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Social landscapes and moving people: the mysterious meaning of migration in western Zambia

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Introduction

Migration, in different forms, has been an important aspect of all wars and major social upheavals. However, an issue that commentators of displacement situations in Africa often overlook is that a large part of the migratory movement in this continent takes place in times of peace and regardless of violent conflict.

This statement does not intend to downplay the disruption and suffering caused by violent conflict, nor the importance of war as a push factor in the decision to migrate. In my view, however, it is not enough to attempt to question the notion of "displacement" by showing that the border between two countries is irrelevant in cultural or ethnic terms. As Malkki (1995) has convincingly demonstrated in the case of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, the feeling of displacement (as a socio-psychological experience more than as a geographical dislocation) can be a very powerful producer of identities and world-views (see also Barrett 1998; Coulter 2001).

This paper argues that contemporary conflicts and refugee movements should be placed in the wider socio-economic and historical context of the regions in which they occur. I thereby follow the lead of other studies in Central Africa (Englund 2002a; Bakewell 2000; Hansen 1977) that highlight the risk, inherent in the labelling of migration flows as "emergencies" or people migrating as "refugees," of mystifying people's motivations and experiences. Rather than bracketing these phenomena together as special categories of human social experience, we as ethnographers (with our traditional interest in local specificity) should be well placed to understand and explain them in terms of the social worlds from which they derive their complexity (Lubkemann 2002:191; Ranger 1994).

Furthermore, I hold that these social worlds need to be appreciated in relation to temporalities – the fluctuating relationships of power, politics, economy and people that shape the histories of particular places (Englund 1999; Englund 2002a). If we manage that task, our descriptions will be less concerned with producing ideas on the convergence between people, culture and territory (see Malkki 1992 for a critique) and more about the different meanings and modalities of migration at different moments in history.

I now turn to the subject matter of this paper and propose four general modes of migration – all relevant to the case I wish to examine, which is the Kalabo district of Zambia's Western Province, close to the border with Angola. In this district, I carried out fieldwork for 11 months between 1998 and 2000 among people living in rural and peri-urban villages, primarily belonging to the Mbunda ethno-linguistic group (language *chimbunda*).[1] The modes I suggest have different causes and reflect

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different life situations, although they overlap. The fact that they overlap to such a degree throughout the lives of individuals is one of the main thrusts of this paper.

- Migration of the *longue durée*: concerns an historical inclination of the region's inhabitants to move and shift location constantly, both seasonally and more permanently.

- Labour migration: between rural areas and the industrial centres of Southern Africa.

- Trade migration: cross-border trade (or within Zambia) for subsistence or for capital generating purposes; mainly carried out by young people.

- Involuntary migration: the prime trigger is armed conflict or the anticipation of violence, whether the outcome is refugee status or not.

Kalabo district and the frontier

Kalabo town is only 60 kilometres away from the Angolan border, along a dirt road. At first sight, the town displays the familiar signs of a rural African backwater in the 21st century, on the margins of the Zambian nation-state (Barrett 2002c). Contributing to this image are the obvious signs of state decay, and with the proximity to the terrible war in Angola the concomitant large number of refugees (approximately 200,000 by the year 2000) that, over the years, fled into Zambian territory.

The image, primarily held by external viewers, of Western Province as "bush", bears significance worth exploring further. First, the notion implies a space devoid of social and political organization, and as such in need of ordering through periodic interventions. It was partly this assumption about the province that, in late 1999, led to massive humanitarian intervention in response to the large influx of refugees from Angola. This was despite a long tradition of self-settlement of Angolans in villages in the area.

Second, the wilderness is, in the cultural imagination of the Central African region, a source of untamed wealth (see De Boeck 1996; De Boeck 1998). The fact that Western Province is one of the main sources of alluvial diamonds from Angola strengthens this view. Perhaps connected to the image of a wilderness, Western Province is still perceived as an important labour reserve (although not nearly as important as it was in the first half of the 20th century) and believed to contain stronger and more resilient manual labourers than any other province.

Western Province, or Barotseland as it used to be called, is dominated politically and culturally by the Lozi, with its Paramount Chief, the Litunga, recognized as the legitimate ruler of the area by many smaller ethnic groups (Gluckman 1959; Prins 1980). Although the groups making up the *Mawiko* category[2], with which Mbunda and several other ethnic groups are associated in Lozi classification, are visible and very active in the economic arena, they are nonetheless seen as latecomers by the

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[2] *Mawiko* means "peoples from the west" in *silozi*.

