

Production, class formation, and the penetration of capitalism in the Kaoma rural district, Zambia, 1800-1978

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1. Introduction¹

Danielle de Lame's seminal contributions to the understanding of ethnic conflict and genocide in the African context have been the product of a passionate interpretation of the topicalities of mass violence, against the solid background of a profound understanding of regional rural change, both social and economic, during the twentieth century CE – based on her intensive fieldwork in Rwanda, which gained her, under my supervision, a *cum laude* PhD in anthropology from the Free University, Amsterdam. In the present paper I will not take up the strand of recent violent conflict. Instead, I will address long-term socio-economic change in a remote rural district of Zambia. My time perspective will be somewhat longer than that informing most of Danielle de Lame's work – encompassing not only most of the 20th but also the 19th century CE, so that we can offset twentieth-century

¹ This paper is based on my ethnohistorical and ethnographic fieldwork among the Nkoya people of Kaoma district and of Lusaka, Zambia, in the years 1972-1974, and subsequently during nearly annual shorter periods of fieldwork in the years 1977-2011. I am indebted to the Nkoya people for welcoming me in their midst and making me one of them; to Dennis Shiyowe, D. Kawanga and M. Malapa for excellent research assistance over the years, and to the Kazanga Cultural Society and a network of educated Nkoya for critical feedback over the years; to the University of Zambia, where I was first a lecturer in sociology (1971-74) and then for many years a research affiliate of the Institute of African Studies; to Henny van Rijn, Patricia Saegerman, and my children for sharing part of the fieldwork with me; to the African Studies Centre, Leiden, for research funding from 1977 on, and for offering a congenial environment where the ideas informing this argument could mature and be subjected to peer discussion; to the Amsterdam Working Group on Marxist Anthropology, during whose sessions many of the leading ideas of the present argument came to fruition in passionate debate; and to the present collection's anonymous reviewer, who pointed out severe flaws in an earlier version. A first version of this paper was presented at the Seminar on Class Formation and Stratification in Africa, African Studies Centre, Leiden, May 18-19, 1978 (convenors Robert Buijtenhuijs and Peter L. Geschiere). The descriptive and theoretical material in this paper was later reiterated in my books *Religious change in Zambia* (1981) and *Tears of Rain* (1992), as well as in a collective book on Africanist Marxist anthropology: van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985. The convention of linking up a specific argument, in this case on Nkoya history and ethnography, with other related work may seem to result (since I am the only author on these topics so far) in unscholarly self-referentiality, but I do not see how that could have been avoided. The paper is now finally published, having been extensively reworked so as to incorporate my later field data and analytical insights. In general, however, the ethnographic present is 1978 – even if for stylistic reasons I have not always explicitly stated so. At any rate, the period treated is, as indicated in the title, 1800-1978 CE. The accelerated class formation in Kaoma district in more recent decades could only be glossed over, and the massive changes in Zambian society at large since the 1970s remain out of scope; they include: the collapse of copper revenues and hence of the country's relative affluence; the rise and fall of Structural Adjustment programmes under intercontinental supervision, the end of the one-party state and the rise of multi-party politics; the shifting regional and national ethnic politics and of the Nkoya's place in it; and the resilience of the Zambian economy under the impact of foreign investments especially from South Africa.

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socio-economic change against some baseline in the pre-colonial past. My principal aim in this argument is descriptive, not theoretical, nor methodological. I will not dwell on the methodology of historical reconstruction involving an illiterate pre-colonial past, nor on the specific nature of the data it requires – having covered that ground extensively in other work.² I will structure and analyse my historical data in the light of a specific conceptual framework,³ that of the neo-Marxist paradigm of the articulation of modes of production. I have no intention of dwelling here upon the fundamental theoretical questions such as have dominated (neo-)Marxist debates, and their aftermath. I merely make my concepts explicit, for the sake of my own argument, and in order to enable comparison between social formations and between time periods. If this means rekindling concepts and theories that seem to have lost most of the popularity they had gained in the 1970s and that instead have by now become somewhat counter-paradigmatic in the 2010s, so be it. My aim in this paper is not at all to re-open the debate on Marxism in African Studies, but, much more humbly and descriptively, to present my data on the history of production in an African rural district in a coherent way; for this purpose the modes-of-production approach is of obvious and proven heuristic value – as the details of the present argument in themselves serve to demonstrate.

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In this paper, then, I shall describe classes and class formation in the Zambian rural district of Kaoma⁴, from the point of view of modes of production, their articulation, the various branches out of which some modes of production consist, and the emergence of capitalism as the dominant mode of production.

Classes I define not so much by reference to specific attributes of their members: a particular life style and consumption pattern (Weber 1969); differential evaluation in terms of status or prestige, as consensually ascribed to a particular group within a society (Warner & Lunt 1946; Parsons 1951); nor indeed, primarily, by reference to legal ownership or actual control over the means of production *alone* – a specific form which class relations have taken in the development of capitalism in the North Atlantic region. Instead, classes define themselves mutually, in relation to one another, through the specific *class struggle* in which they are involved. Under the application of means of production (land, tools, etc.) and technical knowledge, human labour adds *surplus value* to natural resources. Every society shows a number of specific ways in which human labour is subjected to control, and in which this surplus value is expropriated from the original producers. Basically such expropriation can be effected by one group (class) monopolising one or more of the *production forces*: means of production, resources, labour, or knowledge. The forms of monopolising and expropriation are defined by the social organization of production, in other words

² Cf. van Binsbergen 1981, 1992; van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985.

³ Cf. Caplan 1982; Jewsiewicki *c.s.* 1985; Mudzibganyama 1983; Wolpe 1980; Bonner 1976; Depelchin 1975; Geschiere 1978, 1985; Haldon 1993; Milonakis 1993-1994; Rose 1987; Godelier 1975; Hindess & Hirst 1975.

⁴ Mainly the eastern part of the district is referred to in this paper, which is largely under Chief Kahare. Here and elsewhere I prefer a *geographical* identification of the social formation in which, among others, people identifying by the Nkoya ethnonym are involved. The anthropological usage of designating a local society by the local actors' preferred ethnonym, or by some other ethnonym imposed upon the local actors, obscures the essentially dynamic and strategic nature of ethnic labelling. Yet this practice offers a convenient short-hand, to which I may occasionally take recourse in the present argument.

the *relations of production*. The concept of class struggle sums up this expropriation process as well as the producers' reaction against it. Wherever surplus value is created and expropriated, a class struggle can be said to exist objectively. Typically, however, the facts of surplus expropriation are concealed by all sorts of arrangements in the *superstructure* (a kinship system, patronage, cash wages, a legal structure defining ownership and control, a political system, etc.), so that those involved need not be consciously aware of the underlying infrastructural reality; in fact, the principal effect of all ideological superstructure appears to be to conceal from consciousness the violence underlying the relations of production, thus legitimating the latter. As to the specific combination of production forces and relations of production, it seems useful to distinguish a number

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of *modes of production*, which are each characterised by specific forms of class struggle, and by specific superstructural arrangements both to pattern this class struggle and to conceal it.

An important inspiration on this point has been Poulantzas (1974), who offers a broad definition of modes of production along Marxian lines. When the outlines of the present argument were first conceived, in the late 1970s, the neo-Marxist revival in anthropology had been going on for a decade or more,⁵ but the specific recasting of Marx's ideas on the Asiatic mode of production⁶ into a general anthropological theory of modes of production was only beginning to bear fruit in the form of empirically-based publications on modes of production and their articulation. It was only in the 1970s-1980s that fully-fledged studies on modes of production analysis came to set a standard, only to become rapidly obsolete as, with the demise of East European communism, Marxism ceased to constitute an attractive, fashionable paradigm for North Atlantic social scientists and historians.⁷

⁵ Cf. Godelier 1973, 1977a, 1977b, 1978, 1980; Terray 1969, 1975; Meillassoux 1975; Rey 1971, 1973, Rey *et al.* 1974.

⁶ Cf. Lichtheim 1963; Tokei 1964; Thorner 1966; Suret-Canale 1974.

⁷ Remarkably, the modes-of-production approach, so much *en vogue* in the 1970s-80s, hardly found any new major formulations in the 1990s and after. It was supplanted by new paradigms (e.g. globalisation, or bowdlerised version of Foucault and Deleuze) and, in the manner of the circulation of paradigms as identified by Kuhn (1962), went out of fashion and fizzled out, even without giving up much of a struggle. It was not as if this approach had been disproved and faulted in intensive critical debate: by contrast with the endless internal neo-Marxist debates on e.g. the Asiatic mode of production, the external critical debates had been limited and, apart from ushering in the new fashionable alternatives (Poster 1990), mainly concerned fine points such as the applicability of the approach to hunting and gathering (van Zwanenberg 1976; Halperin 1980; Lee 1981; Hall 1988; Ingold c.s. 1991). Ever since, the concept of mode of production continues to crop up occasionally, e.g. in studies of women, children and household (Henn 1988; Wilk 1989; Stamp 1986; Oldman 1994; Hendrix & Hossain 1988; Kynaston 1996); and has even gained coinage in the study of Hollywood film industry. The most recent title on modes of production I could spot applies the term, with some poetic license, to the particular form of organisation and information of non-governmental organisation in the field of conservation (Brockington & Scholfield 2010); another recent application is by African archaeologists in a context of climate change and trade (Chami *et al.* 2004). Tellingly, at a conference on theory in African Studies which I organised at Leiden in 1998, my late lamented colleague Robert Buijtenhuijs (1936-2004) reproached Geschiere and myself for first promoting the concept of modes of production as a major paradigm, then dropping that concept overnight without the slightest critical or autocritical discussion or reflection. In reply I was able to demonstrate that, on my part at least, there had been such autocriticism concerning the relative shortcoming, notably the reductionist tendencies, of the neo-Marxist anthropological approach to symbols, meaning and religion (van Binsbergen 1988; I say *relative*, for unmistakably this approach has also contributed significant insights to this field, cf. Adams 1988; Benn 1989; Caplan 1982; Houtart & Lemercinier 1977, 1979; Houtart 1980; Jobling

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Most, perhaps all, societies comprise several modes of production, which are linked to each other in such a way that surplus value generated in one mode is used to reproduce another, more dominant mode. If each mode of production is characterised, in addition to the material conditions of production, by a specific class struggle stipulating in which way surplus value is expropriated, then the emergence, in a local society, of a new mode of production implies the emergence of a new type of class struggle, in which new antagonistic classes define themselves. The essence of *class formation*, then, seems to be the historical development in which new modes of production present themselves, link up with pre-existing ones, gradually gain dominance over the latter or surrender to the dominance of other modes of production. This process is not peculiar to capitalism, although nineteenth-century West European capitalism was Marx's main test case along with the highly problematic 'Asiatic modes of production'. Even if most studies (including the present one) emphasise the rise of capitalism in processes of class formation, this in fact presupposes the linkage ('articulation') between ascending capitalism and one or more pre-capitalist modes of production.

My case study in the first place seeks to identify, tentatively and as far as my incomplete contemporary and historical data allow, the various modes of production that have existed in Kaoma district over the past few hundred years, and the class relations on which each has revolved.

However, modes of production may internally be differentiated according to specific production forces (tools, methods, aspects of nature to be appropriated by human production), and this differentiation may be accompanied by specific forms of superstructural underpinning. Strictly speaking, such differentiation means that the constituting class relations take various forms. One might be tempted to discern as many modes of production as there are more or less distinct complexes of differentiation to be discerned. On the other hand, if every new tool, every new mode of livelihood were to represent a different mode of production, capitalism as

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the major mode of production confronting pre-existing African forms of production would lose much of its uniquely distinctive position, and would be reduced to just one mode of production among many. It is therefore desirable to restrict ourselves to distinguishing only a handful of different modes of production, and to employ, instead, the term *branch of production* to designate such internal differentiation of a mode of production as gives rise to surface specialisation within essentially the same overall complex.⁸ Table 1 below sets out the specific modes of livelihood or branches of production to be discerned historically in Kaoma district, western Zambia. This usage gained currency in the literature on modes of production and related issues from the 1970s onwards, (e.g. Beach 1977). It is also in terms of branches of production that I have reworked much of the same historical material in my book *Tears of Rain* (1992).

