



Ethnic construction in central province of Zambia: A study of the Kaonde-Ila People of Mumbwa District

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Abstract

Most studies on Zambia's ethnic groups like that of Mainga on the Luyi and that of Andrew Roberts and Mushindo on the Bemba document the ethnic identities of these groups purely as they came from the Luba -Lunda empire in present day Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.). Few studies have explored new linguistic, cultural, customary and socio-political characteristics resulting from a process of intermarriages and intermingling leading to the emergence of a new ethnic groups in Zambia. Thus, this study takes on this challenge by examining the meeting in Mumbwa, a rural district in the Central Province of Zambia of some sections of the Kaonde who migrated from the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C) briefly settled in North-Western Province of Zambia and some Ila groups from Namwala in Southern Province which resulted into a new ethnic group called Kaonde-Ila. A qualitative and descriptive design was followed in this study in which data for the study was first collected from the University of Zambia Main Library where documents such as Colonial Reports, books and journal articles were consulted and analysed. These sources provided a broad view on the origins and evolution of the Kaonde-Ila people of Mumbwa district. Secondly data was collected from the National Archives of Zambia where documents notably, District Note Books, Annual Reports and Tour Reports which contained vital information on the Kaonde-Ila where consulted and analysed. The final part of data collection involved field work in Mumbwa district where different categories of people from Kaonde-Ila Royal Establishments were interviewed. The results in this study suggest that through a process of intermarriages and intermingling by these Kaonde and Ila groups, new linguistic, cultural, customary and socio-political characteristics evolved that came to constitute a new Kaonde-Ila society. The study further indicates that, the environmental pattern of Mumbwa district in Central Zambia provided an area of economic transition thereby enforcing a system of economic activities with which the Kaonde-Ila were identified.

Keywords: Ethnic, Ethnicity, Ethnic Construction, migration, immigration, linguistic, customary and cultural transformation and political organisation

1. Introduction

The term 'ethnic' has been employed in scholarly sources for a group of people with a consciousness of its own identity, usually symbolised by its own self-given name and commonality of territory, language, customs, history, and socio-political organisation. Awareness of a separate ethnic identity may also arise from migrations, association in a new locality, circumstances of conquest or some combination of these. Other conquering groups may also become submerged by a powerful local people or even acquire the language of the people they dominate. Large ethnic groups may conquer small ones, bring them under their political control and transmit part of their culture to the conquered subjects ^[1]. In the context of the above given circumstances, the meeting of the Kaonde and the Ila in Mumbwa evolved into a new Kaonde-Ila ethnic group who now inhabit the central, south-western and north-western parts of Mumbwa district under chiefs Mumba, Kaindu, Chibuluma Moono and Mulendema.

Mumbwa district is one of the seven administrative centres in Central Province of Zambia. The district covers the western part of Central Province bordering Kaoma in Western Province, the newly created Itzhi-tezhi district in the South-West, Namwala in Southern Province, Lusaka in

the east, Kasempa in the North-Western Province and Chibombo to the north-east ^[2].

Establishment of Kaonde-Ila Chieftainships in Mumbwa District.

Documenting the socio-political history of Central Zambia, Roberts records that it is characterised not by centralisation but by fission and migrations ^[3]. We can thus suggest that fission, migrations and possibly hunting expeditions, slave raiding and colonizing parties were some of the factors that led to the formation and evolution of the *Kaonde-Ila* chieftainships in Mumbwa district.

Chief Mumba

Chief Mumba's country surrounds the Boma and his own village is about seven kilometres away to the north. He is thus the nearest of the *Kaonde-Ila* chiefs to the Boma and Mumbwa township ^[4]. According to one tradition, in about 1870 a group of Kaonde people under Chonamungo specialising in elephant hunting left Kola in present day Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C) pursuing elephants until they reached Kasempa. In pursuit of these elephants they crossed the Kafue River and reached Mumbwa caves.

¹ Fredrick Barth (1970), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, p.10.

² N.A.Z District Note Book (Vol 1) 1929, p1

³ Andrew Roberts, *A History of Zambia*, (London: Heinemann, 1976), p91

⁴ N.A.Z Sec2/637 Mumbwa Tour Reports 1933-39

When they arrived at the Mumbwa caves, this group of elephant hunters under Chonamuningo found the Bushmen living there. Upon seeing tall people, the Bushmen fled the area and headed for the south ^[5]. During the 1890s in an attempt to establish a Native Authority, the colonialists came to this area and asked for a chief. They were led to the Mumbwa caves where they found people organized under the leadership of Chonamuningo. The colonialists appointed Chonamuningo as chief and proceeded in naming the area "Mumbwa" (corrupted from Mumba) ^[6].

Chonamuningo the first Mumba is buried at the Mumbwa caves. When the Kaonde moved into Mumbwa area under Chonamuningo, the first Mumba, they were just a small group until about the 1880s when there was a large immigration from the Kaonde country. By that time, the first Mumba had acquired cattle from the Ila and his people had intermarried with them ^[7]. This had set the foundation and evolution of the *Kaonde-Ila* in the area.

Chief Kaindu

On leaving Mumbwa Boma and travelling north one immediately leaves Mumba's area and enters that of chief Kaindu. The Kaonde under chief Kaindu were at the beginning of the eighteenth century Lunda natives living under Mwatayambo whose kingdom was then divided against itself with the result that a section of his people of the Balonga clan under four nephews born from Nonyi sister of a reigning chief whose first born was Kapijimpanga, followed by Nyoka, Mushima and Kamutombang'ombe (later known as Kaindu) being the last born. These four were driven south into the Luba country in what is now Kasempa district and adjacent to an area there occupied by Mwene Kahari (the Mashasha chief now of Mankoya-Kaoma). Mwene Kahari received the visitors amicably and gave Kapijimpanga his daughter to marry ^[8].

