DV435 Political and Economic Geography of Zambia

Shiv, Helen, Gino, Pawel

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Introduction

This poster examines the economic and political geography of Zambia in four distinct sections: Location and Endowment, Colonial Economy and Institutions, Economic Geography and Political Geography. It analyses both historical as well as contemporary dynamics and structures which have shaped the economics and politics of the country and continue to influence them contemporarily. Each column focuses on two main areas of comparison: the importance of a dominant export commodity and the agricultural sector.

Location and Endowment

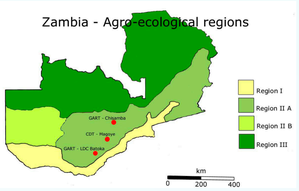
I.1 Location

Zambia is a landlocked country, with no direct. access to the coast. in Southern Africa. It has a total area of 752,610 square kilometres, and is slightly larger than the state of Texas. (CIA). It is located on high plateau which causes a few variations in its tropical climate. The country is also vulnerable to tropical storms from November to April and periodic drought (CIA).

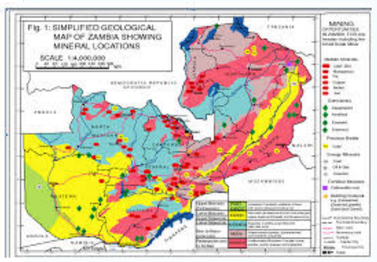
Map of Zambia in Southern Africa (Left) Source Britannica Maps.

I.2 Agro-Ecological Zone

5% of land in Zambia is classified as Arable - under permanent crop(FAO) The country can be spilt into three ecological zones shown on the map to the right. Region II II contains the most fertile soil within the region, and is where most large scale farming takes place. The distinction between IIa and IIb is soil type.



Map of Agro-Ecological Zones in Zambia. Source -UNDP



Simplified Geological Map of Zambia Showing Mineral Locations Source : UNFC

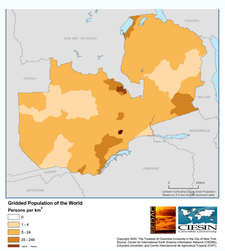
I.2 Natural Resource Endowment

Zambia is extremely resource rich with copper, cobalt, zinc, lead, coal, emeralds, gold, silver, and uranium. It is most well known for its copper deposits located in the 'Copperbelt' to the north.

I.4 Population

Zambia has a population of 17,426,623 as of July 2020, having grown from around 2.6 million in 1955 (CIA). Further, around 65% of the population of the population is under the age of 25 (UN DESA). As seen on the map to the right, there are high levels of high populaiton density in the capital, Lusaka, as well as near the copper belt. Inspite of experiences massive population growth since independence, rural population densities remain low in Zambia. There seems to be a correlation when comparing levels of high population density to areas of high agricultural potential on the zones of agriculture production map on column 2.

Forty percent of Zambia's population live in urban areas, making it one of the most urbanized countries in sub-Saharan Africa (UNEP). As Zambia is landlocked and facing increasing urban population transport services are one of the biggest policy concerns.

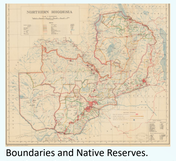


Map of Zambia with population density Source - CIESEN Columbia University

Colonial Economy and Institutions

II.1 Colonial Division of Land

In 1924, the British Colonial Office took over control of Northern Rhodesia from the British South Africa Company (BSAC). Throughout Northern Rhodesia, the colonial administration divided the land into three administrative categories: Native Reserve Land, Native Trust Land and Crown Land. The Crown Land, which was reserved for European settlers, was mostly areas of mining potential and fertile land situated along the railway line, which by 1910 ran from Livingstone to Katanga and provided European farmers with access to markets (Roberts 1976: 183). The Native Reserves and Native Trust Lands, the land occupied by Africans, accounted for around 95% of the total area and most Africans resided on the Trust Lands (Making 1966: 243). Forced relocation into the Native Reserves often led to overcrowding and food shortages (Roberts 1976: 183).



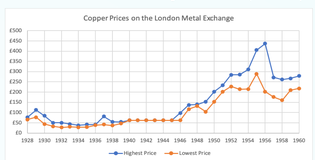
Boundaries and Native Reserves. Northern Rhodesia Survey Department, 1938. Source: Stanford Libraries.

