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Copper Mining and Football: Comparing the game in the Katangese and Rhodesian Copperbelts c. 1930 – 1980

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Throughout the twentieth century, colonial authorities believed in the power of sport as a tool for moulding submissive labour. Belgian and British colonialists, industrialists and Christian missionaries introduced football to the Katangese and Rhodesian Copperbelts respectively towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century and attempted to use it as a tool for controlling, and 'civilising' colonised Africans. This paper argues that Africans found alternative ways of eluding colonial and capitalist exploitation in the mining towns, appropriated football, used it to build urban networks and sometimes even to express aspirations for independence. The two Copperbelts exchanged football tours that played a role in strengthening existing commercial networks for the Europeans and comradeship for colonised Africans. Interestingly, even the post-colonial African leaders Joseph Mobutu and Kenneth Kaunda attempted to use football that was dominant in their copper mining regions as a tool for bolstering their political power and popularity. This paper reveals the complex relationships between football and social change in the copper-rich regions of Katanga and Northern Rhodesia.

Introduction

From the beginning of the twentieth century, colonialists, industrialists, and missionaries, particularly those in the British tradition, were convinced that sport was a vital part of cultural power that could be useful in shaping and controlling colonised African labour (Fair, 1997; Stoddart, 1988; Martin, 1995; Alegi, 2010; Guttman, 1994)¹ Like elsewhere in Africa, European missionaries, capitalists, and colonial officers introduced modern sports such as football to the central African Copperbelt regions of Katanga in Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesian (hereinafter called Katanga and Copperbelt respectively) in the early 1900s as a form of leisure and a tool for educating, 'civilising', and controlling Africans. Separately, as Europeans arrived and settled in the two regions, they formed 'whites only' soccer teams that played competitive matches and attracted large numbers of both European and African spectators (Akindes and Alegi, 2014; Baker and Mangan, 1987; Chipande, 2009).

Despite the colonial racism that permeated football, locals found the game appealing, adopted soccer, and turned it into a black urban popular culture. This paper argues that Africans appropriated football and used it to

build urban social networks, and sometimes even to express aspirations for independence. It is also interesting that post-colonial African leaders of the two copper-rich regions – Joseph Mobutu and Kenneth Kaunda – continued where their European predecessors ended by attempting to use the game as a tool for stimulating their own political ideologies, power, and popularity.

European Football in Katanga and the Copperbelt

As Belgian and British miners settled in Katanga and the Copperbelt, they began to play soccer among themselves and formed ‘whites only’ clubs that played competitive matches and attracted large numbers of both European and African spectators. The introduction of the game in both Katanga and the Copperbelt is attributed to these early colonists.

Following the Berlin Conference (November 1884-February 1885) that divided Africa into colonies of the European powers, King Leopold II of Belgium acquired the Congo Free State, which he treated as his personal property in a brutal manner until 1907 when the Belgian state took over and the name changed to Belgian Congo (Reeves, 1909; Honchschild, 1999; Musambachime, 1990). King Leopold and Cecil Rhodes, a British financier through his British South African Company (BSAC), were both interested in the Katanga. Rhodes lost the race and ended up with a vast territory below the Katanga that came to be called Northern Rhodesia (Guene, 2013). The *Campagne du Katanga* managed the Katangese Copperbelt from 1891 to 1900 when it was taken over by a semi-private concessionary company the *Comité Spécial du Katanga* (Guene, 2013). The booming copper mines in Katanga led to an influx of Belgian miners who brought with them Western leisure pastimes such as football (Akindes and Alegi, 2014).

Historian Peter Alegi reveals how football established roots in the Belgian Congo in the early 1900s particularly in the Katanga region where a ‘whites only’ *Ligue de Football du Katanga* was established in Élisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in 1911. ‘Whites only’ football matches were also being played in the capital Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) by 1912. Football clubs were few. Four teams competed in the B. Smith Cup in Katanga in 1925 and a formal football association, *Federation de Football Association du Pool* was established around 1920 and later affiliated with the Belgian football association in 1927 (Alegi, 2010). In Léopoldville where the white population was large and varied, Belgians, French, Flemish and British residents formed football teams and played competitive matches against each other to the delight of European and a majority of African spectators (Martin, 1995).