Lozi. This is because of their persistent ties with populations living on the other side of the border in Angola; people with whom they share languages, historical traditions, kinship systems and customs. In fact, different groups of *Mawiko* have been present in what is today known as Zambia since the beginning of the 19th century and probably before (Cheke Cultural Writers Association 1994:49-52). However, their numbers have been steadily increasing during the latter part of the 20th century, partly due to the protracted war in Angola.

Since the independence movements in Angola took the armed struggle into Moxico and Cuando Cubango provinces in 1966 (Hansen 1977:92), there has been a steady (though spasmodic) flow of displaced people coming into Zambia from Angola. Most of these people have settled in rural villages in Western Province and some in the provincial capital Mongu, although significant numbers have ended up as refugees in the main settlements Meheba (North Western Province), Mayukwayukwa and, more recently, Nangweshi (both in Western Province).[3]

At the end of 1999, for the first time in many years, there was a large simultaneous influx of Angolan refugees into Western Province from Moxico and Cuando Cubango provinces in Angola. These refugees came because of heavy fighting in those parts of Angola. Since then, the situation in Angola has changed radically since a cease-fire agreement was reached on 4 April 2002, following the death (in battle) of UNITA's leader Jonas Savimbi in February of the same year. A substantial number of refugees have started to return to Angola[4] and it is unclear whether large refugee movements, like those that took place during the 1990s, will ever be repeated in the area.

Migration of the longue durée

Firstly, the Lunda-related polities and their expansion between ca. 1600 and 1850 had a great impact on the whole Central African region, informing political as well as cultural spheres of life (McCulloch 1951; Vansina 1966:ch.3 and ch.6). Among the ethnic and linguistic groups in the region that trace their origin to this historical kingdom are e.g. Ndembu (Turner 1957; Turner 1967), Aluund (De Boeck 1994), Luvale (White 1959), Chokwe, Luchazi and Mbunda.[5]

Secondly, this long-term eastward and southward migration has continued during the last hundred years as people have been, first, "…responding to colonial economic policies and incentives" (Hansen 1979:371), and lately, to the Angolan civil war. For

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[3] UNHCR estimated that 218,000 Angolan refugees were living in Zambia at the end of 2001. Out of these, approximately 90,000 were assisted by UNHCR: 40,000 residing in Meheba, 25,000 in Mayukwayukwa, 22,000 in Nangweshi and 2,300 (former combatants) in Ukwimi in Eastern Province (UNHCR 2002a). The rest, which amounts to more than 120,000, are believed to be staying in villages along and close to the border and it is very questionable if the term "refugee" is an apt way of describing them (Bakewell 2000: 107; Hansen 1990).
[4] According to UNHCR (UNHCR 2002b), 70,000 people who had been refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia had returned to Angola by November 2002.
[5] The relationship between linguistic categories, historical polities and social groups is spurious and the southern Congo Basin, with its two historical spheres of influence, the Luba and the Lunda, is no exception. Illuminating discussions on the ethno-genesis of one particular group in Zambia's Western Province, the Nkoya, and their relationship with the Luba-Lunda divide is found in the work of van Binsbergen (1992; 1993).

Zambia's Western Province, this has meant a steady large-scale immigration during the last hundred years from Angola of people belonging to ethno-linguistic groups, which I have labelled *Mawiko*.

Migration has thus been an integral part of the politico-economic system of Central Africa, in which shifting cultivation, seasonal economic activities such as fishing and long-distance trade have been very prominent features of village life.[6] Many researchers in Central Africa, such as Audrey Richards, Charles White and Victor Turner, have described in detail these practices. For instance, the work of Turner on the Ndembu-Lunda has been very successful in communicating an image of village life in this part of Africa as "the scene of an uneasy truce between strangers, only temporarily constructed into community" (van Binsbergen 1998:884).

More recent studies on the border areas between Zambia and Angola have yielded similar results, directing our attention to the transient nature of social arrangements in this part of the world. Hansen (1977; 1979), who conducted fieldwork on the integration of "Angolan refugees" in these societies, in Luvale villages in North Western Province of Zambia, argues that mobility has played an important historical role in the lifestyle of people in this area.