Northern Rhodesia Native reserves and tribal areas. His majesty's stationery office, 1938.

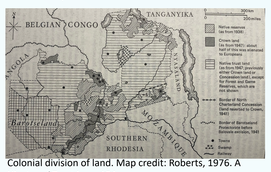
Zones of agricultural production potential. Colonial map. Map Credit: EuDASM. Northern Rhodesia.

II.2 Colonial Economy

The first commercial copper mine opened in Luanshya in 1928. As more mines continued to open, colonial revenue increased and decreased in accordance with world copper prices and external marked demand (Gardner 2012: 6). The colonial government's promotion of the copper mining industry and its subsequent expansion led largely to the neglect of African commercial agricultural, particularly in the northeastern region (Berry 1993: 88). In the southern and central providences, however, the predominantly white farmers along the railway line benefited from the expansion of the Copperbelt which provided a new domestic market for maize (Roberts 1976: 190). By the early 1930s, white farmers were facing increasing competition from African farmers on the Tonga Plateau, in the Southern Province, who were also capitalising on the expansion of the domestic maize market (McCann 2005: 161). To counter this competition, the colonial government established the Maize Control Board in 1936 - which would later become the National Agricultural Marketing Board in the post-colonial era. The domestic maize market was reliant on demand from the Copperbelt which made it vulnerable to volatility in global demand for copper (Vickery 1988: 216). The fall in copper prices in late 1931, which saw mines close and employment drop sharply, resulted in a collapse in demand around the Copperbelt for maize and prices fell from 2 shillings per bag in late 1920s to 6 shillings in 1932 (Vickery 1988: 216).



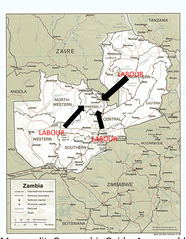
Data source: Banks, 1974. The World Copper Market, pp. 12-13..



Colonial division of land. Map credit: Roberts, 1976. A Hisotry of Zambia, p. 184.

II. 3 Movement of Labour

Amin (1972: 504) categorises the colonial economy of Northern Rhodesia as a "labour reserve". Before the rapid expansion of the Copperbelt began in the late 1920s, thousands of Northern Rhodesians migrated to the mines and farms of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Berry 1993: 89). From the late 1920s onwards, the Colonial government and mining companies pressured adult men, predominantly from the rural Bemba-speaking areas in the northeast, to migrate to the Copperbelt for work (Berry 1993: 97). Posner (2003: 138) notes that in 1937, 51% of African workers employed at the three largest mines in the Copperbelt were from Bembaland in the northeast. The subsequent domination of the mining towns around the Copperbelt by the Bemba-speaking community had implications for the post-colonial political landscape (Posner 2003: 128).

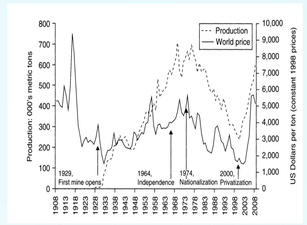


Map credit: Geographic Guide. Arrows added by author.

Economic Geography

III. 1 Copper

Zambia's economy is heavily dependent on copper. It is the most important source of foreign exchange , generating almost 70 percent of total export receipts; it contributes an average of 11 percent of GDP and it accounts for almost 10 percent of total formal employment and about 25 percent of total private sector employment (IMF, 2019). The country is highly vulnerable to fluctuations in copper price. (see figure below). The copper production follows the fluctuations of the copper price.



A century of copper production. Unit value is the value in actual U.S. dollars of 1 metric ton (t) of refined copper apparent consumption, estimated from the Annual Average U.S. Producer Copper Price." Fraser, Larmer 2010

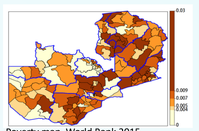
The sector has been nationalised in the 70s and privatised around 2000 but the privatization weakened the state and it had dramatic consequences for the people living in the copper belt. Before, In the 1980s, the IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programme was implemented in the face of the collapse of copper prices. While the elite have been able to protect their living standards, middle and top grade miners have borne a disproportionate share of the burden of austerity. Their real wages fell by a staggering 77% and 84% respectively between 1981 and 1986 (Loxley 1990:22).