1991; Spielmann 2002; Tanner 1979; van Binsbergen 1981. Despite these avowed shortcomings, however, the theory of modes of production has retained such heuristic value for me that I had continued to use it in later work (van Binsbergen 1992; even my prehistoric reconstruction of world mythology – 2006a, 2006b – identifies modes of production and their succession as the motor behind processes of world conceptualisation). In these cases, as in the present argument, the proof of the pudding is in the eating: if a concept manages to illuminate striking interrelations within and between data, within a historical and comparative perspective, the retention of that concept is a matter of intellectual economy and responsibility, rather than of fashion.

⁸ Also cf. the discussion in Pouillon 1976.

Within capitalism, as well as in some pre-capitalist modes of production of considerable geographical span and internal complexity (e.g. the trade-and-tribute mode), issues of class formation are complicated by the existence, at the superstructural level, of the *state*, which in Poulantzas's terms (1974) could be viewed as the crystallisation of class relations: not the handmaiden of only one particular class (as in vulgar Marxism), nor a reified structure or apparatus wielding power in its own right, but a structure of relations in which the fundamental contradictions of the dominant (and presumably also of the other) forms of class struggle within a certain society are expressed, and in which therefore the conditions for this class struggle are reproduced, in other words perpetuated.

Let me conclude this all too brief conceptual exercise with a note on *relative autonomy*, one of the greatest problems in Marxist theory. At least two boundary problems confront anyone who approaches class formation or related issues within a Marxist framework.

The first problem could be called horizontal, and concerns the distinction between various co-existing modes of production. How to distinguish them on the level of operationalisation? Looking at the various production factors and the forms of surplus expropriation in which people are involved, seems elementary enough. Yet e.g. the very different interpretations which various Marxist researchers have given of the relations between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production in the context of labour migration in modern Africa⁹, suggest the remaining difficulties in this field.

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The second, vertical problem concerns the much-debated relation between infrastructure and superstructure. By opting for a somewhat unusual definition of mode of production which explicitly includes superstructural elements (and the same applies when the refinement in terms of *branches* of production is implemented), I have already implied that the autonomy of the superstructure versus the infrastructure can at best be relative, and that their relation is intimate and crucial. But what form does this relation take? Is it possible to pinpoint, with some precision, the ways in which infrastructural arrangements are projected onto the superstructure or the ways in which¹⁰ the superstructure reproduces the infrastructure? The state exists by virtue of a particular relative autonomy between the political and the economic order; by the same token, religion exists by virtue of a particular relative autonomy between the ideological order and the political and economic orders. But what specific theory, beyond such cryptic assertions of the type Poulantzas has to offer, makes us understand the conditions, and the limits, of this relative autonomy? In the study of class formation this issue is of more than marginal interest. For it is precisely under conditions of relative autonomy that non-Marxian approaches to class remain meaningful, even though ultimately they fail to link up such superstructural elements as status, evaluation, legal ownership, consumption attitudes, to the infrastructural realities of production and expropriation. By the same token, Weber's eminently influential analyses of forms of authority, the state, bureaucracy, legitimation, and the routinisation of charisma, even if entirely conceived in a superstructural idiom, may carry weight even in Marxist contexts provided one attempts to place them in a wider

⁹ Cf. Amselle 1976, who explicitly contests the dualism underlying the highly influential approach by Meillassoux's 1975 seminal treatment of labour migration in Africa.

¹⁰ Typically outside capitalism, which is the mode of production in which, through the separation between capital and labour, the economic level ('instance') has become capable of reproducing the total society.

framework where the problem of relative autonomy is neither ignored (as in the Weberian tradition), nor left unsolved (as in much of recent Marxism).

[INSERT TABLE 1 SOMEWHERE HERE]

2. Modes of production and branches of production in Kaoma district, 1800-1978

2.1. Introduction

Table 1 gives a systematic summary of the main branches of production which have existed in Kaoma district since about 1800. In the light of the above discussion, I have distinguished four main modes of production:

- the village mode of production
- the petty commodity mode of production
- the tributary mode of production, and
- the capitalist mode of production.

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231 table continued

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In order to accommodate the internal differentiation which may be perceived within some of these modes of production, I have subsequently differentiated the village mode of production into a number of branches:

- the household branch of production
- gathering as a branch of production
- hunting as a branch of production
- fishing as a branch of production
- agriculture as a branch of production
- animal husbandry as a branch of production

I have differentiated between

- capitalist agriculture, which is pursued on the farms of rural Zambia and Southern Africa as a whole but including those relatively near to Kaoma district;¹¹ and
- labour migration of an industrial nature, which is typically pursued in distant urban areas throughout Zambia and Southern Africa as a whole.

The various modes of production distinguished here differ substantially from each other in their specific combination of the four production factors. The fundamental contradictions which define the relations of productions in each mode, differ from mode to mode; and even if the same few social categories (or rather, *classes*) crop up repeatedly (younger men versus elders; women versus men), the contents and the direction of the extraction process still differ. The same situation obtains, but to a far lesser extent and with blurred boundaries and generous overlap, between branches of production. Moreover, all modes of production, and some branches of production as distinguished here, turn out to be complex in themselves in that *the expropriation of*

¹¹ E.g. in neighbouring Namwala district from the early 20th century on – and from the 1970s onwards even in Kaoma district itself, as we shall see below.

*surplus always takes place between more than one pair of antagonistic classes; e.g. in agriculture it is not only women whose surplus is extracted by men, but also slaves (Nkoya: pl. *bandungo*) whose surplus used to be extracted (until well into the early 20th century) by masters (especially royals), younger men by elders.¹² Given this considerable complexity, the common usage of combining the various pre-capitalist branches under the one undifferentiated heading of ‘the domestic mode of production’ would obscure fundamental issues of class formation. Only by acknowledging*

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such differences as can be detected in the empirical material, can we meaningfully deal with the historical changes which each of them underwent in the last few centuries in the way of class formation.

Table 1, meanwhile, presents modes and branches of production regardless of their distribution on a time axis. It is primarily a classification, which forms only the starting-point for a more dynamic, historical approach.

2.2. The village mode of production

2.2.1. The household branch of production

The patterns of labour and extraction hinted at so far do not cover the products that rank highest in terms of the labour input they require: houses, kitchens, granaries and men’s shelters: nor the activity which, throughout the year, probably constitutes the largest female labour input: the processing of the half-products that derive from gathering, hunting, fishing and agriculture, into digestible food. In this truly ‘domestic’ sphere, where the village communities takes its specific shape, people’s activities do not merely revolve on consumption and distribution; they are not mere epiphenomena of the more directly productive confrontation between nature and human labour as found in the other branches of production. Instead, I propose to regard these domestic activities as constituting a distinct branch of production in its own right. The resources are the half-products deriving from the other branches of production. Labour is provided by women and children in the case of food processing, and by younger men and paid labourers in the case of building. When slavery was still widely practiced, slave labour was to a considerable extent employed for domestic activities. Technical knowledge and skills in this household branch of production are considerable. Means of production in house construction are: axe, hoe, knife, water receptacles. The means of production required for food processing include, in addition, pestle and mortar, a basin, and iron pots. The latter implements are usually a woman’s personal possessions, acquired through inheritance or through gifts from her father or husband. Three-legged pots of cast iron, hailing from the Portuguese territories, had supplanted earthenware vessels in the course of the 19th century, well before the advent of colonial rule (1900). Local blacksmiths could not produce such pots; they therefore had to be obtained through traders. The value attributed to these pots approached that of guns (for which one slave was the standard price). One pot constituted the main element of a fair bride-price until the time (1920s) when labour migration was well established and bride-prices were increasingly in cash. The elders’

¹² Although I do refer to the circulation of women, bride wealth, and the role of elders, the emphasis on detailed description in this paper does not leave enough room to tackle a central problematic in modes-of-production studies: *the way in which each mode of production, and particularly its central exploitative relationship, is being reproduced*. Elsewhere (van Binsbergen 1981, 1985, 1992) I have treated this problem at some length, with special emphasis on the ideological, notably religious and ethnic factors of this reproduction.

control of cooking pots (like that over hoes) gave them power over the household branch of production, beyond such power as they had over the labour of youth and women on the basis of the kinship and marriage system.

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The fact that throughout the period under study very few local *men* have ever consumed food they have entirely or largely processed themselves, shows that one fundamental extraction relation in this branch of production has persisted. However, the reverse statement is no longer true. By the late 1970s, not every adult woman in the village was involved in food processing for the partial benefit of (adult) males. Divorce has become easy and common, and women are often the initiators of divorce. After a career of domestic (as well as agricultural and gathering) labour for the partial benefit of fathers, brothers, mother's brothers and husbands, a considerable proportion of women in their mid-thirties or older settle independently in the villages of moderately distant relatives, shunning further marriages, engaging in agriculture on their own account, and waiting for their children to grow up and provide for their mothers. Married wives of absent migrants who receive remittances can display a similar independence even if living amongst close affines.

Also in other respects the household branch of production has altered. Slave labour is no longer available. The emergence, at several places in the district, of diesel maize mills offers, for those who can afford the cash, a partial release of female labour from the hard and despised job of pounding. The demands made upon the domestic labour of young men, in the second half of the 20th century have had to compete with their opportunities of earning cash by selling their labour, either in distant towns or, locally, in agriculture. As a result, an increasing number of houses is built with the partial assistance of paid labour. All houses depend on male labour for their basic construction – women fetch the water, prepare the loam and apply it to the latticework constructed by the men. This makes unmarried women without cash dependent on the good will of their male relatives – but some women are known to have had dwellings built on their own account.

No longer do all men of a village eat together in the men's shelter, where all women used to bring their prepared meals at the sign of the headman's wife. By the late 1970s, all but the smallest villages had multiple eating places, and the headman's wife only controls those younger women who reside in the cluster of houses immediately around her; she benefits from their labour and with regard to such tasks as fetching water, pounding, beer brewing etc.

2.2.2. *Gathering as a branch of production*

This branch of production, whose local origins go back to the first human habitation of the area, had survived into the 1970s, and I suspect it does until 2012. On the wooded plateau of which Kaoma district forms part, a very

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low density of population¹³ by the 1970s had largely preserved the necessary

¹³ Of the order of magnitude of 1 inhabitant per km², even as late as the early 1970s. In subsequent decades, however, population density has increased dramatically through a number of factors, including: further population influx from Angola, to swell the ranks of Luvale, Luchazi and Chokwe ethnic groups; establishment of a highly successful agricultural scheme in Eastern Kaoma district (Nelson-Richards 1988; Hailu 1994). As a result, from c. 1980 on, the villages of Eastern Kaoma district have experienced land scarcity for the first time in history. All this has gone at the expense of hunting. Moreover, the successful and internationally highly endowed, recent work of the World Wildlife Fund towards social game management (from the turn of the millennium), reinforced by the considerable flow of associated revenue (from hunting, tourism etc.) for local chiefs and communities,

ecological conditions, although in the immediate environment of the main inhabited valleys some major bush products (firewood, grass for thatching) were no longer so plentiful. However, state control, and the necessity to stay near roads that give access to participation in capitalism possible, prohibit moving away to new forested areas of the interior. Gathering is the work of women and children, while men share in their products, extracting, in other words, the surplus. Gathering is the only branch of production which yields, among other products, foods which can be consumed without further processing within the household branch of production. Moreover, it is the branch which requires virtually no means of production (beyond an axe, spear or hoe – but often bare hands are used). Because of these two aspects, gathering can subsidise other branches of production in which the labour of women, young men and formerly slaves is exploited: these producers can, to a considerable extent, keep themselves alive by gathering. Thus old songs mention that fact that slaves, while involved in subsistence agriculture, themselves were not allowed to eat crops but instead had to rely on products from the forest.

2.2.3. Hunting as a branch of production

For several million years, prior to Neolithic food production through agriculture and animal husbandry, all human food was procured through hunting and gathering. Going back, therefore, to times immemorial, hunting has continued to constitute an important branch of production in Kaoma district. Until the late 19th century the means of production were spears, bow and arrows, and traps. Long-distance trade introduced guns only shortly before the imposition of colonial rule. Later, purchase of a gun became a standard investment of money earned through labour migration – and so was a bicycle, which in the second half of the 20th century had become the main means to take meat over scores of miles of forest tracks

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back to the village. Hunting was still a man's true calling. The gun is a main symbol of authority among headmen and chiefs, and features centrally in many succession disputes.