> Throughout the life cycle they are a mobile people – visiting
> relatives; shifting their fields and village sites; travelling on
> long fishing trips or trading missions; and migrating to work
> in the European mines and farms. This constant mobility and
> resettlement has been institutionalized socially and politically.
> (Hansen 1979:370)

It can be surmised that this "mobility lifestyle" contributes to the overall instability of social relationships among Mbunda people and their neighbours, which is also what my research in Kalabo indicates. According to preliminary results from a survey on village demography and history, Mbunda villages in the Lyumba area of Kalabo district had on average relocated three times since their foundation.[7] These relocations do not automatically mean that villages are scattered, but they often lead to new configurations of relatives, as people are very prone to moving.

Overall, the survey confirms the image presented above of essentially unstable households and villages: the divorce rate between spouses is very high (over 80% of first marriages in the 61–80 age group ended in divorce) and the large circulation of village members is evident in the sample. One reason for this is that the rules of succession and inheritance today are even more negotiable than previously and often

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[6] Kopytoff, in a seminal introduction to an edited book on "the reproduction of African traditional societies", argues that we should view sub-Saharan Africa more generally as made up of "frontier societies", whose primary dynamic is found in a propensity to migration (Kopytoff 1986).

[7] The survey (designed by me and carried out by two Mbunda-speaking research assistants) was carried out in ten villages in rural Lyumba area, Kalabo district during May and June 2000. These villages had been founded, seven within the Lyumba area and three outside, between the years 1901 and 1979. The average size of the population was 60 people, with villages containing between 24–122 inhabitants.

lead to struggles for the office of headman. This in turn frequently involves the relocation of dependents without stakes in the issue.[8]

The "mobility lifestyle" becomes evident when considering a kin group in contemporary Zambia with its roots in Kalabo district and before that in Angola; an extended family with its members spread out all over Zambia and Angola in rural as well as urban areas, but who still view each other as kin. The kin group consists of several generations related (mostly matrilaterally) to two sisters from a rural village in eastern Angola. Most of the relatives in, what I choose to call, the first and second generation were actually born in Angola, but moved to the Lyumba area in Zambia in the middle of the 20th century as a result of the war or simply because of the comparatively better social amenities in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia.

Case study

Mushova, belonging to the second descending generation from the "founding sisters", was 32 years when I did my study, unmarried and living with her mother and mother's brother in a compound of Kalabo town. Born in Angola and coming to Zambia at the age of four, her father died when she was young. She grew up in the care of different members of her maternal family, first with her mother's mother in the rural area of Lyumba and eventually in the provincial capital of Mongu. Examining her life story, one is struck by both the degree of mobility and predisposition to seek patronage from different kin members and friends. According to this narrative, Mushova had "shifted" (in Zambian English) a total of 14 times between rural Lyumba, Kalabo town, Mongu, Lusaka, Monze in Southern Province, and back again. Most of the time she stayed with one of three uncles (mother's brothers) or with her older brother, although I counted 10 patrons, to whom she was attached at some stage.

In Mongu, her uncles (at different times) provided her and her brother with education up to grade 8 and money with which to begin a business. However, after failing both to set up a bakery and a sewing business, and after the family scattered, she came back to Kalabo to stay with her mother. Mushova was about to get married in her mid-twenties with an old school friend who promised to marry her after raising the *bionda* (bride wealth) in Lusaka, but he did not stand by his word making a Lusaka girl pregnant and having to marry her instead. After this disappointment, she did not want to get married although she still desired children, which she was planning to get through one of her periodic boyfriends. She claimed that if she failed to get pregnant before the age of 45, she would commit suicide. In the meantime, she contributed to her mother's household and she had voluntarily taken over the

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[8] About half of the villages had headmen (they were all male) who had succeeded their fathers and the other half contained headmen who had succeeded their mothers' brothers, as *chimbunda* (custom) subscribes.

> responsibility for the daughter of one of her sisters. When I met her, she relied (as does the mother's household as a whole) continually on the help of her brother who had permanent employment and was reasonably well off.