After a time the friendly relations between the Mashasha of Mwene Kahari and the Kaonde under Kapijimpanga were broken by a quarrel between the two chiefs over a question of wearing the *impande* shell (an emblem of authority introduced by the Kaonde) ^[9]. Mwene Kahari fought with Kapijimpanga and made things so uncomfortable for him that Kapijimpanga sent one Kabimbi to search for new country for him to settle in and make gardens in preparation for migration. Kabimbi found Mumba living about eight kilometres west of where Mumbwa Boma now is and from him obtained permission to settle in the unoccupied country between him (Mumba) and the Kafue River in the north. Kabimbi settled on the left side of the Nansenga and was soon followed by Kapijimpanga and Kamutombang'ombe and their people who by now called themselves Bakaonde ^[10].

Soon after he had established his people south of the Kafue where they came into contact and fought the Baila on and off for years, Kapijimpanga returned north of the Kafue and succeeded in driving his old enemy Mwene Kahari south to where he now is on the headwaters of the Luena river in

Kaoma district. Kapijimpanga did not return south after his triumph but left his relation Kamutombang'ombe to be chief of the people he had brought down. Kamutombang'ombe had by now adopted the title of Kaindu ^[11]. Kaindu became the hereditary title of the new chieftainship. The Kaonde under Kaindu intermarried freely with the Baila as the Kaonde now crossed the Kafue into Ila country which then extended further and was more densely populated than it is now.

Chief Chibuluma

Chief Chibuluma's area is along the Mumbwa-Namwala Road and goes as far as the Nansenga River. The chieftainship was originally established by Mwanza an Ila from the *Bambala* "people of the north" "who settled in an area called Lwanda also known as Lukumba. This area was north of Namwala district. Mwanza came to this place with his brother Mayaba who became the second chief after the death of Mwanza. Mayaba was succeeded by Namwenda. After Namwenda came Chinenga, then Chilele and the sixth chief was Shakupelenga. All these were *Bena Mpongo* (the goat's clan) who were the rightful owners of the chieftainship ^[12].

The hereditary title of 'Chibuluma is associated with an event that occurred during the reign of Chilele, the fifth chief. Chilele sent his father-in-law who was accompanied by four slaves to go and buy an extra slave in Kaonde country under chief Ngabwe in the north. He gave them three *impandes* (emblems of chief ship) and one *Isalu ulya Nzuzhi* (a serval skin). They went straight to chief Ngabwe in Kaonde land to go and exchange for a slave using these items which they were given. Chief Ngabwe gave them a slave by the name of Nsumbula. The slave picked his belongings and carried them on a *mukuli* (carrier that is put on somebody's shoulders with the loads placed on both sides). They went with this slave and delivered him to chief Chilele ^[13].

This slave, a bachelor grew up in Chilele's home and while serving as a slave he got married to woman by the name of Mulende. When Shakupelenga, the successor to Chilele died, Shamukana a woman vested with authority to sanction the appointment of the next chief appointed Nsumbula to act as chief on behalf of Mambwe Chipanzha the rightful heir to the throne who was still working in South Africa. In the process of Nsumbula's reign in acting capacity, he named himself as 'Chibuluma' meaning *wabuluma bwami bwabeni* (one who has roared for other people's chieftainship) ^[14].

It is noticeable that the first chiefs were known by their own names whereas ever since Nsumbula took over all the subsequent chiefs took the title 'Chibuluma' in addition to their names. Upon the ascendancy of Nsumbula to the throne some village headmen left Lwanda and went to settle in Makunku near Namwala and others went to Moono. The majority of the village headmen remained under Nsumbula in what had now become known as Chibuluma.

Under the 1950 Declaration which resulted in the creation of the Lutale Resettlement Scheme (L.R.S) to make separate Game Management Areas (G.M.A) in the Kafue Nationa

⁵ Interview with Dowell Chilimboyi, Mumbwa, Zambia, 2nd January, 2012. Dowell Chilimboyi was a brother to Allan Chilimboyi who was a clamant of the disputed Mumba chieftainship in 2002.

⁶ Interview with Chilimboyi, 2nd January, 2012.

⁷ N.A.Z. Sec2/637 Mumbwa Tour Reports, 1933-39

⁸ Smith and Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p26

⁹ Smith and Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p26.

¹⁰ Interview with Bill Mukabe, Mumbwa, Zambia, 10th September, 2011.

¹¹ Smith and Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p26

¹² Interview with Robert Chipanzha, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January, 2012. Robert Chipanzha is a son to Mambwe Chimpanzha who was the rightful heir to the throne after the death of Shakupelenga.

¹³ Interview with Zachariah Mwambwa, Mumbwa, Zambia, 8th January, 2012.

¹⁴ Interview with Chipanzha, 8th January, 2011

Park and to avoid a lot of tsetse fly infections, all the villages under chief Chibuluma which were west of the Lutale river and south of the designated resettlement area were moved to the east of the Lutale river. The operation was completed by the middle of 1955. In order to extend the “fly” free belt more people under chief Chibuluma were further moved eastwards and settled on both sides of the Mumbwa-Namwala road where they live to date ^[15]. Besides the ascendancy of a Kaonde to the Chibuluma throne, the resettlement of some of the people under Chibuluma further east by the government through the Lutale Resettlement Scheme brought these people into proximity with the Kaonde of chief Mumba. This situation provided a conducive environment for the formation and evolution of the *Kaonde-Ila* as a new ethnic group.

Chief Moono

Moono’s area extends along the Chibila valley from a point about 8 kilometres south of Mumbwa Boma, southwards along the Chibila valley as far as the Mumbwa-Namwala boundary. All except two villages, Mululi and Mbabalwa are situated on the edge of the Chibila dambo or on the tributary dambos and the majority are within one kilometre of the Chibila stream and have gardens within the dambo ^[16].

The origin of this chieftainship is also associated with a section of the Ila people north of Namwala district known as *Bambala* “people of the north” who left an area known as Nakanjoli and came to settle in Lwanda in an area in which they asked chief Chilele (fifth in line of what came to be the Chibuluma dynasty) for a place to settle ^[17]. Chilele instructed Mwanashendi to demarcate a boundary for them to settle in. Other relatives started coming and the population grew. Originally all this area belonged to Mwanza founder of the Chibuluma chieftainship ^[18].