Decimation of game due to the use of guns by both Africans and European ivory hunters (Clay 1945); the creation of a very large national park in the eastern part of Kaoma district; and state control over hunting through licenses and game guards, -- these were three factors considerably reducing the yields from hunting. A situation such as reported in the 1930s,¹⁴ of whole villages virtually subsisting on hunting and gathering, nowhere obtains any more in Kaoma district.

Only for the last fifty years has game meat been a marketable commodity, sold both within the villages and to the outside. Before that time, hunting was subject to three forms of surplus extraction. First, boys and young men were trained by accomplished hunters in faraway hunting camps. In such situations the elders expropriated their charges' bag. Secondly, no hunter could return with game to the village, without sharing out most of his bag. This was a particularly strong norm, backed up by elaborate symbolism and hideous supernatural (notably ancestral) sanctions. Thirdly, certain larger species were sacred to the prince of an area, who had to receive part or all of it as tribute: skins of lion and leopards, tail of hippopotamus and eland, ground

has now led to a situation where hardly any hunting takes place any more at the village level, and game meat has definitely been struck from the Nkoya rural diet.

¹⁴ District Commissioner Mumbwa to Provincial Commissioner Lusaka, 'Kafue Game Reserve: Recommendations', 12 July 1933, enclosure in: *KDB 1/2/1 Kafue Game Reserve*, file held at the Zambia National Archives, Lusaka.

tusk of elephant etc. (*cf.* Gluckman 1943). Until perhaps the eighteenth century, prior to which long-distance trade and state formation appeared¹⁵ to have been of little importance in the area, these prestige objects would be added to the prince's treasure, to be buried with him at his death. The princes, very often women, would exercise power over only a small area, and in circulation processes their main function appears to have been not recirculation, but withdrawal from circulation. During the 18th

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century, however, if not much earlier, a trade-and-tribute mode of production penetrated into Kaoma district. This altered the circulation of hunters' tribute: skins and tusks became the major commodities which, extracted from local producers, enabled the princes to become powerful interregional entrepreneurs.

Even with the virtual destruction of the trade-and-tribute mode of production under capitalism, which put an end to princely tribute rights, chiefs¹⁶ have retained a special relationship with hunters: possessing the very best guns in the district (for both symbolic and financial reasons), and still claiming historical rights (illegal but connived at by the state) on certain species, the chiefs employ elephant hunters; tusks and meat are sold along unofficial channels and the proceeds go almost exclusively to the chiefs.

Since meat has become a marketable commodity (partly through the contact with hunting groups steeped in capitalism: foremost the Luvala ethnic group), many gun owners have followed the chiefs' example in regard of buffalo, duiker and the many kinds of buck. In exchange for wages or a share in the meat, a hunter is employed to kill game with the owner's gun and ammunition. Two factors have led to the concentration of guns in the hands of elderly men who themselves are not (or no longer) good hunters: succession to high office has implied inheritance not only of a prestigious title but also of a gun; and many guns are owned by, or inherited from, retired labour migrants (many headman fall in this category). I estimate that about 50% of all hunters are thus separated from their means of production. Outside wage labour, it is common for younger men to use a gun belonging to some senior relative, to whom the lion's share will go. The norms on sharing the bag within the hunter's own village still exist, and are still to a limited extent observed by hunters who use their own or a senior relative's gun. Considered from the viewpoint of the state, all this hunting is poaching, so the circulation of the meat requires some slight caution. Most of the meat is marketed in nearby villages by the hunters and gun owners; some is sold to middlemen, who transport it to parts of the districts where game is less abundant or game supervision more effective – a very small proportion of the meat,

¹⁵ I am following here the model established by Vansina 1966 of state formation as springing from endogenous, South Central and Southern African regional dynamics and emerging in the course of the second millennium CE – well after 1500, for the Nkoya region. Very recent rethinking on Africa's transcontinental continuities in protohistorical times, however, has brought out the likelihood that in the region, state formation was strongly influenced by cultural ideas and even population inputs from South Asia throughout the first and second millennium CE – to which came additional influences from South East and East Asia were added. Many of the features of Nkoya kingship, royal control over such branches of production as hunting, fishing, and subsistence agriculture, could be argued to have a Buddhist or Hinduist, especially Tamil, background. However, these emerging transcontinental hypotheses are still to conjectural to allow them a decisive impact on the present argument (van Binsbergen 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

¹⁶ I use the word princes for the political authorities in the precolonial period; chiefs are princes incorporated into the colonial or post-colonial state.

finally, reaches the distant urban areas.¹⁷

Thus the relations of production surrounding hunting since the penetration of capitalism, have led to a proletarianisation of many hunters, defining themselves as a class vis-à-vis gun-owning chiefs and elders. Some hunters still pursue a remnant of the old hunting branch of production; whereas the other hunters, possessing their own means of production, have entered the

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market as entrepreneurs. In the field of circulation, finally, a further extraction is effected by the middlemen.

2.2.4. Fishing as a branch of production

Kaoma district is an ideal environment for fishing, which however can only be undertaken a few months per year. The places where fish can be found are fairly localised, and this allows for a monopolisation of natural resources such as did not develop in the case of the hunting and gathering branches of production. In the nineteenth century, pools were owned by princes and their spouses, while the rights to streams were in the hands of village headmen. The main fishing technique consisted of the collective emptying of a pool or a dammed section of a stream. Men would enter the water using fishing spears; women and children would keep to the borders and catch the fish with their hands or with baskets. Methods were rather haphazard and only the concerted efforts of scores of people could yield results. The owner of the fishing grounds had a right to a portion of the catch. Particularly princes and their spouses could thus exact considerable tribute. As with game, there were strong pressures to distribute the catch over an extensive kinship network.

In several ways the penetration of capitalism has altered this branch of production. The colonial state put an end to formal tribute obligations. Collective fishing parties continued to be held, but princes no longer received any tribute from them: whatever fish they eat, they have to catch themselves, or buy. For rather than distributing the fish over an extensive kin network, participants in the fishing party by the late 1970s sold part of their individual catches on the spot, particularly those women who had no husbands, brothers or sons to spear fishes for them. Headmen could still claim a portion of the fish caught at their dams. But collective fishing parties in which members of a great many villages participate, had partly given way to smaller units, headed by a headman-owner and consisting of his close kin. The extensive, time-honoured fishing techniques were then augmented by more intensive methods (funnel traps) said to be borrowed from the Luvala people. Thus smaller groups produced in a short time much more fish than they could consume. Rather than drying it for their own future use, they sold the fish to outside, mainly via middlemen who visit the area on their bicycles.

2.2.5 Agriculture as a branch of production

Oral records apparently referring to the 18th century already refer to the cultivation of millet and kaffircorn. When Livingstone heard about the area in the mid-nineteenth century, he marked it on the map as rich in

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staples and vegetables (Clay 1945). Yet¹⁸ one cannot escape the impression that

¹⁷ Note that this is the ethnographic present of the 1970s; for the situation in the 2010s, see note 14 above.

agriculture has a much shallower local history than gathering, hunting and fishing. Above we saw that, in the 1930s, entire villages were reported to subsist on hunting and gathering; this points to viable alternatives to agriculture, which in the pre-capitalist past are likely to have been even more important. Contemporary methods of subsistence cultivation seem little complex, especially when compared with the complex skills involved in hunting (Miracle 1959). In the case of forest gardens the soil is enriched only by burned vegetable material – the wet riverside gardens use the natural fertility of the river sediment. Yields are very low. By the late 1970s, there was still land in abundance, and land was easily relinquished or passed on to others wanting to use it. Land quarrels were virtually unknown (except over the coveted wet riverside gardens, which were per definition limited to the small area of the river bed), never led to court cases, and neighbouring groups (such as the Lozi) who were known to be in the habit of quarrelling over land were ridiculed for that reason. Today's main food crops (cassava, maize) are claimed to be recent introductions; elderly people alive in the 1970s claim to have witnessed their arrival in the area – where they came to largely replace millet, bullrush millet and kaffircorn. By contrast to the ritual elaboration surrounding gathering and hunting, there was only limited agricultural ritual: rain ritual, significantly focusing on chiefly graves.

The scanty and contradictory historical evidence suggests that extensive subsistence agriculture as a branch of production has a considerable antiquity in the region yet particularly gained ascendancy with the rise of the trade-and-tribute mode of production (see below, 2.9). In this connection it may be significant important that theories concerning the origin of princely dynasties from the North (the southeast of the present Zaire), associate their emigration from that area with population pressure brought about by the introduction of new food crops from the Americas (Langworthy 1972: 21). The oral tradition to the effect that, at some point in time, the consumption of crops was prohibited to slaves points, likewise, to an association between princes and crops. On the other hand, agriculture is associated with lexical elements of such general distribution in African, especially Bantu-speaking, societies that it must be very much older than Luba and Lunda expansion in South Central Africa in the second half of the second

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millennium CE.¹⁹ By the same token, the symbolic significance of the hoe, (*e.g.* as the

¹⁸ Here the difference must be appreciated between the Eastern Nkoya, or Mashasha, whose identity is primarily that of hunters, and the Western Nkoya, or Nawiko, whose identity is primarily that of agriculturalists, and whom an authoritative survey credits with complex and highly effective agricultural methods (Trapnell & Clothier 1937; Schütz 1976). Not by accident Christian missions and education were initially limited to the western Nkoya.

¹⁹ A major contribution linguists have made to the study of African (pre-)history is by scanning reconstructed proto-vocabularies of African language groups for clusters of terms belonging to other modes / branches of production than hunting and gathering, notably food production through agriculture and/or animal husbandry. This line of enquiry has been particularly associated with the name of Christopher Ehret (1967, 1984, 1998). In Table 2 below I explore the indications for food production in two specific reconstructions of the Bantu proto-lexicon (Guthrie 1967-1971 and *n.d.*; Meeussen 1980 and *n.d.*). Both reconstructions are contested and in quantitative terms they lead to rather different results, Meeussen giving many more specific food-production terms than Guthrie. Yet both convey the impression that proto-Bantu-speaking groups in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1st millennium BCE possessed a thoroughly established food-production system in addition to hunting and gathering. Since for pottery traditions in Western Zambia local continuity throughout the Common Era is claimed, these findings are pertinent to our region as well.

general word for bride-price (Nkoya *makahu*, 'hoes'); in girl's puberty ceremonials; and in cults of affliction) suggests that subsistence agriculture has for many centuries already formed an addition to gathering, hunting and fishing. Princely expansion, however (possibly under South Asian influence) may have boosted this branch of production, and redefined its relations of production.

Subsistence agriculture is primarily women's work. It only requires an input of male labour for the cutting of trees, when the clearing is first made or revived. Young men, and in the old times slaves, often put in labour beyond the initial stage. Agricultural products, however, are stored in the granaries of the elders and nobles to whom these producers are or were attached. The elders control the allocation of land, but formally each resident daughter and wife has a right to a garden she can call her own. Agricultural work would normally be shared between all women of one village, going round from one field to another. In precolonial times, when ironware was scarce and expensive, elders largely controlled the means of agricultural production: they received hoes and axes in exchange for women. Youths who were unable thus to pay for their prospective wives, performed bride services, including agricultural labour. These transactions are all the more significant when we realise that marriage is, among other things, the transfer of male rights over female labour. By the 1970s, when the bride-price had become monetarised and ironware was generally available, the elders' control over these means of production had waned. Women and youths often owned their own hoes and axes, and even if they did not, agricultural implements would freely circulate within the extended kin group, and within and

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between villages. Whereas quarrels and court cases frequently concerned the ownership and use of guns, this was never the case for axes and hoes.