Mushova's mobility, according to Pamela Reynolds (1991:137ff), should be seen as more than just haphazard migrations between relatives, since young people in this region, from early childhood, put a lot of conscious effort themselves into the "search for patrons" among their kin network. This entailed Mushova successfully presenting herself as a moral person, according to well-established conventions (*chimbunda*) on the rights and duties at different stages in the life cycle (Barrett 2002a; Barrett 2002b).

However, Mushova's relocations were also the result of her particular relationships with significant relatives, in-laws, and patrons, whose lives in terms of prosperity, household relations, and well being were in a state of constant flux. At times, for example, Mushova was told to move because of arguments with the patron's spouse or simply because of lean periods in the household economy. This reminds us that, on the one hand, kinship ties between groups separated by the national border or by imagined divisions between rural and urban areas, have been either retained or remembered and can be easily activated when the need arises. On the other hand, people in Kalabo do not only experience these kinship ties as opportunities, but very often as constraints on personal ambitions and action, or even as threats to their health and prosperity in the form of magical retribution (cf. Englund 2002b:152f).[9]

Labour migration

Labour migration from rural villages to the rapidly industrializing areas of Central and Southern Africa forms a significant part of the socio-economic history of the region (Binsbergen 1975; cf. Lubkemann 2002). Known in the local vernacular as *chipalo*, it was very prevalent in early and mid-1900s as a method (from the perspective of the rural village) for young men to raise money for bride wealth and adult life.[10]

According to the life histories I collected, a majority of older men (50 years and older) in the district were at some time in their life involved in labour migration. This is supported by accounts from many other parts of Zambia (Moore and Vaughan 1994: chapter 6; Pottier 1988). Many older men I interviewed would remember with joy their experiences of travelling to far off places with the help of the colonial organization WINELA (Witwatersrand Native Labour Association), who recruited

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[9] Gluckman (1967:154) cited a Lozi song to illustrate their ambiguous view on kinship relations:
He who kills me, who will it be but my kinsman;
He who succours me, who will it be but my kinsman.
[10] Workers were employed in three main sectors of wage labour: mining, domestic service, and agriculture (Hansen 1986:19). The effects on rural life in terms of marital relations and subsistence was profound, but also displayed great variation posing challenges to the conventional theorizing on the subject, as recent research on labour migration and mobility in the region has shown (Binsbergen 1975; Englund 2002b; Ferguson 1999; Lubkemann 2002; Moore and Vaughan 1994). Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not allow further elaboration of the effects of labour migration in the rural areas of Western Province.

rural people to work in industrial centres like Johannesburg, Hwange and the Copperbelt.

However, the efficiency of this type of migration rapidly became more and more questionable as transnational labour migration was made illegal after independence in 1964 (Binsbergen 1975:2) and the "crushing contraction of the urban [Copperbelt] economy was shrinking formal sector employment dramatically, and leaving the 'informal' sectors of traders, charcoal dealers, and so on terribly oversaturated" (Ferguson 1999).[11]

Case study

Musando was born in Ninda in Moxico Province, Angola. He came to Zambia together with his mother and his sisters and brothers when he was still a young boy. They settled in his father's brother's village, in which the latter was headman, in Lyumba, Kalabo district. Before he was to start school, his father came to bring him back to Angola, where he stayed until he reached the age of marriage. Since his father had no resources to pay for the bride wealth (*bionda*), which is a prerequisite for marriage in this region, Musando decided that he would leave for Hwange (Wankie) Colliery in what was then Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe). This was in 1949, the year after the flood of Kasoka (*libathi lya Kasoka*) and after seven months in Hwange he returned to Lyumba with "everything he needed": blankets and clothes for his relatives, and more than enough money to buy one head of cattle for the *bionda*. As a newly married man, Musando soon left for new stints of labour migration, each trip lasting about 11 months followed by periods of up to two years in the village at Lyumba. During this period, he worked in Salisbury and in Johannesburg, South Africa (the latter in four separate stretches) in diverse positions such as an agricultural worker and in the mines as a driller's assistant. The pay was good, he was provided with food and lodging by his place of work, and each time he returned to his home area he managed to bring home goods for his relatives. When independence came in 1964 and the road to Johannesburg was closed, he settled down in the village, where he has stayed ever since.