The diffusion of football to the Belgian Congo cannot be fully explored without paying attention to similar developments taking place across the Congo

River in French Congo's capital Brazzaville. According to Phyllis Martin, football activities had gained momentum in Brazzaville with a 'Europeans only' *Union Sportive Brazzaville* being formed in 1913. This organisation initiated several international football matches against teams from Léopoldville in the Belgian Congo. From 1914 onwards, soccer contests were played between European teams from Brazzaville and Léopoldville that also attracted large numbers of both European and African spectators (Martin, 1995). Football in the Belgian Congo was characterised by racial segregation as seen in the emergence of 'whites only' football clubs and seating areas in the playing grounds in both Léopoldville and Élisabethville. Despite racial discrimination, Africans found the game captivating and enthusiastically attended and watched European soccer matches, learned the game and started playing it in their communities (Akindes and Alegi, 2014).

In the early 1920s, European football was also introduced across the southern borders of Katanga, in the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt. The colonisation of Northern Rhodesia by the BSAC in the late 1890s and the arrival of colonial officials and industrialists led to the game being played in the emerging mining towns (Chipande, 2009). The beginning of large-scale mining in the 1920s – after the development of a small mine in Bwana Mkubwa in Ndola, followed by the Roan Antelope mines in Luanshya in 1927, and later Mufulira, Chambishi, Nchanga and Kansanshi mines in 1930 – led to considerable industrialisation and urbanisation that created a good environment for the growth of European soccer (Ferguson, 1999; Chipande, 2016). The two major Copperbelt mining companies, Rhodesian Selection Trust and Anglo-American Corporation, developed an interest in the welfare of their white employees and heavily subsidised their social and recreation amenities. Duncan Money reveals how the Copperbelt became unique in terms of flourishing leisure and recreation facilities “as the wealth from the mines allowed the predominantly [white] working class population to do what they could not elsewhere” (Money, 2016).

Sport quickly emerged as the main pastime activity in Copperbelt European mining communities and mine owners encouraged the setting up of central sports committees, or councils, that became responsible for the development and maintenance of sports facilities. For instance, in 1936, Roan Antelope Mine heavily subsidised the Roan Antelope Mine Recreation Club with loans and grants that helped in developing first class sports facilities for rugby, football, cricket, hockey, athletics, bowling, and tennis in European communities (Matongo, 1992). This support was given to all European mining communities on the Copperbelt making it the best sporting region in Southern Africa. Bennie Evans, sports officer at Roan Antelope Mine, commented: “Few places in the

world can boast of such lavishly provided sports facilities at such a reasonable cost to sports men” (Horizon, 1963). Apart from the massive wealth from the mines that allowed the development of these facilities, mining companies heavily invested in leisure amenities to attract European miners to the Copperbelt. In addition, Money argues that the “Copperbelt social life was partly about creating a colonial experience like working class life elsewhere in the English-speaking world” (Money, 2016, 208). As in Katanga, early football on the Copperbelt was organised on racial lines.

In 1922, William Nelson Watson, who was working for the Broken Hill mines, formed a ‘whites only’ Broken Hill Amateur Football Association. The Broken Hill mines were opened in 1906 to mine lead and later zinc, leading to the emergence of a small mining town called Broken Hill (Kabwe today). As the town was positioned on the railway line that stretched from Kimberly in South Africa to Élisabethville in Katanga, it developed rapidly and popular football clubs emerged (Wilson, 1941).² The Broken Hill Amateur Football Association organised the earliest clubs in Northern Rhodesia such as Broken Hill Corinthians, Broken Hill Callies, Broken Hill Railways, and Broken Hill Thistle (Chipande, 2009). Alegi argues that the emergence of mines and construction of railways in southern, central, and east Africa from the end of the nineteenth century encouraged the formation of several football clubs and associations in the region stretching from Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), through Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Congo to Uganda (Alegi, 2010). This was seen in Broken Hill where the population of white miners increased and led to the emergence of several soccer clubs for Europeans.