With the penetration of capitalism, agriculture as a branch of production underwent considerable changes. Abolition of slavery and tribute obligations by the colonial state greatly affected an important aspect of the relations of production underlying agriculture: extraction of agricultural surplus value from slaves to nobles and from local communities to distant courts became a thing of the past. Cassava, moreover, largely supplanted other food crops, thus releasing (since it is a far easier crop) labour for production in a capitalist context: cash crops for both sexes, and in addition hunting, fishing and labour migration in the case of men. Being a poorer crop in terms of nutritional value, the staple food situation declined markedly under the impact of capitalism. Severe famines occurred in the early 1930s and in the early 1970s.²⁰

Male participation in capitalism threatened subsistence agriculture, unless other males could be brought to put in the initial clearing labour. For this purpose, contractual relations entered the subsistence agriculture. Finding herself without a

²⁰ Although in both periods ecological disasters (locusts, droughts) contributed to famine conditions, male capitalist participation seems a decisive factor: in the early 1930s the return of unemployed migrants after the 1929 Great Depression and the drying up of the stream of remittances; in the early 1970s the massive participation of young men in a Chinese road-building project. These famines were decidedly more serious than the annual food shortages which, in Central African production systems, tend to occur annually (Richards 1939) and which locally have caused an entire season to be called *mwaka wa ndala*, 'time of hunger'. A very popular song in the district at the time of Chinese construction ran:

'Hunger is painning us,
Hunger is painning us,...

With the implication: 'For our men are working for the Chinese...'

husband, brother or adult son within reach but having some cash at her disposal, a woman would contract male labour. Such contracts were and are notoriously unreliable (*cf.* Allan 1949), and remained without effective legal backing; if the male partner did not put in his labour during the crucial few weeks immediately preceding the planting season, the female partner did not have to pay up, but more important she would not be able to claim compensation for the loss of cultivation opportunities.

Not every household participates in capitalism to the same extent. Those deeply immersed in it, can use their cash incomes from that mode of production to purchase food crops from others. Thus a limited but steadily rising proportion of the food crops enter into cash transactions. In many cases the relations between producer and buyer retain non-capitalist features: the price would be agreed

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before the crops were ripe, one would buy a certain acreage instead of fixed measured quantities, and the price would be well below current market prices. Increasingly, however, cassava, sweet potatoes and ground-nuts are marketed through middlemen, and sold to the outside: mainly to other parts of the district that are more deeply involved in capitalism.

With food crops becoming, at least in potential, marketable commodities, and with the various women from the same village having to find, in principle, their own solutions of the problem of initial male labour input, the penetration of capitalism lead to a fragmentation of agricultural production. By the 1970s, the women of a village would only rarely cultivate collectively. Headmen claimed, stored and controlled agricultural products of their wives and unmarried resident daughters, but no longer that of the women associated with other mature men in their village, nor that of mature unmarried women who were making use of hired male labour and who cultivated independently. Hired agricultural labour was not restricted to initial male labour inputs: a considerable proportion of the village population, especially younger men, sold their labour power in 'piece-work' arrangement with fellow-villagers.

2.2.6. Animal husbandry as a branch of production

This branch of production is insignificant due to tsetse fly: despite the availability of dip tanks in the area, life-stock has a low life expectancy and as a result there very little accumulation or capital increase is possible from one animal generation to the next). The cattle, owned by headmen and other elders, grazes mainly on the open dambos (wet open patches in the savannah forest), under the supervision of children or young men recruited from among the owner's kin, usually without specific remuneration. Nkoya cattle mainly derives from cattle raids among their eastern neighbours the Ila in the late 19th century; it is therefore a relatively recent (and, because of tsetse fly, ephemeral) introduction, which is hardly involved in cosmological and ceremonial elaboration. Meat and skins are sold.

2.3. The petty-commodity mode of production

By the 1970s, the district did not have a rich material culture. As elsewhere in Africa, the impact of capitalism which brought manufactured products within reach, had greatly affected such petty commodity production as existed before 1900. Some historical commodities (such as the tinderbox, indispensable for hunters using muzzle-loading guns) had completely disappeared. However, three major types of petty commodity pro-

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duction were still very much alive, albeit in a modified form: blacksmithing, weaving of rush mats, and the construction of musical instruments.²¹

Rich surface deposits of iron ore created favourable conditions for the development of a local ironware production. The products, mainly hoes, axes and spears, circulated locally, and formed a major element in bride-prices and in compensation payments in case of conflict arbitration. They also circulated in a much wider region. Thus ironware from this district is reported to be sold by African traders in 19th-century Tongaland (Miracle 1959), some 200 km to the east. This trade does not seem to have been directly controlled by princes. It survived until the 1930s, when a colonial officer found that it was almost extinct.²² However, the tribute which princes extracted locally included ironware: particularly ceremonial ironware such as was associated with high office (gongs, ceremonial axes, executioner's swords); and in addition iron implements. Part of this ironware found its way, through the interregional trade-and-tribute networks, to distant communities and princely courts. This form of circulation disappeared when the colonial state abolished tribute and slavery. I have no data on the organization of labour in precolonial ironware production; there is no reason why it should have differed substantially, however, from that described for a culturally similar group in Kalabo district, only a few hundred kms West of Kaoma district.²³ Although the principle of ore smelting was still known in the 1970s (clumps of rough local iron were kept as relics in the royal shrine (*kara*) at the court of Mwene Kahare Mutondo among the western Nkoya), this technology was no longer practiced. Instead, scraps of manufactured iron was used, particularly old Landrover springs. Contemporary iron working was limited to the reshaping of this half-product into finished implements, and their subsequent maintenance. The dealings between the blacksmith and his clients were all in the form of cash transactions; the blacksmith, who owned the means of production (thongs, bellows, hammer, anvil, file etc.), was assisted by young relatives who are not paid. Thus the fundamental extraction process was between blacksmith and assistants. Between the petty commodity mode of production, and

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those branches of production which require the products of the former as implements (hunting, fishing, agriculture and the household), linkages exist which, because of the medium of money, are difficult to interpret in terms of extraction, but which ultimately rely on some participation in the capitalist mode of production from which this money derives.

Mat weaving and the construction of musical instruments were much less encroached upon by capitalism.²⁴ The products were made by individual part-time

²¹ At the village level there is a less specialised, continuous and diffuse circulation of commodities such as tobacco, eggs, chickens, and beer, which strictly speaking should be subsumed under the petty-commodity mode of production. Also we should remember that much circulation of agricultural produce (especially cassava and older food crops), meat and beer takes place not in the context of commoditised exchange but of ceremonial, more or less festive occasions (weddings, funerals, name-inheritance rituals), when family clusters and clans, however ephemeral, define themselves through engaging in mutually complementary relations.

²² SEC/NAT/66A Annual report native affairs Barotse province 1935 file held in Zambia National Archives.

²³ Cf. Housden & Armour 1959 on Kalabo, just west of the Zambezi flood plain.

²⁴ For an extensive analytical discussion of commoditification and mat weaving in the Nkoya context, cf. van Binsbergen 2005: 37 f.

specialists (who, in the case of musical instruments, command complex skills which it takes years to develop). Mats and musical instruments were indispensable elements in domestic and ceremonial life. They were often made by a member of the family and then not paid for. Occasionally they were ordered, and paid for, by the first owner, but once obtained they circulated freely within an extended kin group and between neighbouring villages, never becoming commodities that can be circulated in exchange for cash. The drums of headmen and princes carry personal names and are, along with guns, central symbols of high office; their ownership is determined by succession to such office. In a less exalted way, succession to a name (*ushwana*) is the standard way in which individual ownership over material objects passes on to others after a person's death – so that the commodity character of these objects remains subdued virtually forever.

When trade-and-tribute networks were still in existence, however, mats and musical instruments were included in the series of local products which local princes extracted from the local community, and that were further distributed to distant courts. In those days they were often the products of slave labour. In the 1970s, chiefly courts (the remnants of the trade-and-tribute mode of production as encapsulated in the modern state) have retained patterns of commodity production reminiscent of this situation: junior members of the court, including state-paid musicians, produce such mats and instruments as are needed for court life (until the 1990s, the royal orchestra played court music every sunrise and sunset, and the floor of the court room would be covered with mats for courtiers and visitors to sit on, only the prince having the right to sit in a chair).

2.4. The tributary mode of production

I have already referred to the emergence, in Kaoma district sometime in during the Common Era, of a trade-and-tribute mode of production. These developments in the district must be seen against the background of similar processes all over South Central Africa in the late 1st and throughout the

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2nd millennium CE.²⁵ Prior to the 18th century, interregional trade seems to have hardly touched the area now coinciding with Kaoma district. But with such trade bristling all around the periphery of the area, and reinforcing or rekindling processes of state formation, the time was ripe for the trade-and-tribute mode of production to develop or intensify locally. The royal courtly culture of the distant Lunda, introduced by magrifying princes perhaps in the 18th century, provided an organisational model, and an ideology of exalted princely states marked off by exclusive paraphernalia (ceremonial ironware and musical instruments), ceremonies (installation, burial, initially also boys initiation ceremonies), and special magical claims. This state formation, whatever its precise dating, introduced a dual system of values in the

²⁵ My 1992 monograph on Nkoya history and ethnicity, *Tears of Rain*, was based in part on a literalist, more or less presentist reading of Nkoya oral traditions, assuming the latter to deal essentially with the local region and with the second half of the 2nd mill. CE. Later, with increased exposure to comparative mythology and Asian Studies, I have had to realise that these traditions also contain mythical material from provenances thousands of kms away and from across millennia, which made the books' argument no longer convincing (van Binsbergen 2010). Inspired, in large part, by the Nkoya data, most recently I have been working on transcontinental continuities between sub-Saharan Africa and South, South East and East Asia in pre- and protohistory, and, as related in an earlier footnote, in that connection considerable evidence is surfacing concerning South Asian cultural and demographic influences upon state formation in Central and Southern Africa in the 1st and 2nd millennium CE.

region: the villages continued to be governed by productivity, reciprocity, non-violence and the avoidance of sorcery (four ideals, nonetheless, whose non-attainment invariably led to community crises, often at predictable intervals of one to two decades) – the royal capitals however, in stark contrast, were marked by exploitative parasitical relations vis-à-vis the surrounding villages, and moreover by an absence of reciprocity, by violence and by sorcery connotations (van Binsbergen 2003, 2011).

On an interregional scale, the kingdoms developing in Kaoma district were of minor scope. They displayed all the Lunda organisational and cultural features. Relatively massive princely capitals were created, where a prince with his court officials (judges, councillors, military leaders, eunuchs, headed by a Prime Minister entitled *Mwanashihemi*, ‘Chief of Protocol’) would reside with their wives and slaves. Slave labour, but particularly tribute both in labour and in the form of products from the various local branches of production, formed the material basis for these establishments. However, rather than becoming interregional foci in their own right, treaties and military expeditions soon brought these emerging kingdoms of Kaoma district under tributary relations with other, more successful states: foremost the Lozi (Luyana/Kololo) kingdom which ben-

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efited from the extremely favourable environment of the Zambezi flood-plain, and the trading contracts with the Angolan coast – and to a lesser extent the East African coast. From the middle of the 19th century, tribute in the form of skins, ivory, slaves, musical instruments, mats, honey, and occasionally cattle raided from the Ila and Tonga to the east, would irregularly pass between the local kingdoms and the rapidly expanding Lozi state. In a less organized form, raids from the Ndebele in the south, the Yeke and Kaonde in the north, and the Ila would extract surplus value from the area, and threaten, to the point of extinction, the local minor kingdoms.

After a trickle of, mainly hear-say, mentions of the Nkoya area throughout the 19th century, the first detailed European reports on the area (Gielgud & Anderson 1901) reveal a condition of flux. Political relations had become fragmented. A number of entrepreneurs, many with little more than the mere aspirations to princely status but with considerable economic and political power, competed for local hegemony. Some princely establishments acknowledged Lozi overlordship, many others denied the arbitrary claims of the Lozi ambassadors who roamed the area with their retinue. Large caravans of Angolan and Swahili traders likewise crossed the area, exchanging slaves and ivory for guns, ammunition, pots, calico and beads at the capitals of these princely entrepreneurs, and stimulating raiding between the latter.