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[11] These tendencies have continued during the last decades so that when, previously, it was possible to travel at will for employment, today queues at the annual recruitment of cane-cutters to Southern Province are teeming with grade 12 graduates with little hope of formal employment. For the rural population the only remaining possibility is this yearly campaign staged by the Nakambala Sugar Estate, which is forced to reject hundreds of disappointed applicants each time. Contrary to the "labour migration generation", contemporary men of marrying age in the rural areas are forced to be "seated in the village" awaiting the time their parents can afford to pay the bride wealth (Barrett 2002a; Barrett 2002b).

The life story of Musando is interesting primarily because of the things that he leaves out, or forgets to mention.[12] One such thing was the return to Angola, in boyhood, with his father, the other was the fact that the village (*limbo*) to which he refers as his home (*kwimbo*), was only established in 1951 and was relocated three times after that. This confirms the suggestion made by Moore and Vaughan (Moore and Vaughan 1994:173) that we should understand the concept of "returning home" as returning to a home area rather than a home village.

Returning home might thus mean to your father's village, mother's village, or any other relative's village and answers will often not reflect shifts in the location of the village, or in the presence (or absence) of residential groups. Consequently, answers to questions about mobility have to be seen in the light of a taken-for-granted "mobility lifestyle", which means that movement does not necessarily equal rupture in the lives of our subjects (Lubkemann 2002:191).

Trade migration

The third mode of migration, like the second, is directly related to livelihood and subsistence options. It concerns mobility in conjunction with trade, which has constituted an important supplement for people in this area for centuries (Hansen 1977:136ff; Vansina 1966). In Kalabo, and Western Province in general, trade has also been a matter of survival for the *Mawiko* people, who have often been disadvantaged by land ownership rights favouring Lozi agriculturalists (Hospes 1999). Notable goods involved in cross-border trade include maize, beans, wild game products and diamonds (from Angola), as well as cattle, groceries and fuel (from Zambia). Today, there are a number of quite successful (and wealthy) businessmen of Mbunda origin in Kalabo, each keeping a large store with ostentatious stock. Some of these businessmen have primarily profited from trade with Angola. Trade is, furthermore, a characteristic of adolescence (*mukwenje* and *mumbanda*) in the Mbunda understanding of the life cycle. At this time you are expected to "move around"; this alludes to both spatial mobility and sexual adventurousness.

The illegal trade in diamonds is probably the most conspicuous, and most controversial (see Global Witness 1998), contemporary expression of the interconnectedness of the people living on both sides of the border between Zambia and war-torn Angola.[13] Connecting numerous countries, networks, and people, all over the world, the trade in alluvial, rough diamonds from war zones such as Angola and Sierra Leone is a striking example of the "second economy" (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000), which often constitutes one of few avenues for young people in Africa to get access to goods and lifestyles associated with modern capitalism (De Boeck 1998).

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[12] The narrative has been edited to fit the context of the paper and is in reality a compound of a longer interview in which many circumstances were revealed only after questions of clarification had been posed.
[13] See also the recent report from the UN Security Council (UNSC 2000) regarding the Angolan rebel movement UNITA and sanction breaking by fellow-African states, which did little to refute allegations of Zambian involvement, especially at the level of individual businessmen.

For many young people in Kalabo, however, trade migration (like labour migration before it) remains a strategy for involvement and advancement in village life; for men, to raise bride wealth and set up a household, for women, to secure the household's livelihood and to assist relatives and neighbours. The historical continuities in these practices are evident, as the following examples show:

Case studies

Maseka, born in Kuthi in Angola in 1901, came to Zambia in 1970 and was a headman in his village in the Yuka area of Kalabo district, when I interviewed him. In his childhood, he recounted that he was first cared for by his parents and he helped by cultivating the land. That is how he became a young man (*mukwenje*). Then he came to the age when he learned how to "play with a woman", i.e. have sexual relations with women. Before marriage, he had first to work and get money to raise the bride wealth and he did so through cultivating maize and beans and selling the produce to the Portuguese (Maputo) traders. He claimed that it took them a great deal of time to raise that money, because at the time money was hard to come by. They worked hard to get a few coins so they could buy some pigs, goats or even a cow. After negotiating with the girl's parents about the size of the *bionda*, he managed to get their permission to marry the woman who is the mother of his first-born son. After his parents passed away, he came to put up his own village in Zambia, using his late father's name.