Basically, these people were great fishermen who caught fish in the Chibila stream using Miono (plural for Moono). Moono was a fish trap in the form of a conical basket made of light sticks and bark-string. It was elongated and with an inside trapdoor called *buvwazhi* ^[19]. The fish entering the wide-open end found themselves unable to come out. The miono were arranged in numbers at the confluence of the Chibila and other streams. It is from this fish trap that the name Moono is derived ^[20].

The people under chief Moono suffered greatly in the latter part of the nineteenth century for they were raided not only by the Kololo and Ndebele but also by the Chikunda from the south. Later, the Mbwela attacked them and the Lenje raided them as recently as about 1910 forcing Moono to take refuge with chief Mumba of the Kaonde. ^[21] Smith and Dale also record that, because of their northern location the people under chief Moono were somewhat intermixed with their neighbours the Kaonde ^[22].

Chief Mulendema.

Chief Mulendema’s area is found in the western part of Mumbwa district along Lusaka-Mongu road. It is bordered

by chief Mumba’s area in the north-east, chief Chibuluma’s area in the south-east and the western part of the chiefdom is in the Kafue National Park bordering Kaoma in Western Province ^[23]. Most of the population in Mulendema’s chiefdom is settled along the Lutale stream. The chiefdom was founded by Munyama, a prominent Ila hunter of big game who came from the west in the Batenge area of Namwala district.

Munyama the head of this chiefly family and all the rulers that came after him were known by this title of Munyama. The name ‘Mulendema’ is associated with the fifth born son of Munyama who had great skill in singing and drumming. Mulendema was the term used to describe the good quality of the sound that he produced when beating the drums and the good sound that his voice produced when singing. When this chief’s son became chief, he kept the name of Mulendema and when the colonialists came, they also maintained the title of Mulendema ^[24].

The intrusion of Kaonde influence in this area which was in former times mostly Ila occurred during the reign of Kabambakuku Munyama who married a Kaonde woman from the northern Kaonde country as one of his wives. Later on, Kabambakuku Munyama’s Kaonde wife brought a brother by the name of Lukataika Kalinso so that he could come and stay with her at the matrimonial home. Kabambakuku Munyama employed his brother-in-law Lukataika Kalinso as a Kapasu (Native Authority policeman) at the palace ^[25]. As a Kapasu, Kalinso carried out his duties so diligently to the point of being so highly regarded by the D.C at the Boma.

The choice of heir to the throne was between the two sons of Kabambakuku Munyama namely, Matabula Mwangwa and Chivwema. Matabula Mwangwa died while his father was still alive. Suspecting that his brother had been bewitched, Chivwema left the area for Sala in Shakumbila fearing that he would die in the same manner that his brother had died ^[26]. This situation created a vacuum in terms of who was to succeed Kabambakuku Munyama when he died in 1940. R.C. Denning the D.C gave a three-month ultimatum in which a successor to the throne had to be found ^[27].

The successor to the throne could not be easily found and the three months ultimatum given by the D.C elapsed. In order to facilitate development and continuity in the chiefdom, the D.C made a decision which was not to be questioned by anybody in which Lukataika Kalinso (the Kapasu) was appointed chief ^[28]. The members of the royal family were incensed with the decision made by the D.C of appointing Lukataika Kalinso as chief who was a foreigner from Kaonde country and wanted him killed. The D.C protected Kalinso by keeping him at the Boma for some time. In protest the members of the royal family destroyed all the Native Authority and treasury documents at the palace by throwing them into the Lutale River ^[29]. The D.C sent messengers to go and punish these members of the royal family by way of whipping them using sjamboks. The members of the royal family and a number of villages

¹⁵ N.A.Z. SEC2/644 Mumbwa Tour Reports, 1954-55.

¹⁶ N.A.Z. Sec2/645 Mumbwa Tour Report No3 of 1955.

¹⁷ Interview with Mwambwa, 6th January, 2012.

¹⁸ Interview with John Mweemba, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January, 2012.

¹⁹ Smith and Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p163

²⁰ Interview with Norah Luubi, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January, 2012.

²¹ W.V. Brelsford, *Tribes of Zambia*, (Lusaka: Government Printers, 1965) p57.

²² Smith and Dale, *The Ila Speaking Peoples*, p27.

²³ N.A.Z. SEC2/645 Mumbwa Tour Report No 8 of 1955.

²⁴ Interview with Chivwema, 15th January, 2012.

²⁵ Interview with John Shanzemba, Mumbwa, Zambia, 17th January, 2012.

²⁶ Interview with Chivwema, 15 January, 2012.

²⁷ N.A.Z. SEC2/639 Mumbwa Tour Report No 6 1940

²⁸ Interview with Maybin Chivwema, Mumbwa, Zambia, 18th January, 2012.

²⁹ Interview with Envans Munyama, Mumbwa, Zambia, 19th January, 2012.

comprising their supporters fled to the south in the border area with Namwala.

Lukutaika Kalinso was taken back to Mulendema and began ruling as chief under the protection of government messengers provided by the D.C. When Kalinso became chief, the Kaonde began migrating in large numbers to go and settle in Mulendema's area because their own person had now become chief [30]. Kaonde villages in Mulendema became a majority and the Munyama Ila villages had become a minority.

By the late 1930s the state policies shifted towards creating bigger and allegedly more efficient Native Authorities. T.F. Stanford, Acting Chief Secretary in 1939, informed the Provincial Commissioners in the territory that, 'the present policy is to abolish petty subordinate authorities at suitable opportunities with the object of building up strong central authorities [31]. As a consequence of this, the influx of the Kaonde in Mulendema's area reached the highest peak.

The Kaonde-Ila: Language, Culture, Customs, Traditions and Socio-Political Organisation

Jan Peter argues that, an ethnic group is understood to designate a population with a consciousness of its own identity usually symbolized by a self-given name and a commonality of territory, customs, language, history and social political organization [32]. In this context therefore, some Kaonde groups who moved from the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C) briefly settled in North-Western Province's districts of Solwezi and Kasempa and some Ila groups from Namwala areas in Southern Province of Zambia settled in Mumbwa district where they acquired a new language and evolved into a new cultural, customary, traditional and social political organization that came to be called *Kaonde-Ila* by which they are identified today as an ethnic group.