The creation of regular colonial administration in the area in the first decade of the twentieth century (until 1924 in the hands of the British South Africa Company), almost entirely upset the trade-and-tribute mode of production. Tribute obligations vis-à-vis local princes, and vis-à-vis the Lozi Kingdom, were soon formally abolished. So was slavery. However, it was to take until the late 1930s before these forms of surplus extraction had effectively disappeared. Great pains were taken, meanwhile, to reshape the dismantled Lozi state into a ready instrument for colonial indirect rule. The Lozi king and aristocracy were compensated for the loss of tribute and slave labour. A proportion of the hut tax exacted from every adult male in their area was allotted to them (later they were to receive a fixed stipend independent from tax revenue). This area, the former Lozi state, was so redefined as to include the whole of Kaoma district. Among the competing local princes a small number were selected for official governmental recognition, and these were artificially incorporated in the Lozi neo-traditional bureaucracy. In so far as this meant Lozi interference in court matters, the move was greatly resented. But at least the recognized princes, henceforth called

'chiefs', shared (directly or indirectly) in the revenues on the colonial state's surplus extraction through hut tax – and arrangement that was to survive, in modified form, even after Independence (1964) through the Barotse Agreement. Due to these state subsidies, such Nkoya royal chiefs as Mwene Mutondo and Mwene Kahare could continue to surround themselves with court dignitaries and musicians.

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While on the surface much of the prestigious Lunda court culture was thus perpetuated and even revived, the chiefs' relations with their subjects had radically changed. Direct surplus extraction, and trading, had been supplanted by taxation mediated through the state, and by trading through a few private stores including missionary establishments. Former slaves continued to reside at or near the chiefs' places, often as clients of the chiefs, and subject to humiliation and threats because of their slave origins which constituted a public secret. However, as there was land in abundance, and as former slaves were usually related to local non-slave families (particularly those of chiefs and headmen), they managed to assimilate in the local society, and by the 1970s were only, and then insultingly, reminded of their slave ancestry in circumstances of serious conflict. Elders, successors to glorious titles which in the 19th century had meant near-princely status, and who had shared in the trade, raiding and tribute proceeds of the princes, in the 20th century saw themselves forever barred from chiefly office (whose succession rules were, under Lozi and colonial influence, greatly narrowed down so as to exclusively favour close patrilineal kin of earlier incumbents), with only very limited chances of occupying a remunerative position at the chiefs' courts, deprived from their slaves, and with no other compensation than administering the village tax register. In the latter capacity they acted, of course, as the unpaid agents of the state-controlled surplus extraction. The administrative requirement to be registered in some village home must have given the elders some extra hold over the younger men, particularly if these joined, as labour migrants, capitalist production outside the district.

The vicissitudes of indirect rule; the creation of Native Authorities; repeated conflicts with the Lozi aristocracy; the struggle for Independence; the redefinition of indigenous chiefs in the Zambia state, where their judicial and executive powers were removed and only their advisory and ornamental functions retained official recognition – all these circumstances have informed the situation of senior chiefs in Kaoma district in post-colonial times. On the basis of the 1900 treaty between the state and the Lozi king, and its modification under the 1964 Barotse Agreement, they still enjoy a state subsidy which enables them, along with some other chiefs in the Lozi hierarchy, to maintain so-called Royal Establishments at a scale which still had a measure of splendour around 1970, although much of that has been lost in subsequent decades (*cf.* Brown 1984; van Binsbergen 1987, 1992, 1999). In addition to a formal staff of about ten people, a considerable number of male clients and female relatives cluster around the chiefs, discharging productive or ritual activities and sharing as kinsmen in the state-provided wealth. Since Independence, however, the process of surplus extraction from which the chiefs benefit has changed again. Village tax was abolished and instead income tax is raised on all earnings in the formal capitalist sector. Thus the class position of the chiefs and their retinue has

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come to be defined by direct reference to the capitalist relations of production in the urban areas. An assessment of the state's role in the articulation between industrial capitalism and the various pre-capitalist branches of production found in the rural areas such as Kaoma district, may indicate why both the colonial and the Zambian

state apparently have such high stakes in preserving chiefs and courtiers, these remnants of the trade-and-tribute mode of production.²⁶

2.5. The capitalist mode of production

2.5.1. Capitalist agriculture as a branch of production

From the middle of the 20th century, the capitalist developments within the (subsistence) agriculture branch of production (marketing of food crops, employment of labour) can be summarised as the modification of relations of production; within a branch of production whose production factors have largely remained the same. State-promoted capitalist agriculture in the district, by contrast, from the outset constituted a mode of production which also in its production factors differed considerably from historical, subsistence agriculture.

In its most salient form, capitalist agriculture as a mode of production by the late 1970s found expression in two huge schemes located at the western and eastern peripheries of Kaoma district (*cf.* Nelson-Richards 1988; Hailu 1994). Cultivation is carried out on large stretches of land, precisely delineated, and alienated by state agencies from the local population; the latter are relegated to the status of squatters, waiting for eviction. On these schemes, the means of production are those of modern rational farming: tractors, harvesters, large tool sheds, piped water, etc. Their internal, very complex organization of labour follows bureaucratic lines, with formalised relationships between the workers involved, most of whom (save those occupying the lowest positions) are recruited from *outside* the district.

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Almost all labour in these schemes requires special technical knowledge and skills such as are not available in the surrounding local society.

One of the schemes, the western one, is a state production centre; its main product is high-quality maize such as constitutes the main staple of Zambia's urban population. In this context it should be noted that, with the one-sided stress on mining development, Zambia has for many years had difficulty to feed its urban population, and has usually imported maize. The other, eastern scheme is run by a parastatal organization dealing with a non-food crop, tobacco; its aim is to establish, upon and around the scheme, various types of capitalist producers of tobacco, in conjunction with maize. These producers vary in capital assets, credit facilities, and strictness of supervision. The most successful of them are enabled to build up, within the scheme, impressive farms yielding very high incomes. The least successful are local villagers in the vicinity of the scheme, who have been persuaded to grow tobacco in their original village context, receive limited assistance, and gain only very modest incomes. Common to all these producers is that they are completely dependent upon the scheme for their supplies and marketing; that their participation in the scheme can be one-sidedly terminated if their performance falls below the norm; and that they are

²⁶ For an interesting parallel argument on South African chiefs, *cf.* Beinart 1985. On this point, and greatly inspired by the situation in Nkoyaland, see van Binsbergen 2003a, 2003b. A related question which I shall not here consider but which has been treated extensively in my extensive later work on the Nkoya traditional authorities (*cf.* van Binsbergen 1987, 1992, 1999), is: *why is it that far outside the circle in which the state subsidy to chiefs circulates, the interest in and the competition for prestigious titles continues unabated in Kaoma district?* For the overwhelming majority of headmen, the chances of ever joining the royal establishment in a remunerative position are negligible. With the fragmentation of production under the encroachment of capitalism, village headmanship does not automatically enhance an elderly man's power to extract surplus value from younger men and from women. Ironically, in 2011 I was nominated a Nkoya sub-chief myself.

dependent upon means of production which are not their own, and that for many of them will never be their own. Most of these producers employ agricultural labour in addition to the unpaid services of wives, children and co-residing relatives.

The schemes rapidly became veritable focal points of capitalism in the district: on or near them, stores, beer halls, a market, a small diesel maize mill, have cropped up to cater for the needs of an increasingly proletarian population, *i.e.* one dependent on wage labour and capitalist relations of production in general.

Very few locals find permanent, formal employment on the staff of these schemes. Equally few qualify to become farmers within the scheme. Many young men from the surrounding area find irregular, casual cash employment with these farmers. Many of the entrepreneurs who flock to the environment of the schemes also originate from Kaoma district also often from other ethnic groups than the Nkoya.

Outside the schemes, in the villages, the distinction between capitalist agriculture and subsistence agriculture is somewhat blurred. Here it takes the form of the production of cash crops (primarily maize, with some ground-nuts), whose marketing is monopolised by the state marketing board. These agencies also supplies fertiliser and hybrid seeds which are both indispensable for this type of production. The hoe remains the main agricultural implement, and the annual production per farmer is therefore very low (one or a few bags of 90 kg). Only extremely rarely, and at great expense, do a few villagers manage to engage a tractor come up from the district's

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schemes to plough their village fields. Patterns of land use for cash crop production in the villages is still essentially the same as for subsistence farming. However, the most successful village producers are beginning to expand their fields and to claim exclusive use of them in ways which infringe upon the historical claims of their neighbours. No legal form is available to deal with these mounting frictions – under the historic conditions of land abundance, litigation over land had always been exceptional, and socially disapproved. Land conflicts are therefore still fought in an idiom of gossip, sorcery accusations, and sorcery attacks – and there are indications that these time-honoured expressions of conflict are mounting rather than declining in the face of modernity. Cultivation of the new cash crops requires new skills, which are taught by civil servants: agricultural demonstrators resident in the area. In the 1970s, at the village level, relations of production in cash-crop agriculture had come to be similar to those dominating the cultivation of food crops. Women provide most of the labour, men put in initial labour, production is fragmented, villagers frequently sell their labour to each other, married men claim and market most of the products. Not only unmarried, but also married women, however, may occasionally farm for their own account. The latter, instead of turning they money over to their husbands, wish to spend it themselves on clothes and food – which results in marital quarrels and divorces.

If one looks beyond the village level, considerable differences become manifest between the marketing of food crops and that of hybrid maize. Given the high initial expenditure on seeds and fertiliser, *the producers can never afford to consume the modern crops themselves*. They have no choice but to sell them, either to the state marketing agency or, illegally and in small quantities, to middlemen who pay a slightly higher prize. Outside the area, these products are used to feed an urban population, thus making possible the latter's participation, as proletarians, in capitalist relations of production. The main relation of production manifest in village cultivation of cash crops, therefore, appears to be the extraction of surplus value, through the state, for the benefit of urban labour in the capitalist mode of production. The extraction relations within the village: between men and women, and between

younger men and elders, are only subservient to this more fundamental form of surplus extraction. Men (as against women) and elders (and against youth) can therefore be said to be involved in a class alliance with the state and capitalism. Once involved in capitalist production, the peasants are becoming entirely dependent upon state agencies that deal with supply and marketing. This frequently leads to excesses, such as fertiliser and seeds not being available at the required time or being diverted to a black market at exorbitant prices; and marketed crops not having been paid for many months after collection. The producers fret over this, clamour for improvements, for tractors, better roads etc. It is part of their class situation

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that these demands are ignored. But why, then, should they involve themselves with capitalist production at all? Because, with the general penetration of capitalism (increased use of manufactured products; wage labour in the village; monetarisation of bride-prices and of many other transactions within the village, e.g. healing, love affairs, court fines, food circulation etc.) *they absolutely need money*. Cash crops are not the only way to get money. Hunting and fishing, and selling one's agricultural labour have provided alternatives in the past – alternatives which, however, have rapidly declined since the 1970s. Moreover, men from their late teens to their forties can go to town to work; women from this area have only a very limited access to urban income. Women and elderly men, therefore, try to get a share of the migrants' incomes through general remittances, bride prices, healing ritual, and amorous engagements. However, this flow of cash into the villages is irregular, not very voluminous, and tends to decrease as – one the main structural processes in post-Independence Zambia – circulatory migration gives way to more permanent urbanisation. Given, finally, the fact that earning opportunities in hunting are limited to a few men who are either accomplished hunters or gun owners, and that income from fishing is limited to men and to a few months per years, it becomes clear that capitalist agriculture is the main way through which many villagers (particularly mature men, and women) can get a cash income.

2.5.2. Labour migration as a branch of production

This branch of the capitalist production requires an extensive discussion in relation with its superstructural underpinnings. This discussion will take up the following section.

3. State, church, education and ethnicity: The superstructural requirements²⁷ for the dominance of capitalism in Kaoma district

The colonial state, with the neo-traditional Lozi administration as its picturesque ally, carried on, in a novel way, the interregional extraction processes which had been developing within the trade-and-tribute mode of production. Taxation was an important, but not the only extraction device. Apart from the foodstuffs that were consumed by colonial administrators, the district produced little that could be marketed within a capitalist circuit. The local products that had been sufficiently valuable to be the objects of precolonial interregional trade, were only irregularly

²⁷ An alternative and perhaps more dynamic term would be 'ideological (state) apparatuses', in a tradition going back to Gramsci, and especially Althusser (1976).

drawn within the capitalist circuit. Such petty African trade as there was, was drawn under state control by the introduction of trade and peddler licenses. Promotion of

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cash crops (maize, and formerly rice) was only seriously undertaken from the 1950s on. Before that time, a Lozi representative chief in the district (he afterwards became the Lozi Paramount Chief), ingratiated himself with the colonial government by vigorously promoting the collection of wild latex, a strategic resource during the Second World War (Caplan 1970); these rubber campaigns, however, soon came to an end. No other direct exploitation of natural resources took place. Beyond the district's southern boundaries very extensive exploitation of timber forests was undertaken, which even warranted the construction of a railway branch; but in the district itself this only meant the creation, relatively nearby, of a very limited capitalist labour market.