In 1927, a football association emerged on the Copperbelt that was called Rhodesia Congo Border Football Association. This body was responsible for administering whites’ football and rugby on the Copperbelt until rugby separated and formed the Rhodesia Congo Border Rugby Union. The Northern Rhodesia Football Association was formed in 1929 and became responsible for coordinating Europeans’ soccer in the whole territory. The huge investments that mining companies made in sports infrastructure led to the Copperbelt becoming the hub of ‘European’ football in Northern Rhodesia and probably made the region an attractive destination for European miners. By the end of the 1950s, the Rhodesia Congo Border Football Association dominated the game in Northern Rhodesia with Mufulira and Nchanga being the most competitive clubs (Horizon, 1959). Apart from local competitions, Copperbelt European soccer clubs exchanged football tours with European football clubs from neighbouring Katanga, which is examined in detail later in this paper.

This discussion reveals how soccer became one of the major leisure activities for European colonists in both Katanga and the Copperbelt, and how

mining companies in both copper-mining regions supported the development of 'Europeans only' sports revealing the racist nature of Belgian and British colonial and mining policies. This is in line with scholars who have argued that the careful study of leisure and sport can be useful in grasping issues that go beyond the players and playing field – wider “transformations associated with colonialism, post-colonialism, and the development of Capitalism” in Africa (Akyeampong and Ambler, 2002, 1-6; Guttmann, 1994; Martin, 1991). Despite social and sporting discrimination in both Katanga and the Copperbelt, local people keenly watched European football matches and were so captivated that they even gave the best European players nicknames (Alegi, 2010). This enthusiasm Africans showed for the game created fertile ground for the diffusion of soccer among the local people in the two regions.

Africans' Appropriation of Soccer in Katanga and the Copperbelt

As mentioned above, the introduction of soccer to the African populations in Katanga and the Copperbelt can be attributed to the arrival of European missionaries, colonialists and mineworkers (Guttmann, 1994; Chipande, 2016; Akindes and Alegi, 2014). In the Katanga Province of Belgian Congo, Gerard Akindes and Peter Alegi reveal that the Catholic Church's “civilising mission” provided Congolese youth with sports activities that were meant to “educate” and distract them from paying attention to colonial and capitalist exploitation (Akindes and Alegi, 2014). A Catholic priest by the name of Father Raphaël de la Kethulle de Ryhove who arrived in Léopoldville in 1919, spearheaded some kind of sporting evangelism. He formed the *Association Royale Sportive Congolaise* (ARSC) to formalise football clubs and organise competitions for African footballers (Dietschy, 2006, 31-41). As the Belgian colonial officials were reluctant to support African social welfare and education, Catholic missionary schools with priests such as De la Kuthulle provided African education with sport, particularly football, as one of the main leisure activities (Akindes and Alegi, 2014). Christian missionary education played an important role in the diffusion and development of modern sports in Africa, particularly in British colonial Africa where it was seen as “a highly valued component of a broader program of rational recreation, and ‘Muscular Christianity’ aimed at producing disciplined, healthy, and moral citizens” (Alegi, 2010, 8).³

In the Belgian Congo Christian missionaries (the Catholic Church), colonial enterprises (the Belgian mining giant *Union Minière du Haute Katanga*) and the colonial government formed what scholars have termed an “unholy colonial trinity” from the 1920s in order to “create a disciplined, efficient, moral and healthy African working class” (Alegi, 1999, 57). Modern sports, particularly football became integrated into the Belgian imperial project with colonialists

asserting that, “To colonise, is to civilise...[and] School of Sport is also a part of civilisation such as we understand it” (Dietschy, 2006, 39). The *Union Minière du Haute Katanga* (UMHK) adopted a motto “good health, good spirits, and high productivity” and deployed the European welfare system to control African leisure time and labour. Sport was part of an array of forms of social control that also involved brutal violence. One hundred African miners were massacred by colonial troops armed with machine guns in December 1941 on the Lubumbashi compound football ground during an African mineworkers’ general strike to demand for better conditions of service (Goldblatt, 2008, 507; Akindes and Alegi, 2014; Alegi, 1999).