Kaonde-Ila Language

Fredrik Barth records that language is one of the features that people look for and exhibit to show identity [33]. Similarly, Harry Hoijer explains that language like many other cultural phenomena cannot be observed or studied directly. He argues that just as we can describe a method of making baskets only by observing the actions of those who are making them, so we can describe a language by observing the speech behaviour of those who use the language [34]. In this case therefore, it is noticeable that the *Kaonde-Ila* language spoken in Mumbwa is a mixture or aggregate of the original Kaonde language spoken in Solwezi and Kasempa and the original Ila language spoken in Namwala in Southern Province. Smith and Dale record this transformation. They note that the Ila proper called the people of Mumbwa *balumbu* because of the language they spoke which was dialectically and linguistically different

from theirs [35]

Furthermore, during his tour, R.I. Cunningham the District Commissioner for Mumbwa in 1956 also summed up the *Kaonde-Ila* transformation and commented as follows:

An interesting light was thrown on the breakdown of ethnic identity by the fact that many of the people in the southern part of Mulendema and Chibuluma's areas did not know to which ethnic group they belonged. These people were in former times Ila, but they had so intermarried and intermingled with the Kaonde that all individual features of the two ethnic groups seem to have disappeared. Even chief Mulendema was not sure and opted for *Kaonde-Ila*. *Kaonde-Ila* apparently is thought to be the language spoken from the fact that the *Kaonde-Ila* treasury which was founded in 1937 brought together the various Kaonde and Ila chiefs [36].

The classification of the *Kaonde-Ila* as members of a new ethnic group using the language bearing aspect is based on their exhibiting particular traits of a new language. Although there are some similarities due to the fact that *Kaonde-Ila* language is descended from the two common ancestral Kaonde and Ila languages, listening to their individual acts of speech and utterances it is obvious that utterances of *Kaonde-Ila* differ in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the typical Kaonde spoken in Kasempa and Solwezi and the typical Ila spoken in Namwala [37]. There was an ongoing influx of new words in the *Kaonde-Ila* vocabulary. *Kaonde-Ila* borrowed words from the original Kaonde and Ila which were combined and recycled to create new ones whilst losing some old words.

The sociolinguist Jennifer Coates describes linguistic change as occurring in the context of linguistic heterogeneity. She explains that linguistic change can be said to have taken place when a new linguistic form used by some sub-group within a speech community is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as a norm. [38]. In this case therefore, the changes that occurred in this society as a result of the two groups coming together also influenced language.

In the illustration below Smith, Dale and Melland give us original Kaonde and Ila names for game and other animals and Charles Mwambi gives us examples of how either an Ila or Kaonde name replaced the other [39] in the *Kaonde-Ila* transformation:

| Kaonde | Ila | Kaonde-Ila | English |
|--------|---------|------------|-----------|
| Mbizhi | Chibize | Chibize | Zebra |
| Kiba | Inzhiba | Chiba | Ring dove |

In their family relationships or when addressing an elderly person, most ethnic groups in Zambia use 'Ba'. The Ba-ila proper never used 'Ba' when addressing elders [40]. Because of this Smith and Dale record that the Ba-ila were often

³⁰ Interview with Londwe Chipwemuka, Mumbwa, Zambia, 17 th January, 2012.

³¹ T.F. Stanford to Provincial Commissioners, Northern Rhodesia, 25 November, 1939. N.A.Z. SEC2/310 Chiefs Recognition Central Province, 1937-1946.

³² Jan Peter (1969), 'Ethnic and Cultural Differentiation,' in Fredrik Barth (ed) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, (London: George Allen and Unwin.), p.14

³³ Barth, 'The Social Organization of Culture,' in F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, p24

³⁴ Harry Hoijer (1971), 'Language and Writing,' in Harry. Shapiro (ed) *Man, Culture and Society*, (London: Oxford University Press.), p274

³⁵ Edwin. W. Smith and Andrew M. Dale(1968), *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* Vol 1, (New York: University Books.) p.27

³⁶ N.A.Z. SEC2/646 Mumbwa Tour Report No 11 of 1956.

³⁷ Interview with Phillip Yalukanda, Solwezi, Zambia, 5th September,2011. Being from Solwezi, Yalukanda spoke proudly of himself as a pure Kaonde

³⁸ Jennifer Coates (1993), *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account Gender Differences in Language*, (London: Longman.), p. 228

³⁹ Edwin W. Smith and Andrew M. Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 150. Also see Frank H. Melland, *In Witch Bound-Africa* (1922) (London: Seeley, Service and Company, p.268. Oral interview with Charles Mwambi, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January,2012.

⁴⁰ Interview with Charles Mwambi, 6th January, 2011.

thought of by the outsiders as being rude and yet they had scrupulous regard for laws of politeness^[41]. Possibly as a result of Kaonde influence, the examples below show that the *Kaonde-Ila* in Mumbwa adopted the title ‘Ba’ as a plural of respect:

| Kaonde | Ila | Kaonde-Ila | English |
|-----------|---------|------------|-----------|
| Bata | Ta | Baata | My father |
| Bama | Ma | Baama | My mother |
| Bamwinsho | Achisha | Bachisha | My uncle |

Another sociolinguist William Labov, following Jennifer Coates records that change in pronunciation results from social interactions and processes^[42]. In this regard, the other aspect worth noting is the change that occurred in the prefix of nouns or verbs that began with ‘K’ in Kaonde which were changed in *Kaonde-Ila* to start ‘C’^[43] as in the few examples given below:

| Kaonde | Ila | Kaonde-Ila | English |
|---------|----------|------------|---------------|
| Kipushi | Ipushi | Chipushi | Pumpkin |
| Kipuku | Chipuku | Chipuku | Ghost |
| Kibi | Chibyabi | Chibi | Something bad |

As can be seen from the few given examples, the change in the prefix starting with ‘K’ in Kaonde to that starting with ‘C’ in *Kaonde-Ila* reflects Ila influence on those Kaondes who settled in Mumbwa. Through interactions between the Kaonde and the Ila new words and sayings were picked and integrated into speech. As a result of a new cultural environment, groups of speakers reflected new places, situations and objects in their language.