Shanda, an unmarried man of 28 at the time of my first interview with him, lived in his own house in Mapa compound in Kalabo town with his parents and siblings. His father was born in Zambia but had brothers and close relatives living by the Cuando River in Angola[14]. Shanda was a grade 12 graduate (like most of his brothers and sisters) and called himself a businessman. Inspired by his older brothers, who had been involved in the smuggling of red mercury from Angola in the 1970s and 1980s he started, in 1987, to go into Angola looking for diamonds. He told about the initial difficulties, when the intense war made most people afraid of travelling and they had no diamond tester, which made him make many mistakes. Since he had relatives close to Lumbala N'Guimbo, however, he was soon put in contact with the right people in order to purchase "good stones". After a few successful, small-scale deals, he also began trading in other goods like maize and other agricultural produce from the Nengo area in Angola, and with items like game products and

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[14] Shanda's grandfather was from Angola and had settled, for a while, in Zambia en route from labour migration in South Africa. In the 1980s, the grandfather and an uncle fled from hostilities in Moxico Province to Zambia, but they refused to stay in Kalabo because of fear of UNITA retaliation so close to the border and they went instead to Meheba where the uncle was still residing at the time.

snakeskin. A year after our first meeting, Shanda had married a woman and settled in their own house in Mongu, the provincial capital situated on the other side of the Zambezi from Kalabo. Based in Mongu he conducted long-distance trade in fresh fish brought to Lusaka and sold to the major hotels there. His future goal was to set up a chicken farm in Mongu.

In examining the first three modes of migration, it is clear that these phenomena have had a profound influence on the entire political economy of the area, which is thus bound together by networks of kinship, friendship and alliance. Even the war and the concomitant involuntary migration have been instrumental in integrating the region, and keeping it integrated despite administrative obstacles, during the latter half of the 20th century.

Apart from the influence of involuntary migration, which I will examine in the next section, the entanglement of people from Angola and Zambia during the last few decades is obvious if we turn to the connections between the administrative structures on both sides of the border. Despite assurances to the contrary by the Zambian government[15], personal contacts between Angolan (UNITA) and Zambian officials have certainly occurred on a regular basis, at least during the time of my fieldwork. Individual UNITA personnel (in civilian clothing) have entered Zambia to conduct trade for personal gain, with little intervention from the authorities on either side. Furthermore, supplies of food, medicine, and fuel for UNITA troops and civilians under their protection, have been procured through the markets of Western Province.

Behind all these events, working as the financial engine of the relationships, lies the substantial (and illegal) trade in uncut diamonds mined in Angola's Lunda Norte Province, employing thousands of people during its peak in the early 1990s (De Boeck 2000). The survival of UNITA, during the last decade, was completely dependent on the smuggling of some several billion US dollars-worth of rough diamonds. Although Zambia's two provinces bordering Angola were not the only routes for smuggling these gems, the trade certainly had a great impact on the regional economy (Global Witness 1998).

Involuntary migration

Having described the historical context, characterized by large-scale migrations of a seasonal and more permanent nature between areas which today belong to two different polities (Angola and Zambia), and the "mobility lifestyle" pervading many aspects of social life in this region, a case has been made for treading carefully when trying to understand the meaning and significance of involuntary migration in Kalabo district. These historical circumstances are probably the reason a majority of "refugees" arriving in western and northwestern Zambia over the last 45 years have opted to stay as "self-settled refugees" in Zambian villages rather than accepting to go

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[15] See e.g. *The Mail* and *Guardian*, April 9, 1999, "Zambian aid for Angolan rebels"; IRIN, 13 April 1999, "Lusaka denies allegations of support for UNITA".

to the established settlements. According to Hansen, "the refugees may be seen as only the latest phase in the continuing migration of these people along the same routes throughout this [the 20th] century" (1979: 371).

Nevertheless, starting in October 1999, the arrival in Zambia of a large number of Angolans, who could not be absorbed by local villages, developed into what could be described as an "emergency", partly outside the scope of the historical experience of people in the region. How should we understand these occasional large influxes, turned into humanitarian emergencies, in contexts where more small-scale and personal receptions have been the normal ways of entering host societies?