The Catholic missionaries continued playing an important role in the development of football in Katanga, at the same time working together with colonial and mining authorities to use sport as a tool for controlling the Africans. In 1925, Father Gregory Coussement formed the Élisabethville Football Association and, by 1950, over 30 clubs were affiliated to the association. These included soccer clubs such as Vaticano, Union Sportive Militaire Saio, Lubumbashi Sports, Tout Puissant Englebert (TP Englebert), Saint-Éloi Lupopo and Empire Lunda among others. By the end of the 1950s, the Élisabethville Football Association had about 1,250 African soccer players registered, and thousands of fans, making soccer one of the most popular pastimes for African miners in Katanga (Alegi, 1999).

While Africans eagerly appropriated the game into their mining compounds, they could have been slowly alerted to colonial and mining officials’ goals of using the game as a tool for political and social control. Scholars have argued that, while African soccer was a creation of European imperialism and its self-professed “civilising mission”, the local people quickly recognised that the game could both empower and disempower (Akindes and Alegi, 2014). This was noticed in other regions, too, such as South Africa, where mine owners supported football because it boosted African miners’ morale, leading to increased production, and also offered an opportunity to control them. However, within a short time, the game became an avenue for tension and contestations for urban space, “race-consciousness, nationalism and [Africans’] assertive opposition to white stewardship” (Alegi, 2010, 41).

European colonial officials, mining industrialists, and missionaries introduced football to the Zambian Copperbelt following the colonisation of the area by the BSAC towards the end of the nineteenth century. Just as in Katanga, Africans who went to seek mining jobs became interested in European soccer and adopted the game in their communities. In the beginning, there were differences between colonial and mining authorities and African miners over the conceptualisation of leisure and leisure time in relationship with work.

Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler reveal how mine management in Luanshya's Roan Antelope Mines in the 1920s and 1930s struggled when they introduced soccer because African miners saw it as an extension of their formal work and demanded to be paid for it. The Compound Manager complained, "We have had several instances of natives having failed to turn up for a game of physical drill and putting forth the excuse that they did not get overtime pay for doing work" (Akyeampong and Ambler, 2002, 5). This meant that African miners conceived leisure differently from their European employers. African leisure activities normally involved beer drinking in small groups, visiting neighbours, telling folktales and riddles, performing traditional dances and playing a variety of games. These activities worried Europeans who saw them as immoral and a cause of increasing misbehaviour and other disruptive social acts in the mining towns (Chipande, 2016, 59). Despite the initial resistance, Africans found soccer fascinating, appropriated it, improvised equipment and began to play it in their communities.

Community teams emerged in mining towns that initially took the ethnic identities and loyalties of urbanising African miners. This was shown by teams' names such as Bisa made up of migrants from Bisaland, Nyasa for people from Nyasaland, Nyika for those from Tanganyika and so on. Football clashes between these community teams was an athletic spectacle that sometimes brought hosting communities to a standstill as hordes of fans gathered around rudimentary football grounds to support their teams (Chipande, 2016). The game undoubtedly played a role in cultivating camaraderie and urban social networks among urbanised Africans (Alegi, 2010). Alegi further attributes the popularity of soccer in African communities to the game's low budget needs, as locals could easily improvise equipment such as balls and turn any available flat ground into a playing field (Alegi, 1999).

The popularity of soccer in the Copperbelt's African mining compounds quickly attracted the attention of colonial and mining authorities. It prompted the governor of Northern Rhodesia to sponsor a competition in 1936 that came to be known as the Governor's Cup. Mining and colonial officials attended African football matches and offered support for some of the competitions, not only to exercise political control over African leisure and labour, but because they were also afraid that local miners could use soccer gatherings as avenues for political agitation (Chipande, 2016). For example, the emergence of several football teams and competitions that attracted large numbers of fans in Copperbelt mining towns prompted authorities to introduce, organise and sponsor the Governor's Cup in 1936. Qualifiers for the Cup involved teams competing in each district to qualify to the finals that were usually watched by the Governor of Northern Rhodesia (Chipande, 2009: 62). The football passion in African

urban communities that compelled colonial authorities to react was not unique to the Copperbelt; Phyllis Martin tells how the popularity of the game in colonial Brazzaville's African townships of Bacongo and Poto-Poto in the 1930s also forced colonial administrators to give African soccer serious attention (Martin, 1995).