Kaonde-Ila Culture, Customs and Traditions

When the Ila proper found in Namwala district are compared to the *Kaonde-Ila* living in Mumbwa district it is further noticeable that the linguistic change in these groups of the Kaonde and the Ila who settled in Mumbwa was part and parcel of cultural, customary and traditional change taken as a whole. Edmund Leach argues that every ethnic group adopts new values and ideas, pursue different patterns of life and institutionalise different forms of behaviour when faced with different opportunities offered in a different environment.^[44] In this context therefore, there seems to be a number of overt cultural, customary and traditional forms of the *Kaonde-Ila* which can be considered as new traits exhibiting the effects of immigration, ecology and a history of adaptation to a new social environment.

During social and cultural entertainment, the Ba-ila proper used only one drum. The Kaonde introduced the use of three drums in social and cultural dances. The Kaonde were also renowned for their good dancing skills in *machacha*, originally a Kaonde dance performed by women only for the girls’ initiation ceremony. Because of their prowess in dancing, the Ila began to hire the Kaonde to dance at their

initiation ceremonies^[45]. The *Kaonde-Ila* in Mumbwa also adopted the use of three drums in their social and cultural dances. The *machacha* dance also became prominent among the *Kaonde-Ila* but this time it was performed more in songs that exhibited Ila characteristics.

Another cultural transformation took place in *kuzemba*, a funeral dance in the original Ila custom in which the *namalwa* (friction and the *kayanda* drum were used). The men rushed up and down the village with spears stabbing into the air. The women also rushed about uttering shrill cries. It was now interesting to note that in Mumbwa district when rushing up and down, women swung small branches in a sweeping motion from the hands^[46].

Socio-Political Organization of the Kaonde-Ila

The *Kaonde-Ila* were not merely or necessarily a new ethnic group based on the occupation of an exclusive new territory in Mumbwa district but they also developed into an ethnic boundary with a new socio-political organization that canalized their social life. This new socio-political organization which was developed among the *Kaonde-Ila* also became a means by which they were identified as members of the same ethnic group as this implied the sharing of criteria of evaluation and judgment.

A major noticeable effect of immigration in *Kaonde-Ila* society is in the system of inheritance, the practice of passing on property, titles, debts, rights and obligations upon the death of an individual. Traditionally, the Kaonde and the Ila had different methods of descent and inheritance. The Ila proper favoured descent by patrilineal, a system in which the choice of heir was made among the sons, brothers and male grandchildren of the deceased while the Kaonde followed a system based on the principle of matrilineal descent in which succession was by nephews, the male children of the sister to the deceased^[47].

In *Kaonde-Ila* society, candidates for inheritance did not appear to be restricted by any particular degree of relationship to the deceased either by patrilineal or matrilineal. It mostly tended to be a mixture of the two and it was also confined to the descendants and collaterals of the deceased^[48]. In the selection of heir to the deceased it was mostly with the elderly who were most nearly related to the deceased with whom the final choice rested. The tendency in the case of headmen was to select an intelligent young man who would avoid trouble with the administration^[49]. The main consideration in the selection was not the benefit of the rightful individual but the good of the clan. Therefore, unsociable and inhospitable persons were regarded with suspicion. Likewise, an adulterer who instead of conserving the inheritance of the clan mismanaged it or a quarrelsome one who would cause the clan to split up instead of consolidating it, such were also looked upon with disfavour^[50].

The lack of a properly regulated system of descent and inheritance brought about weak leadership especially among headmen and chiefs. This at times led to instability and

⁴¹ Smith and Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p361.
⁴² William Labov, *Principles of Linguistic Change*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p273.
⁴³ Interview with Charles Mwambi, 6th January, 2012.
⁴⁴ Edmund Leach (1989), ‘Tribal Ethnography,’ in Elizabeth Tonkin, Marion Macdonald and Malcolm Chapman (eds), *History and Ethnicity*,(London: Rout ledge,), p. 23.

⁴⁵ Interview with Denwit Chibutu, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January, 2012. Denwit Chibutu is Headman Mukuwanshiku in chief Moono’s area and a member of the Palace Committee.
⁴⁶ N.A.Z Mumbwa District Notebook Vol 1 1929
⁴⁷ N.A.Z. Mumbwa District Notebook, Vol 1, 1929.
⁴⁸ Interview with Elina Ng’anza, Mumbwa, Zambia, 4th January, 2012. Elina Ng’anza is a sister to current chief Mulendema, John Shazemba.
⁴⁹ Interview with Ng’anza, 4th January, 2012.
⁵⁰ Interview with Elina Ng’anza, 4th January, 2012.

prolonged succession disputes. With the imposition of colonial rule in about 1900, this further created a problem for the colonial authorities who insisted on dealing with Africans as belonging to ethnic units under the authority of chiefs^[51]. This problem of selecting a successor resulting from a mixed system of descent and inheritance was noted by H. Nigel Barry, District Commissioner in 1947 on a tour of a small Kaonde-Ila Native Authority of Kabulwebulwe in the neighbourhood of Mulendema's chiefdom and he recorded thus:

Chief Kabulwebulwe is now definitely at the age of retirement and must vacate office. He has been chief for many years and appears to be almost seventy years old. It was obviously a matter which people had been discussing. His people are a mixed race of which 55% are the Ba-ila and about 45% are Kaonde. The Ila section favour descent to a son. The Kaonde favour the matrilineal system. It is therefore, no easy matter to assist the authority and the people to choose a successor^[52].

To date the compromised tradition of the *Kaonde-Ila* kinship system continues to cause instability in most chieftainships. For example, before his death, the eighth chief Mumba Kasapato brought in the Ila tradition by subjecting his son Bobolo to deputize him ignoring his nephews in accordance with the Kaonde tradition^[53]. As a result, upon his death, the son became a successor at the expense of the nephews. In this case succession to the throne became patrilineal. When Bobolo the ninth Mumba died those from the paternal side thought that this would be the trend and as such they contended for the throne leading to a dispute that lasted for five years from 2002 to 2007 a period in which the successor to the throne could not easily be agreed upon^[54].