The major influence of the colonial state upon the district's natural resources was not active exploitation, but the closing of huge areas for human habitation, gathering and hunting. The country's main national park was created in the eastern part of the district. This concession to international conservatism and the sportsmanship among colonial civil servants had a tremendous impact. It caused the forced resettlement of scores of villages, hitherto largely relying on hunting and gathering, to parts of the district that were more densely populated, and that had a poorer forest ecology and soils. Local hunters saw their richest and best-known hunting grounds closed. Also outside the restricted areas, hunting and the felling of trees was subject to licensing – which meant two streams of extraction: one of license fees, and (as these were seldom paid) a probably more voluminous one of fines.

Moreover, the total absence of human habitation and hunting in the game reserves seems to have led to a rapid proliferation of tsetse fly, which negatively affected the human and cattle population in the eastern part of the district.²⁸ Also gathering was affected, both by the creation of restricted forest areas, and by the state's restrictions on the movements of villages. Thus one could no longer move away from the more densely populated valleys, where certain forest products (firewood, grass for thatching) are however increasingly scarce. Village resettlement campaigns, undertaken after Independence, have a similar effect, and thus combine with the 'free market forces' that compel a population increasingly participating in capitalism, to stay near the roads that connect the local periphery with distant markets. All this results in the mounting land scarcity noted above.

In still another way did the existence of the colonial state have an important effect on the district's natural resources. *The colonial state, of course,*

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monopolised violence. This not only put a halt to the competition between local princes with their following, and made possible their definite subjugation to the much resented Lozi administration, – it also meant that the local population could not effectively ward off the many thousands of Angolan immigrants who crossed the border from the 1920s on. Kaoma district is separated from the Angolan border by the Lozi mainlands. Refusing to accommodate the Angolan immigrants (mainly Luvale) in their own areas, the Lozi, backed by the colonial state, allocated to them parts of Kaoma district. In later years, also increasing numbers of Lozi would themselves

²⁸ In the 1940s and 1950s, the remainder of considerable cattle herds (which derived from Tonga and Ila raids, or from Lozi royal gifts, shortly before 1900), became greatly depleted by tsetse fly, and they eventually disappeared as they were bought by cattle traders who are alleged to have paid one bicycle for each head of cattle.

move from their mainlands to Kaoma district. This encroachment not only infuriated the original inhabitants and drove home their powerlessness – the much more effective (in local Nkoya eyes: positively rash) Luvale methods of gathering, hunting, fishing and subsistence agriculture (*cf.* White 1956) resulted in rapid expansion which further reduced the productive viability of the local population.

The results of this complex of state influences on the district were manifold. Pre-existing branches of production were either completely redefined (the trade-and-tribute mode of production) or very substantially weakened (hunting, gathering, fishing, subsistence agriculture).

This weakening made them less resistant to the penetration of capitalist elements. As we have seen, all these branches have acquired partial but unmistakable capitalist features: the separation between labour and means of production, and the emergence of labour as a commodity, paid for in cash. But these capitalist features do not simply reflect alterations in the rural relations of production at the village level. Where does the cash come from that increasingly dominates the local branches of production? Where do the products go to that are extracted in exchange for cash? Introduction of capitalist features in the rural relations of production means that the entire district is drawn within a capitalist mode of production encompassing the whole of Central Africa, and indeed almost the whole world. The minor introduction of capitalist elements at the village level can only be understood against the background of the total district being assigned a role, however insignificant, in the capitalist world system.

The main extraction, then, effected by the colonial state in Kaoma district, was in fact the extraction of labour. Initially some of this labour was used locally, for the colonial state itself: porters were indispensable for a district administration in an area where, until the 1930s, most district travelling by administrators was on foot or on bicycle. Far more important, however, was the role of the colonial state in creating the conditions for the local populations' participation, as migrants, in capitalist relations of production located outside the district.

While Marxist analyses of labour migration all agree as to the structural, 'forced', causes of labour migration (interpreting individual migrants' con-

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scious strategies as mere surface phenomena), they have stressed a number of different processes as the main underlying explanation:

- the competition between food crops and cash crops, which (due to price manipulation in the centre) is tipped in favour of the latter – so that the starving farmers have to flock to the towns in order to sell their labour (Amin 1973);
- the systematic underpayment of migrant labour, so that rural societies increasingly relying on consumption of manufactured commodities become involved in a spiral movement of ever increasing necessity to sell labour (Arrighi 1973);
- and finally the exploitative device of the subsistence wages, by which the capitalist mode of production makes use of labour, the reproduction of which it has left to the non-capitalist mode(s) of production (Meillassoux 1975).

Kaoma district seems to offer, in addition to these factors, yet a further variant which outside Africa has been recognized as the 'backwash effect':

- capitalism, through the colonial or post-colonial state, effects and erodes pre-existing branches of production to such an extent that the local rural population is no longer capable of effectively reproducing itself through the

latter – therefore part of this population is forced to participate, outside its original area of residence, in capitalist relations of production, whilst at the same time local relations of production assume capitalist features to a more or less limited extent.²⁹

However, the colonial state's contribution to labour migration was more specific than just creating the wider conditions implied in an eroded local society. Without the state, migrancy from Kaoma district would have been impossible. The state issued and protected the money in which the capitalist relations of production, such as between migrants and their employers, were to be both expressed and concealed. It imposed taxes which formed an extra impetus for wage labour. It provided identity cards, which identified the bearer as a manipulable, powerless and exploitable outsider and non-national at the distant places of capitalist work, and on which spells of migrant labour and taxes paid were duly marked. It provided the roads, airfields, rest camps, implicitly even brothels, along which the migrants could move to and from their places of work. It provided the legal means by which contractual relations between migrants, recruiting agencies and employers were fixed and could be enforced in court and by the police – practically always in the interest of the employers and recruiting agencies. The state

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even set, and on request might generously increase, an annual quota of the number of recruits that were allowed to leave a particular area. Returns on migrant labour form a recurrent item in the district officers' Annual Reports, and betray a keen official interest in the matter.

Thus the colonial state acted as an instrument for spreading and reproducing the relations of production that define capitalism. It is noteworthy that the state expenditure towards this goal was, during much of the colonial period, covered neither by hut tax revenues, nor indeed by taxation of the various capitalist enterprises in the territory of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Thus the vicariously exploitative nature of the state remained largely hidden from its own officers, who with a free conscience could pursue the lofty goals of Native Administration, and who themselves often regretted 'the exodus of able-bodied men' from the countryside.

In this respect the administrators' frame of mind was similar that of European missionaries in the district, who, given the governments' slowness in providing schools except near the courts of some senior Lozi representative chiefs, were the first to introduce Western education in the area.

Christian missions can be seen as the ideological counterpart of capitalism. They endeavour to disengage people, as individuals, from their non-Christian kin, and offer a morality in which grace and salvation feature as spiritual commodities, monopolised by the church but available to the converts provided the latter show, in their symbolic beliefs and actions, a similar unquestioning submission as capitalist relations of production demand of the worker in the production process. As formal organisations characterised by hierarchy, competition between equals, a fixed patterning in space and time of the lives of those involved, churches (in Africa in much the same way as in the North Atlantic region) constitute excellent contexts to prepare people for the modern capitalist production process which is likewise carried out within formal organizations. Moreover, the mission school reproduces not just capitalist attitudes

²⁹ The extent to which reproduction of the local social formation is more and more problematic can be seen, *e.g.*, from the fact that the ethnic groups that constitute the 19th-century of the area (foremost the Nkoya people) now the lowest reported fertility in Zambia, according to a fertility survey undertaken by the Central Statistical Office and published in the 1970s (Central Statistical Office *n.d.*).

but in a more direct way contributes to the reproduction of labour by the teaching of basic skills (literacy, basic technology) which made for the ready and profitable insertion of migrants in the capitalist mode of production. Finally, this ideological and cognitive preparation for functioning in capitalist settings in itself weakens the non-capitalist branches of production in which the labour of the pupils would have been involved had they not been at school.³⁰

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This is all the more relevant in an area like Kaoma district, where in the 1970s most primary school pupils appeared to be older than ten, and where primary school leavers were often well advanced towards twenty. Instead of the direct extraction of their surplus by local elders (which extraction they were beginning to perceive beneath the crumbling ideology of historical branches of production encroached upon by capitalism), these youngsters eagerly submitted (under the promise of future gratification in the earthly or heavenly New Society) to an anticipatory extraction process, learning (at their own expense) to be proletarians – and often cultivating the teachers' and missionaries' gardens into the bargain!³¹

Not all graduates from schools and Bible courses, however, became directly involved in capitalist relations of production, as migrants and proletarians. Some were absorbed in the mission and school circuits themselves, thus reproducing the ideological institutions whose direct link with capitalism I have made clear. A larger number were absorbed by the state, to serve in the political superstructure through which capitalism maintains and reproduces itself, and penetrates other branches of production. From a Weberian perspective, it might be interesting to trace all the different self-perceptions, evaluations, aspirations, consumption patterns, of the social actors involved, the internal bureaucratic organization through which their positions are connected, and the various legitimation devices through which their roles in the process of surplus extraction is commonly concealed – in sociology as well as in society itself. It is likely that a more penetrating analysis of the superstructural institutions and their workings would reveal a more subtle relationship between these superstructural specialists, and capitalism. For in so far as the state, the intellectuals and the churches endeavour to assert a relative autonomy vis-à-vis infrastruc-

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tural conditions, they cannot just act as handmaidens of the capitalists, but also have to link up, in some way, with workers' interests, and even with remnants of the pre-

³⁰ This is an important point in Kaoma district up to the 1970s, where truancy was very high, and where especially the Nkoya people were considered to value and further their ethnic music and dance above formal education. Many elders preferred to have their young boys accompany them on hunting and fishing trips or, in cattle areas, to be herd-boys. Girls at the age of 8 or 9 already made a considerable contribution to household production. Many parents did not see the point of a school education and were particularly resentful of any physical work that children were made to do at school.

³¹ Another youth response to social change in the 1970s I treated (1975) in a paper entitled 'Labour migration and the generation conflict': attracted by a similar, vaguely millennial inspiration, and perceiving the emergence of a local branch of the, then, national ruling party (Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party – UNIP – which had brought the country to Independence in 1964), young male villagers from families closely affiliated to the Kahare royal family, partly on the basis on their vicarious UNIP association organised a public meeting and turned this into an anti-witchcraft trial by challenging Chief Kahare and his courtiers of abducting and killing children in order to make the usual royal longevity medicine out of the latter's brains. With historic irony, the leader of that ephemeral and strictly local youth movement twenty years later, when the same Chief Kahare died, loyally met his death (most probably by a form of auto-hypnosis, possibly also at the hand of other courtiers) in order to serve his king in the afterlife – in a manner strongly reminiscent of Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975)..

capitalist branches of productions and with the various diffuse classes implied therein. However, whatever the possible gains of Weberian refinements to our analysis, from the Marxist perspective tentatively adopted in the present paper the overall class position of these African teachers, church workers, and civil servants is fairly clear: they are the agents through which capitalism reproduces itself on the superstructural level, and for their livelihood they share in the fruits of such extraction processes as capitalist relations of production entail.

The impact of the colonial state in Kaoma district resulted both in labour migration and in the partial reshaping of rural relations of production in a capitalist direction. The population was launched on the path of proletarianisation and peasantisation. On the superstructural level, this process resulted in a large number of ideological and organisational responses that might be interpreted as manifestations of class struggle, and that are just as diffuse and off-the-mark as one would expect in the situation when class struggle is not (yet) fought at the infrastructural level, in other words does not yet directly and consciously challenge relations of production.