In order for Copperbelt authorities to have a firm grip over soccer in African mining compounds, they formed a Native Football Committee in 1936. This committee comprised white compound managers from Roan Antelope, Ndola, Mufulira and Broken Hill mines and aimed at monitoring and controlling football in African communities on the Copperbelt and in Broken Hill. In its first meeting, committee members said, "This committee constitutes itself a committee for the control and organisation of Native football All disputes, misconduct, [and] breaches of rules are to be referred to this central committee[,] whose decision shall be final".⁴ Later, the Native Football Committee evolved into the Copperbelt African Football Association that included early African football leaders such as Tom Mtine and it governed the African game in the whole of Copperbelt province (Chipande, 2016). This evidence from the Copperbelt supports Alegi's view that "by 1948 no other urban cultural practice in Africa matched soccer's force as a conduit for leisure, social control and popular expression" (Alegi, 1999, 73).

The Copperbelt strikes of 1935 and 1940 could have strengthened colonial and mining capitals' belief that colonial domination required an ideological or cultural component to complement rule by force. This was seen in increased development of recreational sporting amenities and activities in African mining compounds, particularly after the Second World War (Tenga, 2000). Similarly, the mining and colonial authorities on the Copperbelt developed welfare schemes they believed were useful for educating and controlling increasingly restless African labour. British interests were, therefore, determined to direct African leisure through local welfare schemes. Anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker, who conducted research on the Copperbelt in Luanshya's Roan Antelope Mines in the 1950s, explained, "Management through the activities of its Welfare Department was obviously playing an important role in the induction of Africans into Western Culture" (Powdermaker, 1962.) Football became one of the most popular activities in the Copperbelt welfare schemes.

The popularity of soccer in African mine compounds forced mining authorities to support the game in order to have control over it. This was seen in the construction of the first football stadiums in all major mining towns: Roan Antelope's Kafubu Stadium in Luanshya; Rhokana's Scrivener Stadium in Kitwe; Nchanga's Gabbitas Stadium in Chingola; and Mufulira's Shinde Stadium (African Life, 1958). Every weekend, more than 2,000 spectators frequented these newly built arenas to watch their favourite clubs play in the Copperbelt league. In 1958 David Coyle, chairperson of the Copperbelt African Football and Athletic

Association declared, “there is no sport today, which is more popular among Africans than soccer. Every Sunday afternoon, thousands of people in every copper mining camp flock to the local stadium to watch football” (African Life, 1958). Similarly, Tom Mtine who was secretary of the association also boasted, “my association has been in control of adult African football on the Copperbelt since 1937, and caters for the entertainment of something like 50,000 African spectators weekly.”⁵

While the exact numbers are difficult to confirm, the massive popularity of the game was there for everyone to see. Powdermaker observed that sports, particularly soccer, track, and high jumping, were the most popular leisure activities in Luanshya in the 1950s (Powdermaker, 1962, 107). Without question, by the 1950s the game had become a major part of African urban popular culture and an inescapable feature of social life on the Copperbelt. Miners and other residents played, watched, and used soccer “to build patronage networks and alliances, as well as to legitimise their activities” such as hanging-out, beer drinking and strategizing on how to cope with colonial and capital domination (Alegi, 2010, 3).