The *Kaonde-Ila* economy

The environment is important to human existence. It provides the resources with which to achieve development. The life pattern of every society has been very much influenced and dictated by the environment in which that particular society exists^[55]. The geographical position of Mumbwa district in Central Province provided an area of transition for the *Kaonde-Ila* between the main economic areas of Namwala in Southern Province and Solwezi and Kasempa in North-Western Province.

Kaonde-Ila Agriculture

The Ba-ila proper were subsistence cultivators as well as pastoralists. As cultivators they grew crops such as sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes and ground nuts. The axe-hoe technology was used for cultivation. The choice of which crops to grow depended to a large extent on the type of soil prevailing in the areas around Namwala district^[56]. Cultivation remained on subsistence level. In times of short

falls, the Ila traded their cattle for grains from the Tonga. Holub's observation was that, "the Ila do not grow as much grain as they need and buy most of it from Matoka and Mankoya in exchange for lechwe skin and cattle^[57]."

On the other hand, coming from the forest areas, the Kaonde practiced shifting cultivation and chitemene farming (cut and burn)^[58]. Trees were cut down over an area and felled trees were arranged in circles around termite hills and on broad strips of land, left to dry and burnt just before the rainy season. Ash from the burnt trees, which made the soils more fertile, was scuffled up with a hoe by both men and women and children aged between eight and fifteen years. Women and their daughters sparsely planted maize seeds with a hoe, before broadcasting sorghum seeds throughout the burnt area and covering them lightly with soil using a hoe. Pumpkin, gourd and bean seed were sparsely planted and covered with a hoe in or around the sorghum garden (*majimi*). The garden was usually fenced off by men and their sons to keep away the wild animals such as pigs and hippopotamus. Unburnt land near the sorghum garden was cultivated and planted with sweet potatoes on mounds. Finger millet which was usually used for brewing beer was grown in burnt termite hill areas^[59]. Women and their daughters later weeded and harvested the crops while their husbands and sons hunted wild animals.

Because of the special ecological and environmental circumstances prevailing in Mumbwa district, the *Kaonde-Ila* evolved two systems of agricultural practices. The plateau soils on the higher levels in the wooded areas of Mumbwa district were poor and only able to sustain a two year or three-year cultivation circle before failing off. The *Kaonde-Ila* living in these areas practiced a form of 'chitemene' which appeared to differ in some respects from the method generally practiced in the Northern Province both in the preparation of the plots and the rotation of the crops. The *Kaonde-Ila* in these forest areas practiced a form of *chitemene* in which once an area had been selected, the trees were lopped and the stumps were left standing. The selection of the site did not revolve round the presence of an ant hill as the case was with the Kaonde. In the first year a legume was planted and their after, Kaffir corn, sorghum and maize. Each year, instead of establishing further gardens at some distance from the old, the local practice was to extend the old garden itself^[60]. The method of agricultural practice adopted by the *Kaonde-Ila* possibly as a result of Ila influence was different from that of the Kaonde as the *Kaonde-Ila* did not move on to new grounds when the soil became exhausted.

The central area of the district was well watered with the main water systems being the Lutale River with its tributary the Lukanga and the Chibila with its tributary the Bulungu. In this area, almost without exception, all *Kaonde-Ila* villages made gardens on the fringes of these streams and dambos and these gardens were in most cases cultivated continuously for several years. In these areas, even in a comparatively bad rain fall year, the planting of maize, cassava and other relish crops was conspicuous^[61].

⁵¹ N.A.Z. SEC2/639 Mumbwa and Lusaka Annua Reports, 1936-37

⁵² N.A.Z. SEC2/639 Mumbwa Tour Report No 5 1947

⁵³ Interview with Dowell Chilimboyi, Mumbwa, Zambia, 2nd January, 2012. Dowell Chilimboyi is young brother to the late Allan Chilimboyi who was a claimant to the throne from the paternal side after the death of Kasapato in 2002.

⁵⁴ Interview with Chilimboyi, 2nd January, 2012.

⁵⁵ Swanzie Agnew, 'Environment and History: The Malawian Setting,' in B. Pachai (ed) *The History of Malawi*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1972) p28.

⁵⁶ R. J. Fielder, 'Economic Spheres in Pre-Colonial Ila Society,' *African Social Research*, 28 December, (1979) p18

⁵⁷ E. Holub, *Travels North of the Zambezi 1885-1886*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p12

⁵⁸ Solwezi District Agricultural Office, DA/ SOL/101/2: Livestock General 1958-1982.

⁵⁹ N.A.Z. SEC2 934: Kasempa Tour Reports 1933-1939.

⁶⁰ N.A.Z. SEC2/938 Mumbwa District Tour Report No7 of 1948.

⁶¹ N.A.Z. SEC2/939 Mumbwa District Tour Report No 9 of 1949

The shortage of trees for the making of burnt gardens also caused a revolution in the agricultural methods of the *Kaonde-Ila* living on the fringes of the Kafue Flats. They also adopted some sort of fixed cultivation in response to the special environment prevailing in the area. The District Officer P. E. Aldous on a tour of chief Moono's area in 1949 recorded his experiences:

The area on the edge of the Kafue Flats is an extremely fertile area of the territory and even if the rainfall is scanty, the gardens are kept green and healthy by the flood waters from the Kafue River. Because the gardens are dependable, famine is almost an unknown word. Maize, relish crops like groundnuts and sweet potatoes are grown. Fruit trees like mangoes, paw paws and mulberries are grown in most villages for their fruits and shade^[62].

In a related development, District Commissioner N.S. Night on a tour of Kaindu's area in 1951 also noted this purposive adaptation in *Kaonde-Ila* agricultural methods in response to special environmental conditions and recorded thus:

It is interesting to note that in the former predominantly Kaonde western area only one village was found cutting 'bush' gardens. All villages had gone to dambo and stream cultivation. This was attributed to Ila dambo fringe cultivation. As a result, especially north of the Kafue, village gardens are heavily concentrated along valuable dambos which had perennial running water^[63].