Class struggle in Kaoma district in the colonial period was initially channelled, in the best tradition of false consciousness, along lines of ethnic militancy. Here the state-protected and allegedly arrogant Lozi formed a ready target. Especially when the formal creation of a Lozi senior representative chief for the whole district, in the 1930s, shattered local hopes among chiefs and courtiers to enter into direct negotiations with the colonial state as fully-fledged Native Authorities (rather than as a second-rate 'Lozi subject tribe'), a bitter anti-Lozi movement was launched in the area. Nineteenth-century political conditions had not been conducive to the emergence, locally, of a strong ethnic identity encompassing larger areas than the individual kingdoms, which originally (before the emergence of the trade-and-tribute mode of production) may have coincided with clan areas, and which alternatively rose and declined in their struggles for hegemony. However, once the district was defined as a distinct unit within the state administration, local ethnic awareness could develop, in antagonism against the Lozi, in the course of the struggle for such token prizes as the administration had to offer: control of the Native Treasure; roads; schools; hospitals; recognition and re-institution of local royal titles, etc. It was only then that the 'Nkoya' ethnic label gained practical political significance. When the massive Watchtower movement – an important context of social and ideological change through South Central and Southern Africa from the 1920s on – reached Kaoma district in the 1930s, its local protagonists combined an eschatological message of sorcery eradication and the New Society, with explicit challenges of the Lozi Paramount Chief. The Lozi neo-traditional

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administration was allowed to severely punish these preachers; the chiefs who had supported the latter were reprimanded. Antagonism against the Lozi has continued to dominate political thinking in the district until decades after Independence (1964), concealing more fundamental structural causes of the local predicament; this misfired ethnic response ranged from the shunning of marital ties with Lozi residing in the district, to the emergence of several short-lived Nkoya political associations, the backing of the opposition party after Independence (the Lozi controlled regional nominations for office in the ruling party), remonstrations against the local preponderance of Lozi teachers and the use of the Lozi language in schools, factionalism within the district rural council, and even massive support for my own research from 1972 on.

Ethnicity is thus the major local response³², on the superstructural level, to the new structures of surplus extraction which capitalism imposed upon the district. Ironically, rather than living up to the stereotype of divisiveness which political scientists have habitually imposed on African ethnic expressions, ethnicity by the 1980s turned into a powerful force for the further incorporation of the Nkoya segment of the Kaoma population into capitalist structures (van Binsbergen 1986, 1995). The awareness of Lozi domination, coupled with general ill-feedings vis-à-vis the state that had deprived them of hunting and gathering opportunities without offering compensation in the form of modern amenities, and that had blocked the road South to labour migration, had caused, among the Nkoya towards the 1970s, a rather general withdrawal from political activities, and apathy vis-à-vis the cultivation of cash crops. When however, about the same time, internal conflict within the ruling party seriously weakened the strength of the Lozi in national politics, opportunities became brighter for regional politicians. They managed to secure one seat in parliament and some in the district rural council. Relying on close kinship ties with the local chiefs, and strongly identifying as Nkoya, these regional politicians managed to gain considerable support and trust in the area. Driving home the message that improvement of local conditions would be within reach if only people were prepared to participate (as the politicians themselves were doing) in the structures created by the state and the party, and to join in the cash-crop programmes advocated by them, these politicians contributed to a considerable rise in cash crop production, and to a marked lessening of anti-government feelings. In the process they were assisted by a small number of local teachers, agricultural demonstrators, staff at the agricultural schemes etc., who likewise identified as Nkoya. Against the background of the local perception of Nkoya history since the mid-19th century as an unbroken

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chain of humiliation and expropriation, these leaders have considerable appeal as examples of what the peasants may yet stand to gain from the state and capitalism. These leaders are not just active in politics, but also deeply involved in cash-crop production themselves. For this purpose they enjoy state credit facilities (as politicians some of them have a hand in the allocation of such credits to promising farmers) and make full use of the opportunities offered by the district's agricultural schemes, employing agricultural labour, operating a store, etc. Having found their own niche in capitalist production and in the state that promotes and maintains such production, they induce their fellow-Nkoya to follow them in that direction.

In the late 1970s, the latter did not seem to have much of an option. From today's perspective (2012) it would appear as if the most significant aspect of class formation in Kaoma district over the past quarter century has been the rise of this new, state-orientated and capitalist Nkoya elite – many of whose members are now found in the cities along the line of rail rather than in Kaoma district, where they only scoop down for rushed visits during election times.

4. Conclusion: Classes in Kaoma district, 1800-1978

In order to discuss classes and class formation in Kaoma district, Zambia, I have started out with a conceptual exercise, which links these key concepts to the concept of mode of production. Adopting the view that classes define themselves in class

³² There have been others, such as prophetic and sorcery eradication movements in the 1930s and late 1950s, cf. Reynolds 1963; van Binsbergen 1981.

struggle, and that this struggle is given in the nature of the relations of production which, in a specific linkage with production factors, define a mode of production, I then set out to describe, one by one, the various modes of production (and their constituent branches) that Kaoma district has known since about 1800 CE. For each mode of production, with its constituent branches, I have attempted to identify the fundamental extraction processes by which surplus value produced by the labour of one class, is expropriated by the antagonist class.

The picture emerging is kaleidoscopic and dazzling. As far as I can see, a strict application of the definitional framework with which I started, would reveal every mode or branch of production in Kaoma district, throughout the two centuries under study, to consist of the superimposed class struggle between *a number of pairs of classes*: elders versus younger men; men versus women; royals versus slaves; middlemen versus peasants, etc. The same pairs of classes would feature again and again in the various modes and branches of production; *e.g.* that of younger men versus elders seems to occur almost anywhere. What is more, the direction of the extraction process between these classes is not the same everywhere: *e.g.* in some modes and branches of production it is the women who extract, but in most it is, on the contrary, the women's own surplus which is being extracted.

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In the light of Occam's Razor we would frown at this multiplicity of branches of production. Yet I hope to have shown that it is unsatisfactory to simply call the whole of non-capitalist production in Kaoma district, past and present, by the habitual term of 'domestic mode of production'. Neither can the specific capitalist features which each proposed branch of production has developed, be adequately dealt with unless we analyse these branches as specific, distinct elements, that should not be allowed to submerge completely into the composite production system that constitutes the local social formation.

Classic social anthropology has, in such terms as integration, reciprocity, or homeostasis, stressing ultimate unity of the local social formation, a partial solution for the complex enmeshing of productive and exploitative relations that emerges from my description of Kaoma district, particularly in its pre-capitalist manifestations. It is a solution that stresses the local participants' *ideology*; it is ideology that enables the local participants to dissimulate the underlying contradictions of their society, as ultimately based on labour and surplus extraction – but these material processes need to be highlighted at least as much as the local ideology that conceals them. But in doing just that, we are not only finding classes in pre-capitalist African society (an unpopular idea), but even the number of such classes risks to exceed the already very high number of branches of production proposed.

One way out might be the following. Perhaps it is one of the characteristics of a society like that of 19th-century Kaoma district, that class-like elements in the relations of production tend to be counterbalanced and dissipated, across the various modes and branches of production which that society comprises. *Salient, recognisable class relations would then only exist in those cases where the same pair of classes stands in the same extraction relation throughout the majority of the modes / branches of production involved* – so that these class relations reinforce each other, and in fact constitute the major form of articulation between these modes / branches of production. Viewed in this way, pre-capitalist society in Kaoma district may still be said to have had classes, but only a few: elders, younger men, women, nobles and slaves.

Across the various schools and fashions, social science has become accustomed to conceive of classes as more or less permanent, endogamous, broad subsets of society,

membership of which is determined by social action and not by such non-ascriptive attributes as age and sex. Slaves and nobles would be acceptable classes according to this tradition, women and elders would not. I submit that objections of this kind rely too heavily on the type of class structure that prevails in North Atlantic industrial society. And even so, women in industrial society have been increasingly recognized as a class (as a necessary step in countering the exploitation and exclusion to which they have been subjected for centuries), and so might be elderly people – not by virtue of somatic or demographic attributes, but

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because of their common role in the capitalist production process, more precisely: their being relegated to the periphery of that process. In pre-capitalist societies, means of production and technical knowledge tend to be of such relatively limited scope that the individual labour power of humans is still a major datum in production; under those conditions, why should sex and age differences not be crucial in the relations of production? The fact that, in the course of years, young men will become elders may seem to indicate that the boundaries between those two classes are blurred, that they are not ‘real’ classes. (‘For do workers ever automatically become capitalists, or serfs, masters?’) A man’s individual career is however not the best point of departure for an understanding of class relations – despite the massive volume of non-Marxist sociology which deals with inter- and intra-generational, individual social mobility. In Kaoma district during most of the past two centuries, wherever elders and younger men were jointly involved in production, extraction of surplus was taking place that lend a class dimension to their interaction. The fact that, as years go by, the complementary class position stipulated by these relations of production finds new incumbents, is commonplace and does not alter these relations. Finally, we ought to realise that the transition from young man to elder is really not all that automatic. The alternative is that younger men succumb under the burden of their class position: they take the great risks of big game hunting, their food is less adequate than that of elders, and they are continually the object of the elders’ material and magical struggle for power and survival. Under such conditions, a young man’s survival would be synonymous to successful class struggle. This is certainly how, even in the 1970s, youths in Kaoma district saw their situation themselves: as a constant struggle to keep alive under the attacks from the elders, which they conceptualise, however, not in terms of surplus extraction but of *sorcery*. Every death of an elder was an occasion for rejoice among the young men, and they would dig an elder’s grave joyfully singing. Being dependent upon the elders because of the latter’s control of land, female labour, the household branch of production where food is processed, and major means of production such as guns, young men considered their attachment to any particular elder as temporary. No matter how close the kinship tie with him, they were always prepared to leave him and settle with some other elder if such a move promised to improve their conditions of living both materially and in terms of spiritually security, in other words, protection against sorcery. Much mobility between the villages goes back to this mechanism, and so does some of the rural-urban mobility.

Slaves and nobles as classes emerged only with the trade-and-tribute mode of production, probably a handful centuries ago. No longer were class relations contained within the scope of the production process in the village; this newly emerging mode of production marked the incorporation,

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still at a limited scale, of Kaoma district in interregional processes of extraction. It was only then that classes in the conventional social-science sense became manifest, under the impact of an extraction process orientated towards the outside. The early

princely states maintained the conditions for this extraction process. They were the expression of the class relations on which this process hinged. The colonial state, with the neo-traditional Lozi state as an important aid, stepped into this extraction structure, reshaped it in capitalist terms, weakened pre-existing branches of production, and thus, through the historical developments I have attempted to trace, made Kaoma district entirely subservient to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. The extraction of labour through migrancy, cash crops, game meat and fish in Kaoma district as elsewhere in rural Central Africa, supplied the workers / labour power for capitalist production in the towns, mines and modern farms elsewhere, and made it possible (directly; or indirectly, *i.e.* through releasing food elsewhere in rural areas) to feed this labour force. In the same way, it contributed towards the reproduction of those superstructural requirements (the state, education, Christianity) through which capitalism is underpinned and reproduced.

Both indirectly, through the effects of the colonial state, and directly, through their incorporation in capitalist markets, the rural relations of production acquired capitalist elements: wage labour, separation between producers and means of production, and circulation of products as commodities. Alongside these elements, non-capitalist aspects managed to survive to some extent. For this reason class relations in Kaoma district continued to display the diffuse nature discussed above. Moreover, many of those deeply involved in the extraction process, as employers of labour (gun owners, villagers who have their gardens cultivated of their houses built, farmers at or near the agricultural schemes) and/or as superstructural agents (*i.e.*, as chiefs and courtiers, politicians, teachers, church leaders, civil servants), were themselves also involved in productive labour and thus exposed to surplus extraction. Given this complexity, easy formulas and sharp distinctions are not going to help us very much. Perhaps a similar danger attends characterising – as I have done myself, above – the district's class by such a heavy, emotionally-charged term as *exploitation*. Such a term would moreover carry the suggestion that relations between chief and politician on the one hand, and peasants on the other, are characterised by direct and purposeful extraction – whereas in fact such extraction as has existed, has been indirect and unconscious, mediated through the state, and couched in terms of ethnic (politicians) or feudal (chiefs), loyalty, responsibility, and vocation.

Yet it is useful to distinguish shades of class position in this context, even though all positions that are not wholly those of peasant, have much in

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common. If we are to distinguish between them, I suggest that the following are important dimensions:

– *extraction of surplus: directly or indirectly.* The gun owners and the farmers directly extract the surplus value created by those working for them. The teachers and the chiefs, in those specific capacities at least (they are likely to be gun owners and farmers as well), may ultimately benefit from extraction of a local surplus, but this escapes perception in so far as such extraction is mediated through the state – these civil servants and state-recognised office-bearers receive an income based as much on surpluses extracted elsewhere within Zambia, and the world at large.