Europeans played a central role in the diffusion of football in both Katanga and the Copperbelt. Africans in both regions were captivated by the game, appropriated it, and turned it into their urban popular culture. It has been argued that there was no other form of popular culture that could challenge football, in terms of generating excitement, that provided a city experience to newly urbanised Africans (Martin, 1995). While the game could have been introduced as a tool for “civilising” and controlling local people, the African miners introduced it themselves and used it to create alternative versions of their urban societies, and also to deal with the realities of colonial and capitalist exploitation (Akyeampong and Ambler, 2002). For example, during one of the African Urban Advisory Council meetings in Kitwe in 1951

E. Sampa questioned a welfare officer's failure to construct a proper schedule for football competitions ... [Lawrence] Katilungu, a member of the council, supported Sampa, saying that 'at present welfare was at low ebb and people did not know where and when football matches were to be played.' The white district commissioner (and chair of the meeting), P. D. Thomas, replied that the time had come for welfare activities to be managed by Africans themselves ... Katilungu curtly rejected the commissioner's suggestion arguing that Africans should not be doing work that European welfare officers were paid to do. Council members unanimously supported Katilungu's assertive statement and the district commissioner refrained from commenting further on the matter (Chipande, 2016: 61).

The above example shows how Africans in the mining towns used football and other colonial structures such as the African Urban Advisory Councils to challenge colonial and capitalist exploitation and lay a foundation for the liberation struggle. Meanwhile, both regions had several soccer exchanges that strengthened their historical relations.

Katanga and Copperbelt Football Exchanges

From the 1930s to the early 1960s there were several football tours of both European and African soccer teams between Katanga and the Copperbelt. These tours strengthened the social and economic networks between the two regions that go as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The relationships between the two regions date back to the powerful centralised Luba and Lunda empires in Katanga of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from where most Northern Rhodesian ethnic groups such as the Bemba, Lunda, Luvale, Lozi, Chewa and others trace their ancestral origins. This link led to a complex network of languages, trading and labour connections between Katanga and the Copperbelt that continued after the arrival of colonialism towards the end of the nineteenth century (Larmer, 2016).

Furthermore, the copper mining industry in the two regions had been a joint affair between UMHK and the BSAC. From the inception of the Katanga mines, Belgians lacked familiarity in African enterprises. This caused the *Comité spécial du Katanga* that was managing Katanga to join hands with the Tanganyika Concessions Limited (TCL), which was owned by Cecil Rhodes' friend Robert Williams, to launch a chartered company that came to be called UMHK in 1906. Therefore, necessity made the UMHK a joint venture between the Belgians and the British creating a symbiotic relationship that linked the two regions (Guene, 2013). Initially, Katanga heavily depended on Northern Rhodesia for labour and food supplies. Africans traversed the border between Katanga and the Copperbelt to seek employment and other means of earning money creating a strong network between the two regions (Guene, 2013). These interactions were sometimes seen in the similarities in African leisure activities in the copper mining compounds. For instance, social anthropologist James Clyde Mitchell indicates resemblances in the Beni ngoma, a society of dancers, which helped musical band members who were in distress, and was found both in Katanga and the Copperbelt (Mitchell, 1956).

As already discussed, authorities in both Katanga and the Copperbelt shared much more than copper mining techniques, as seen in how they tried to use football to control African labour to maximise copper production and prevent political agitation. The large numbers of Europeans in mining towns

of both regions encouraged the Rhodesia Congo Border Football Association that controlled 'whites only' football on the Copperbelt, and its counterpart the *La Ligue Royale de Football du Katanga*, to start organising football matches between the two regions from the 1930s onwards (Horizon, 1959). These football exchanges were not limited to the two regions. In the 1950s, white South African soccer clubs such as Marists and Academia visited Belgian Congo and played several soccer matches against a mixture of black and white sides in *La Ligue Royale de Football du Katanga* competitions in Élisabethville and Jadotville. These contests attracted thousands of local spectators. Football tours were a common occurrence in this period (Bolsmann, 2010).

Apart from white teams from different regions that visited each other, colonial and mining authorities felt that subordinate black athletes were suitable cultural ambassadors who could play a role in improving mining companies' domestic and international images (Alegi, 1999). They organised several African soccer exchanges between the two mining regions. Katanga was the hub of soccer in Belgian Congo as it was the most industrialised region with thriving towns such as Élisabethville, Jadotville, and Kambove. Similarly, the Copperbelt was the heart of the game in Northern Rhodesia from the 1940s in the growing mining towns, Luanshya, Kitwe, Chingola, and Mufulira. The parallels between the two regions made it possible for the Copperbelt African Football Association and the Élisabethville Football Association to organise a series of African soccer exchanges from the 1940s to the early 1960s (African Eagle, 1957).