The Development Agreements the government concluded with the foreign companies exempted them, among other things, from paying most taxes and from many national laws, for example on environmental pollution. Sometimes there is a growing anti-Chinese sentiment because of low wages paid to African workers (Fraser, Larmer, 2010:15,22). Zambia has become the first African country to default as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

III.2 Agriculture

Also in the agricultural sector the privatisation has been a controversial topic. In the Northern Province, for example, market liberalization in the early 1990s caused a decline in maize production. Policies to promote maize production in the 1980s had a large influence, so that by the end of the decade the Northern province was a net exporter of maize to the more populous and urbanised Copperbelt and Lusaka (White et. al 2005:134). In addition, the Northern Province had and has to cope with the negative consequences of the transition from citemene (slash-and-burn production, mostly of cassava) to ibala (fixed fields fed with fertiliser) in the colonial period (Turner 1996:228). These structural changes have a negative impact on the food security of the population. Other major problems are deforestation due to the growing Chinese demand for Zambian timber. (Asanzi et. al 2014:448), droughts and floods The highest concentrations of the poor population are in the Eastern, Central, and part of the Northern provinces (IMF 2019, World Bank 2015). The country's large-scale commercial farms, on fertile land, are mainly located along the Line of Rail, which links the copper belt with Lusaka, and are predominately owned and operated by European settlers and their descendants (Britannica).

Stunting, hight for age, 2013, WFP 2018



Poverty map, World Bank 2015

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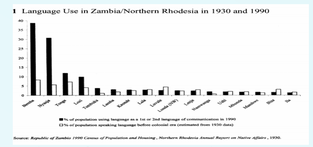
Political Geography

IV.1 Post-Colonial Electoral History

In Zambia, political divisions are more visible across language lines than ethnic lines. Four main languages seem to have evolved since the colonial times and as a result dominate within Zambia in contemporary times (Prosner, 2003: 128). Colonial labour migration has lead to the widespread of the Bemba-speaking community from the Northern parts of the country particularly into the Copperbelt region. Furthermore, the very first leader of independent Zambia, was Bemba-speaking Kenneth Kaunda. Upon independence his UNIP party with a stronghold in the Luapula and the Northern areas beat Harry Nkubula's ANC whose stronghold was based in the Southern Province (Scott and Molteno, 1969). UNIP gained dominance with a programme aimed at immediate self-governance and universal suffrage and a well organised and popular leadership (Rasmussen, 1969: 409). Kaunda governed a one-party state, until the first multiple party elections in 1991.



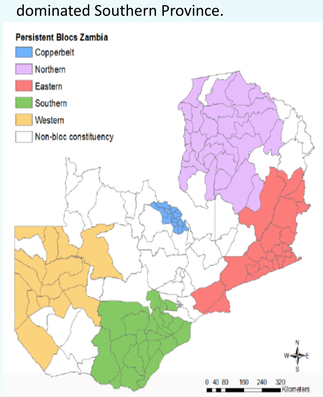
Distribution of Language Use in Zambia, Posner 2003: 129, 136

IV.2 Importance of the Copperbelt

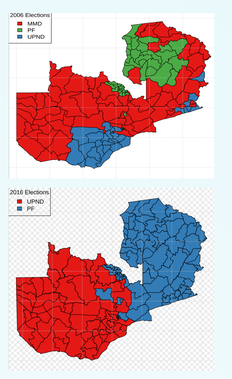
The importance of the Copperbelt has been crucial throughout Zambia's post-colonial political history. Out of the six leaders that ruled the country in the post-colonial era three were born and four were trained and educated in the Copperbelt (Philips, 2019). The MMD, which took power as only the second party in the country's post-independence history in 1991 grew from within the Copperbelt. It found support in the largest Copperbelt trade unions, which originated support under colonial rule . In consequent years, Michael Sata' and his Patriotic Front (PF) have originated and garnered initial support in the region just like the MMD decades prior (Phillips, 2019).

IV.3 Contemporary Electoral Blocks

Currently, we can identify five main electoral blocs within Zambia (Boone, 2020). Analysing the results of the 2016 election presidential elections, we can observe how the recent dynamics shape Zambian politics. In the 2016 elections the current President Edgar Lungu of the PF received high results in its strongholds of Northern areas and the Copperbelt, while Hakainde Hichilema of the opposition UPND received high results in its stronghold of agriculturally-dominated Southern Province.



Map of Persistent Electoral Blocs in Zambia, Boone 2020.



Distribution of votes in the 2006 and 2016 Electoral Elections, Phiri 2016