– *The dependence upon participation in capitalism.* The villager, even if he occasionally employs labour, and sells crops and meat, is still for a considerable part (although no longer entirely) capable of physically providing his own subsistence. This is hardly the case for the politician, the teacher, the civil servant.

– *The security offered by one's specific relation towards the overall extraction process.* The risks of the poacher, of the villager who invests money (of the order of magnitude of a year's monetary income) in seeds, fertiliser and labour, in order to produce literally a few bags of maize for the payment of which he may have to wait half a year, are of a higher order of magnitude than those of civil servants.

- *A breeding effect: to what extent does one's specific relation vis-à-vis the overall extraction process, enable one to engage, as capitalist, in direct processes of local extraction?* Chiefs³³ and courtiers, with their modest state incomes, are capable of employing wage labour for hunting or agriculture; moreover, they display high marital mobility and/or polygamy (through which they can increase their surplus extraction from female labour). Civil servants build farms, and upon retirement operate stores; politicians secure plots in the agricultural schemes, credit facilities, and likewise engage in trading. Most of this is beyond the means of most villagers, even those who, as elders, are formally engaged in class relations where they get the upper hand of women and young men.³⁴

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From the viewpoint of an overall process of surplus extraction, there is something to be said for viewing all these various positions (chiefs and courtiers, politicians, civil servants, church leaders, traders, and in some respects even elders) as pertaining to one class. Their class position does not consist in being the ultimate exploiters of the rural population,³⁵ but in maintaining the conditions through which capitalist extraction can be realised. As a class, chiefs and courtiers, politicians, civil servants, church leaders, traders, perhaps even elders, in the 1970s seemed to move towards ever increasing exclusive dependence upon capitalist relations of production – and from the 2012 perspective we can only confirm that the process of class formation they represent has, if anything, intensified in the last few decades. In the 1970s there were still great similarities between those participating in direct extraction and those who, through the state, were sheltered from such directness; the breeding effect of their class position caused many of them to end up in pretty much the same kind of extraction structures. In 1978 I predicted that in the long run this fundamental contradiction, between direct and indirect extraction, might further develop, and that the two positions would grow apart – leading to a class of petty capitalist entrepreneurs on the one hand, of salaried civil servants on the other; this prediction has not come true, and the two positions have continued to merge – with this proviso that now part of this class resides in the town on the line of rail and only occasionally

³³ In the colonial era, new incumbents of chieftainship (always subject to state recognition through being gazetted in the *Government Gazette*) tended to have had an earlier career as petty civil servants, e.g. *boma* (district capital) messengers or railway employees.

³⁴ I hesitate to include patterns of expenditure and consumption in this comparison. These are manifestations of class relations, and should not, as in the Weberian tradition, be taken as primary. Nor does it seem meaningful to compare the various classes in terms of annual monetary income, converting subsistence production in prices. While such exercises may have a limited meaning in a social context that is completely determined by capitalism, they would be out of place in the present context, where the partial survival of non-capitalist modes / branches of production precisely means that not all labour and not all products constitute *commodities*.

³⁵ These 'ultimate exploiters', at a global scale, I have not here attempted to identify – perhaps for intuitive fear of implicating the North Atlantic middle classes to which I myself largely belong.

visits Kaoma district.

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Table 1: Summary of modes of production, and their constituting branches of production, in Kaoma district since 1800 [pp. 230-231]

mode of production	branch of production	resources	producers	means of production	technical knowledge & skills	central relation of exploitation (producers/extractors)	products
village mode of production	household branch of production	forest: unfinished products from gathering, hunting etc.	women, young men, slaves	cooking pot, axe, knife, mats, sieves, mortar, pestle, vessels	considerable	women/men; labourers/owners; slaves/nobles; men/women; young women/elder women	food ready for consumption (meals)
	gathering	communal forest	women, children, slaves	hoe, axe, receptacles	generally available	women, children/men; slaves/nobles; women/others	firewood, fruits, honey, wax, vegetables, medicine, building materials
	hunting ³⁶	communal forest	mature men	spear, bow & arrow, knife; since about 1850: gun, gunpowder	very specialized and relatively rare	mature men/others; hunters/ gun owners; hunters/ chief; women/others; hunters, gun owners/middlemen	fresh and dried meat; tusks, skins, medicine
	fishing	pools and streams owned by either the local group or a royal title	men (women)	fishing spears, traps, dams	generally available	men/women, children; fishermen/chief; women/others; fishermen/middlemen	fresh and dried fish
	agriculture	forest gardens and riverside gardens; seeds controlled by elders but privately owned (?)	women, men	hoe, axe	generally available	women/men; young men/elders; slaves/nobles	staples (maize, cassava, kaffircorn, millet) and vegetable relishes
	animal husbandry	cattle, dambos	children, young men	fenced kraal	considerably specialized	herdsman/owner	skins, meat
petty commodity mode of production	petty commodity production ³⁷	forest, distant car breaker's plants	men, women	blacksmithing tools, woodcarving tools	very specialized	young men/elders; local community/court	hoes, spears, tinder boxes, mats
tributary mode of production	trade and tribute branch of production ³⁸	any	local community	from the local community: see above; from the entrepreneurs/princes: arms, charms (?)	from local community: varies with product; from entrepreneurs: knowledge of markets, languages, contacts etc	young women/elder women (beer); local community/court; lesser court/ distant more powerful court (e.g. Lozi, Ndebele)	hoes, mats, honey, wax, mead (honey beer), skins, tusks, fish (beer?)

³⁶ Hunting forms a dominant theme in male culture; people from this area excelled in hunting and were renowned for it over much of what today is called Western & Central Zambia.

³⁷ In principle includes the circulation of humans as commodities (slaves), and the techniques of capturing and marketing slaves.

³⁸ Slavery never formed a distinct branch of production but, as a source of labour and as a relation of production, was a continuous aspect of the gathering, hunting, fishing, subsistence agriculture and trade-and-tribute branches of production. Formal abolition of slavery affected these branches of production, particularly the trade-and-tribute mode. Slavery was generally couched in a kinship idiom, was strongly domestic, and implied extensive legal and marital rights for the slave, including the opportunity to succeed to high office. From about 1850-1920 slavery took on forms of commoditization.

capitalist mode of production	(a) capitalist agriculture ³⁹	forest (seeds...?)	women, young men	(hybrid seeds), fertilizer, hoe; very occasionally: scotch cart, plow, plowing oxen, tractor	specialized knowledge required, as taught by government agencies	labourers/ farmers; peasants/middlemen, peasants/ urban consumers (via marketing board, state, farming schemes); women, young men/ senior relatives	maize, ground-nuts, occasionally cassava
	(b) labour migration	worker's labour power; raw materials	young men	industrial plants, human bodies	specialized knowledge an advantage as taught by government agencies and on-the-job	labourers/ industrialists	industrial and mining products

³⁹ Commercialization as from early 20th century; strongly encouraged as from 1950s, and particularly as from late 1960s.

Table 2. Indications of food production in the proto-Bantu reconstructed lexicon according to Guthrie (1967-1971 and n.d.) and to Meeussen (1980 and n.d.) [p. 240]

Guthrie	* <i>-bòdì</i> 9/10, goat (G185); * <i>-bÓnÒ</i> , castor-oil bean, plant (G166); * <i>-càkod-</i> , to weed (G263); * <i>-còpà</i> 9/10, calabash bottle (G425); * <i>-dèm-</i> , to cultivate (G568); * <i>-gÒmbÈ</i> 9/10, cattle (G849); * <i>-kòà</i> 7/8, yam (G1166); * <i>-kókó</i> 9/10, chicken (G1203); * <i>-kòndá</i> 9/10, domestic pigeon (G1221); * <i>-kòndÈ</i> (10), edible beans (G1222); * <i>-kÒndÈ</i> 5/6, banana (G1144); * <i>-pòNg-</i> , to winnow by fanning (G1601).
Meeussen	* <i>-baga</i> 7, 11, cattle pen , 4.5.; * <i>-bembì</i> LH 9, pigeon , 3.1.; * <i>-bibì</i> 5, 3, heap of weeds/wood , 2.2.; * <i>-bida</i> 6, millet, sorghum, kaffir-corn ; * <i>-bingá</i> 7,9, pigeon , 2.1.; * <i>-bu,</i> <i>n-</i> , harvest, reap , 7.1.; * <i>-bono</i> 3, castor oil plant , 5.1.; * <i>-búdi,</i> 9, goat , 6.3.; * <i>-bungu</i> 3, chaff , 6.2.; * <i>-cakud-</i> , weed , 5.1.; * <i>-cambi,</i> , group, herd , 4.2.; * <i>-cambo</i> 9, enclosure for cattle , 4.2.; * <i>-cangi,</i> 9, chicken , 4.3.; * <i>-cangu</i> 6, corn sp. , 4.3.; * <i>-cic-</i> , winnow , 2.3.; * <i>-cimb-</i> , dig, plant , 2.1.; * <i>-cinj-</i> , pound grain , 2.1.; * <i>-congo</i> 5, banana , 5.2.; * <i>-cupa</i> 9, 7, calabash, milk jar , 6.5.; * <i>-degi,</i> 14, sorghum , 3.3.; * <i>-dengi</i> (3; 5; 7; 9), pumpkin , 3.2.; * <i>-dú,</i> <i>g-</i> , cook, stir (pap), paddle , 7.2.; * <i>-diki,</i> -, lead to pasture , 2.2.; * <i>-dim-</i> L, cultivate , 2.1.; * <i>-dimbud-</i> L, eat the first fruits (at harvest time) , 2.1.; * <i>-dúngú</i> 9, pepper , 6.2.; * <i>-gadi</i> 14, pap , 4.4.; * <i>-genge</i> , sugar cane , 3.2.; * <i>-gimbi</i> 14, millet-beer , 2.1.; * <i>-gu,</i> <i>n-</i> , harvest, reap , 7.1.; * <i>-guba</i> , sugar cane , 6.2.; * <i>-gubu</i> 3., calabash (esp. musical instrument made of) , 6.2.; * <i>-gudube</i> L 9, pig , 6.3.; * <i>-gunda</i> L 3, cultivated ground , 6.2.; * <i>-gungu</i> 3., pumpkin , 6.2.; * <i>-ju,</i> <i>kua</i> ? 9, chicken , 7.2.; * <i>-kú,</i> <i>ba</i> , chicken , 7.1.; * <i>-kókó</i> 9, chicken , 5.4.; * <i>-konde</i> L 5, banana , 5.2.; * <i>-kubi</i> , cooked vegetables , 6.3.; * <i>-kún-</i> , plant (seeds), scrape, sow , 6.1.; * <i>-nu</i> 7, mortar , 6.3.; * <i>-pand-</i> , plant , 4.2.; * <i>-pemba</i> , maize, millet, food , 3.1.; * <i>-pembe</i> 9, goat (general meaning seems to be ‘horn’) , 3.1.; * <i>-pépet-</i> , winnow, clear grain by fanning , 3.3.; * <i>-pida</i> , millet , 2.2.; * <i>-pudi,</i> 5., pumpkin , 6.3.; * <i>-pungu</i> 5, millet , 6.2.; * <i>-tu,</i> 3., meal (flour) , 7.2.; * <i>-tama</i> 3, corn, grain , 4.1.; * <i>-tanga</i> 5 L, melon (pumpkin) , 4.3.; * <i>-tém-o</i> 5, hoe , 3.1.; * <i>-tenda</i> 3, chicken , 3.1.; * <i>-tu,</i> <i>g-</i> H, rear, tame, domesticate, own, possess animals , 7.2.; * <i>-ti,</i> <i>m-</i> /H/, dig, plant (fix vertically into) , 1.1.; * <i>-ti,</i> <i>mb-</i> /L/, thrust into the ground, plant , 1.1.; * <i>-tooke</i> L, banana , 5.4.; * <i>-ti,</i> <i>ti,</i> -, winnow , 1.3.; * <i>-tu,</i> <i>ta</i> ? 1, cattle herd , 7.2.; * <i>-unga</i> 14, flour, powder, meal , 6.2.