The sudden influx of Angolans into Kalabo district following the recapture of Lumbala N'Guimbo by UNITA in December of 1999 was arguably the largest the district hitherto had experienced. The Angolan town had previously been in the hands of UNITA for 17 years and dissatisfaction with their regime seems to have been behind the decision of many civilian inhabitants in the area to join the "home guard" organized by the Angolan Government when the latter captured the town in October 1999. The period of government control was thus short and the anticipated retaliation of UNITA, which in previous years had failed to arouse any but enforced support in the local population, led to quite a large number of people starting the journey across the unmarked border, into Zambia.

Case studies

Reagan I, a 21-year-old unmarried man from Lumbala N'Guimbo, arrived in Kalabo in December 1999 almost simultaneously with my family and me, although we did so under quite different circumstances: I as an anthropologist staying in a pre-rented house, and he as an official refugee residing with his mother and two grandparents at the reception centre a few hundred metres away. Despite having lived under UNITA rule for so long, Reagan had fled from the town when UNITA began to attack, for fear of retaliation, since he belonged to the majority of young men who had joined the Government Civil Defence Force (Defesa Civil). His reason for joining was open dissatisfaction with UNITA rule: their forcing people to work for them, to carry arms or sing and dance at rallies, their failure to provide food and proper schooling. For Reagan, this was far from the first time he had been to Kalabo and Zambia. In a long-term effort to raise money for *bionda*, in order to marry a girl, he had already made five trips to Zambia to sell his maize, and buy second-hand clothes (*salauala*) which he then would bring back to Angola to sell for a small profit. The trip would take about one month. According to him, most *bakwenje* (young men), or at least "the clever ones", participated in the trade, especially those who were "orphaned" (his father was dead) like himself.

Reagan II, 23 years, also from Lumbala, came to Kalabo with a large extended family of young and old, as well as with his

wife of one year. The reasons for coming to Zambia were also fear of UNITA retaliation, although he did not admit to being part of the Defesa Civil. Reagan II had also visited Zambia on trade business four times previously, staying with relatives within Kalabo district. During the trips he would paddle a canoe filled with maize from his own harvest, exchange it for clothes, plates and soap which he brought back to Angola. He claimed that one of these trips was enough to pay for the *bionda* demanded by his parents-in-law. Although he accepted to be transported with the rest of the refugees in the Kalabo reception centre to Mayukwayukwa settlement, he said that it would be on the condition that he could carry out trade there. He stated quite bluntly that if he were denied being able to trade, he would settle with his relatives outside the settlement instead. While the Zambian policy on the subject of refugees doing business was unclear to him, he was adamant that in the future he would make his life in Zambia where "life is more civilized".

During only three months, 22,000 Angolans fled from Moxico Province into Zambia, and although many arrived in North Western Province, as many as 5,000 reached the hastily established reception centre in Kalabo and another 8,000 the one in Sinjembela further south (UNHCR 2000). Due to the annual flooding of the Zambezi, which effectively stopped the distribution of necessities as well as efforts to transfer the refugees to established settlements, the national and international structures for receiving these refugees were severely crippled. The situation was exacerbated as the refugees arrived in the lean months of December and January, often referred to as the "months of hunger" (*Ndungu*), causing further pressure on local hosts.

It is perhaps not surprising, following the known tendency of humanitarian agents to view the existence of refugees as a "problem", if not an "emergency", regardless of previous migration patterns and the relations between refugees and hosts (Bakewell 2000:111), that the ensuing response by the Zambian government, UNHCR, and their implementing partners LWF and MSF, took little heed of the historical precedents of local solutions to refugee situations in the area.[16] Suddenly, the sandy roads of Kalabo town were busy with white four-wheel-driven vehicles with donor acronyms and men and women with radios moving back and forth. Disused government buildings and missionary quarters were turned into headquarters for the different agencies and the few guesthouses in town were full. The change in scale of the national and international intervention in the ongoing process of "involuntary migration" of people from Angola into Zambian territory also seems, at a first glance, to have created changing relationships between "Zambians" and "Angolans".

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[16] Nor did they show much appreciation for local knowledge and structures. Local health workers and doctors at the Kalabo district hospital complained that the MSF policy of replacing doctors at the reception centre, sometimes at only a few weeks interval, was a greater burden on them than the increased patient load caused by the refugees. It was these functionaries who were constantly forced, spending whole days of valuable work time, to bring the MSF doctors up to date in tropical medicine and local knowledge; these latter physicians were often specializing in subjects far removed from the realities encountered in African rural hospitals.