The *Kaonde-Ila* and Animal Rearing

Originally the Kaonde were not a pastoral people because of the presence of tsetse flies in their area of original settlement the North-Western Province of Zambia^[64]. The tsetse fly was found over a wide area in the region. The most affected areas were those which today form the Game Management Areas. On the other hand goats (*bambuzhi*) and pigs (*bankumba*) were found in many parts of the region. Apart from game meat, chickens (*banzolo*) also provided meat to the majority of the indigenous people^[65]. Most of the domesticated animals such as goats, pigs, chickens and pigeons were never slaughtered to satisfy hunger but for special reasons. A chicken for instance, was the most prized reared bird which was eaten at special functions such as marriages, funerals, birth and so on^[66].

Cattle keeping or pastoralism was the most vital aspect of the Ba-ila economy. The Kafue Flats on which the Ba-ila lived, in some areas varied in width from nine to thirty-two kilometres. In the rain season lasting from January to April or May, the flats were several metres deep in water. The floods rose and dispersed some two months after the rains. In the dry season, the flats were used for grazing cattle. The lagoons and the ox-bow channels sunken below the surface of the plain provided cattle with sweet grass during a season when animals in less fortunate areas were desperately searching for nourishment among the drying bush land and vegetation. The plain therefore, supported a higher concentration of cattle^[67]. From the earliest records it is obvious that the history of the Ila has been associated with

cattle ownership. Cattle were highly valued for their social importance. As among the Tswana of Botswana, the possession of cattle was itself a symbol of status in society. A man's wealth was estimated mainly by the size of his herds and one with a large herd was generally respected and was more influential in the affairs of the community^[68].

Given this economic historical background of both the Kaonde and the Ila and the existing ecological and environmental conditions, District Commissioner, N.S. Night recorded the *Kaonde-Ila* living in the south-eastern and south-western parts of Mumbwa district in chiefs Moono and Chibuluma's areas on the margins of the Kafue Flats as having adopted 'cattle keeping' as a major aspect of their economic life^[69].

The adoption of cattle keeping by the *Kaonde-Ila* in this part of the district was also accompanied by a radical change in their measure of value as well. Like cattle with the Ba-ila proper, in the initial Kaonde society, the muzzle-loading gun was the standard of currency. All customary payments in marriage, inheritance, and compensation for adultery claims and all other payments were made in guns. In civil cases in Kasempa, guns were frequently preferred to cash^[70]. In the *Kaonde-Ila* transformation cattle became highly prized for their ritual and symbolic significance. Their practical value was also highly appreciated. Cattle were killed for funerals and puberty ceremonies. The *Kaonde-Ila* also began to use cattle in bride wealth and as fines and awards for damages^[71].

Initially, the Kaonde lived chiefly on kaffir corn largely supplemented by maize, with sweet potatoes, groundnuts, beans lentils, pumpkins and cucumbers. Honey, wild roots and fruits, meat and fish were also used to vary their diet^[72]. As a result of the transformation in which the *Kaonde-Ila* began to keep cattle, fresh milk (*mukupu*) and sour milk (*mabishi*) were added to their diet^[73].

The *Kaonde-Ila*: Hunting, Fishing and Food Gathering

Like any other African ethnic group in Zambia and Central Africa as a whole, hunting became a very important feature of *Kaonde-Ila* economy. Travellers in the region reported numerous and varied game throughout the area. Though rinderpest killed many animals, this had only a temporary depressing effect on game population. Animals recovered quickly from the scourge.

On the flats the lechwe, wildebeest, zebra, buffalo, roan antelope, reedbuck, oribi, sitatunga, leopard, lion and hyena are found in numerous numbers. In the woodland kudu, hartebeest, puku and warthogs are found. In the Kafue River dwell the crocodiles and hippopotamus^[74]. Harding made similar observations in 1900. Near the present Mumbwa Boma he made the following comments:

Game abounds, in fact through our morning's trek we saw

⁶² N.A.Z. SEC2/ Mumbwa District Tour Reports 1949-50

⁶³ N.A.Z. SEC2/643 Mumbwa Tour Report No 4 of 1952

⁶⁴ Interview with Peter Chishimba, Kasempa District Animal Husbandry Officer. Kasempa District Agricultural Office, Kasempa, Zambia, 10th December, 2011.

⁶⁵ Interview with Chishimba, 10th December, 2011.

⁶⁶ Kamwengo, 'Hunting and Conservation in Kasempa, p.38

⁶⁷ Fielder, 'Economic Spheres in Pre-Colonial Ila Society' p.19

⁶⁸ A.C Mushingeh (1981), 'Colonialism and Cattle Marketing in Botswana' M.A dissertation, University of Zambia, p.16

⁶⁹ N.A.Z. Mumbwa District Annual Reports, 1936.

⁷⁰ N.A.Z Kasempa District Notebook, 1951.

⁷¹ R.J. Fielder (1973)), 'The Role of Cattle in the Ila Economy: A Conflict of views on the use Cattle by the Ila on Namwala,' *African Social Research*, 15 (June), p338

⁷² Frank. H. Melland, *In Witch Bound-Africa*, (London: Seeley and Company Limited, 1922), p24.

⁷³ Interview with Timothy Kasemune, Mumbwa, Zambia, 7th January, 2012. Timothy Kasemune who is Senior Headman Kasemune in Mumba's area observed that initially the Kaonde used to regard sour milk as rotten food.

⁷⁴ F.C Selous, *Travel and Adventure in Africa*, (London: Lowland, 1893), p. 211.

more than during the whole period of our trip, every species seems to have selected this spot as a rendezvous. Eland, sable, zebra, hartebeest wildebeest with steinbok, oribi and duiker, all these I saw within three hours march and it was with great reluctance that I left such an ideal sportsman's spot but as we had plenty of meat and not, being on a hunting expedition we passed without killing any^[75].

Living amidst the wealth of game that has been described, the *Kaonde-Ila* became lovers of hunting. They developed good methods of hunting copied from both the Kaonde and the Ila. First was the day to day hunting with dogs and spears, bows and arrows. Second, springing traps were used to kill small animals. Third, trenches were dug for big animals. Fourth was the communal hunt called *chila*, the most famous hunt being the buffalo hunt. *Chila* were most effective for the lechwe^[76]. Since most of the hunting was for subsistence and not for trade, the effect of these methods on the game population was small. Given the population of the time and judging from the traveller's reports there was no noticeable reduction in game^[77].

The Kafue River, its lagoons and tributaries swarmed with fish which the Ba-ila made extensive use of as food. In chief Moono's area, the *Kaonde-Ila* continued to use a fish trap called Moono introduced in the area by the founders of the chiefdom. As pointed out earlier, it is from this fish trap that the chiefdom derived its name. The Moono fish trap was in the form of a conical basket made of light sticks and bark string. It was elongated and with an inside trap door called *buvwazhi*. The fish entering the wide-open door found themselves unable to come out again^[78]. The *miono* were arranged in numbers at the confluence of the Chibila and other streams.

Although fishing was an important resource exploited by the *Kaonde-Ila* especially living on the margins of the Kafue Flats and consumed large quantities of this fish themselves, for trade, the Kafue fishing was largely in the hands of foreigners and always has been^[79]. It was only in Kaindu's area where there was less emphasis on cattle keeping where fishing was well developed. Here fishing rights were much more pronounced than elsewhere. Part of Kaindu's power was acquired by exacting tribute from fishing rights. The development of the fishing industry in Kaindu's area was noted by District Officer D.B Hall on a tour of the area and he recorded thus:

The natives on the Kafue in the northern part of the district are very good in the art of catching and killing fish. This industry was formerly in the hands of the Lozi and other alien natives. These natives are still engaged in it but through the efforts of chief Kaindu, the local natives began to interest themselves. The season which lasts from the end of August to December, a considerable quantity of fish is carried to the copper mines for sale. Small quantities of fish

are disposed of at Mumbwa Township^[80].

Food gathering is the oldest practices by most African societies against famine caused by draught, warfare or slave raiding. It must be mentioned that food gathering was carried out in times of plenty. All human societies have at one time or the other depended on food gathering for sustenance^[81]. Of far more importance, therefore, in the economic life of the *Kaonde-Ila* was the gathering of wild food products which went on throughout the year. Roots and wild greens loomed large in the daily diet and often provided the daily relish. At certain seasons the *Kaonde-Ila* gathered large quantities of wild fruits. For instance, at the beginning of the rains there were both termites and mushrooms to eat^[82].

On the whole the Ila proper had little success in collecting honey. This was not a frequent event as most people among the Ba-ila had a dislike for sweet things. But after having come under the influence of the Kaonde who introduced the use of hives, the *Kaonde-Ila* began to cheerfully ignore stings and got the combs if they were lucky enough to stumble upon a hive full of honey^[83]. The Ba-ila proper also only used to brew beer from millet grains but with the introduction of honey also came *imbote* (honey beer) in the *Kaonde-Ila* transformation. *Imbote* was made of, the honey combs full of young bees mixed with honey and water. The mixture was placed in a narrow-mouthed calabash (*iloba*) and set near a fire or in the sunshine to ferment. Next day it was ready for drinking or if there was need it could be made in the morning and drunk the same evening. It was said to be very intoxicating^[84]. The other forest products which were never eaten by the Ba-ila proper but had now become part of the *Kaonde-Ila* diet in Mumbwa district were caterpillars^[85].

Conclusion

The main argument in this study was that the rich and well-balanced ecosystem of Mumbwa district attracted some Kaonde and Ila groups to settle in the area. These groups came either as colonizing parties or hunting and fishing groups. It has been shown in this study, that *Kaonde-Ila* does not really refer to only one language but to the whole group of the two languages' or dialects broadly alike but differing in many details from typical Kaonde and Ila in terms of pronunciations, grammar and vocabulary. In this case therefore, linguistically, the current *Kaonde-Ila* language in Mumbwa district is descended from the two common ancestral Kaonde and Ila languages and so belong to the same family of languages as each of them seem to have influenced the other. The linguistic change in these groups of the Ila and the Kaonde who settled in Mumbwa was part and parcel of a cultural, customary, traditional and a socio-political organisational change taken as a whole.

⁷⁵ C. Harding (1904), *In Remotest Barotseland*, (London: Hurst and Blackett.), p330

⁷⁶ Interview with Paul Kakumbi, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January, 2012. Paul Kakumbi is a son to Moffat Kakumbi a prominent hunter in chief Moono's area.

⁷⁷ E.K. Jordan, 'Namwala in 1906,' *Northern Rhodesian Journal.*, 2,1 (1953), p26

⁷⁸ Interview with Fanwell Chilenga, Mumbwa Zambia. 6th January, 2012. Fanwell Chilenga is from Katumpa Village situated on the Chibila river in chief Moono. The subjects of Katumpa village were renown fishermen in Chibila river.

⁷⁹ Interview with Chilenga, 6th January, 2012.

⁸⁰ N.A.Z. SEC2/1291 Mumbwa and Lusaka District Annual Reports 1936-37.

⁸¹ B.S Siamwinza (1998), 'A History of Famine in Zambia 1825-1949' PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, p.24.

⁸² Interview with Chilenga, 6th January, 2012.

⁸³ R.J Fielder (1965), 'Social Change Among the Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia: With Particular Reference to their Relations with the Primitive Methodists Mission. M.A dissertation, University of Manchester, p.77

⁸⁴ Smith and Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p140

⁸⁵ Interview with Norah Luubi, Mumbwa, Zambia, 6th January, 2012. Norah Luubi is Headwoman Shikapoli in chief Moono's area. She spoke highly of her Ila background and did not eat caterpillars.

Owing to the changed ecological and environmental circumstances in which the *Kaonde-Ila* found themselves they adopted methods of cultivations which were different in some respects to original Kaonde and Ila way of cultivation. The existence of good pastures on the margins of the Kafue flats encouraged the *Kaonde-Ila* to adopt cattle keeping which could not be done in North-Western Province because of the existence of tsetse flies. *The Kaonde-Ila* also evolved new hunting skills. Originally both the Kaonde and the Ila were only renown for subsistence fishing. But the *Kaonde-Ila* in chief Kaindu's area became commercial fishermen who began supplying fish for sale to the copper belt and Mumbwa Township.

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