One indication of this is the fact that so few of the newly arrived refugees had found shelter in the rural villages closer to the border. Another indication was the way in which some Kalabo dwellers took advantage of the refugees' vulnerable situation – exhausted and without a local support network. Despite mangoes being considered locally as "free for all" food, the fruit was used as payment for the labour of desperate refugees who cleared new fields for more wealthy Kalabo inhabitants. Although "piece work" in exchange for payment in cash or in kind is not seen as immoral in the villages (it can even occur between close relatives, such as father and son), working for something that is usually deemed free would be viewed as highly inappropriate.

For Kalabo town, the "emergency" ended with a massive airlift of 2,500 refugees (the remainder transported by the Zampost boat) to Mongu, from where they were conveyed to the established refugee settlements (the majority to Mayukwayukwa settlement) in January and February.

The border post at Sikongo (about 60 kilometres along a gravel road from Kalabo town) was certainly permeable, to say the least. Trader informants claimed that there was a 4–5 hour walk to the border from the small town and little surveillance of the area. This is not to say that borders are unimportant for the classification of social categories in everyday life. During my fieldwork in Kalabo district, despite the history of cultural integration in the region, there seemed to be a growing preoccupation with identification based on national origin.

A first indication of this was the acknowledgement by some villagers that nowadays they often informed the authorities when refugees arrived in their villages. Purportedly, they did this out of fear and suspicion as some recently arrived Angolans had brought arms and, sometimes, had used these to commit crimes such as robbery and poaching (in the nearby Liuwa Plains National Park). As the old headman, whose life story I addressed above and who was himself once a refugee from Angola, put it: "We are failing to accommodate our fellow colleagues just because some of them are coming with guns and ammunition, so whenever there is a problem we are also involved. That's why we have to take them to the authorities!"

Second, the public intervention that was needed in an influx of this scale (refugees were gathering, for instance, in large crowds in the small town) created a public response, with agencies having to negotiate with Lozi chiefs for the allocation of land for a reception centre. In the public, Lozi-dominated sphere, all *Mawiko* people are often referred to as Angolans, even villagers of, for example, Mbunda origin who have been living in the area for generations. This is in contrast to the (historical) informal reception of people from Angola in the rural villages closer to the border, where language, (fictive) kinship, and clan names are markers of potential commonality.

Combined with the humanitarian logic (understandable in view of the objectives of dispensing aid) of striving to differentiate populations in order to find beneficiaries of assistance (Bakewell 2000), the public Lozi view possessed even more force.

Third, the demographic composition of the refugee families would probably affect their potential to cope with the situation and if they were able to seek patronage in a village or not. If Reagan I had arrived alone in Kalabo district, like he had so many

times before, he would probably have chosen another alternative to the reception centre. However, on this occasion it was the only option since he was travelling with elderly people. This confirms Hansen's contention that "refugees in camps are those who failed to find kinsmen or who could not generate enough social and local political support" (1979:371).

Fourth, it is hard to say whether the refugee movement would have been as visible in the public sphere of Kalabo if the events in Lumbala N'Guimbo had occurred in a period when there was more food available in the rural villages rather than during the "month of hunger".

These points might go some way in explaining why the events in Angola (the same events that caused the two young men in my case study to leave) contributed to a heightened differentiation between Zambians and Angolans. The events show that in times of intense influx of people the emphasis on common (flexible) heritage and kinship may very quickly transform itself into fixed categories, which are easily fitted into new hierarchies of economic exploitation and patronage. This illustrates the importance of bringing temporalities into the analysis of migration and displacement – the specific conditions that shape the lives of particular migrants, even though they are travelling familiar routes and moving within known social landscapes.

The Kalabo case stories can thus be seen as examples of "how the trajectories of personal relationships, relief aid and historical contingencies intermingled to produce highly variable experiences of displacement under seemingly homogenous conditions" (Englund 2002a:23). However, the significance of considering the temporality of situations does not rule out the need to have a thorough understanding of historical patterns of migration in a region. It is still critical, therefore, to examine the experience of displacement or involuntary migration, however frightening and painful, in the light of the other modes of migration that I have suggested.

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