Copperbelt select soccer teams travelled as far as Léopoldville in Belgian Congo for matches. For instance, a Copperbelt select team was invited to Léopoldville for a competition in 1951; they lost all their matches. While in Léopoldville, the Rhodesians were given a great reception by the British Consul, Congolese officials, mining officials, and the Congo Football Association.⁶ The presence of these high-ranking officials suggests the powerful diplomatic and commercial roles of these football tours.

African football tours were not limited to Katanga and the Copperbelt but extended to the whole region. This is seen in the organisation of one of the very first known "unofficial sub-Saharan soccer championships" in 1950 in Élisabethville (Alegi, 1999, 56). This competition involved a team from the South African Johannesburg Bantu Football Association (JBFA), a Copperbelt team under the Copperbelt African Football Association, a team from Léopoldville, and a hosting team from Katanga. The host team Katanga beat Léopoldville 2 -1 in the final that was played in Leopold II Stadium watched by about 40 000 Africans and an unspecified number of Europeans (Alegi, 1999, 63). Such matches played a role in building international networks and promoting camaraderie among colonised Africans.

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw several African soccer clubs from Katanga, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa exchanging football tours. This created international football links. The sustained interest in African international soccer competitions from the 1940s to the early 1960s reflected the popularity of the game on the continent. Alegi argued that foreign soccer tours in the 1940s and 1950s played an important role in building camaraderie among colonised Africans and connections with “wider processes of industrialisation, urban migration and cultural exchange” (Alegi 2010, Alegi 1999). To date, there are Zambian players that are playing football for Katangese clubs such as Tout Puissant Mazembe popularly known as T. P. Mazembe. Similarly, there are Katangese players playing football in different Copperbelt football clubs.

Mobutu’s and Kaunda’s Post-colonial Football Politics

Following the independence of many African states in the 1960s, some post-colonial African leaders used football as a tool for uniting their new states and controlling their people. Football became a big part of independence festivities in many African nations in the 1960s and soccer stadiums were speedily constructed in their capital cities as “symbols of modernity and pride” (Alegi, 2010, 55). Since the game was more pronounced in Katanga and the Copperbelt, the two regions were unsurprisingly dragged into post-colonial football politics for their respective countries.

Following a bitter decolonisation process in Belgian Congo, Patrice Lumumba became President in 1960 and was immediately faced with a secessionist movement in the mineral-rich Katanga province, the *Confederation des Associations Tribales du Katanga* led by Moïse Tshombe (Larmer, 2016, Goldblatt, 2008). Lumumba was arrested and murdered in collusion with Western intelligence agencies, after which Joseph Mobutu, who was head of the armed forces, took over as president in 1965. When Mobutu became president of Congo, his populist character took him to football, as the game had already gained roots following the Catholic Church, the UMHK, and colonial authorities’ use of soccer as a tool for mobilising and controlling local people. He organised a football tournament to celebrate his ascension to power and invited Ghana’s national team, the Black Stars to Kinshasa for a competition. The Black Stars thumped the Congolese Lions 3 – 0. This tournament enthused Mobutu’s interest in the game and caused him to bring football authorities under his direct control. Further, he facilitated the Brazilian football star Pele to visit Congo, and also employed an expatriate coach from Hungary to coach the national team (Goldblatt, 2008, 507). Mobutu was not the first African president to use football in this way; other African leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah of

Ghana, Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, and Sekou Touré of Guinea also attempted to use football in their respective countries as a tool for boosting their political power and popularity (Alegi and Bolsmann, 2013).

With a lot of support for football from President Mobutu, financial investment started pouring into the Congolese game and it began bearing fruit (Goldblatt, 2008). A Katanga based football club TP Englebert from Élisabethville dominated club football, not only in Congo, but also across the continent as a whole, in the late 1960s. TP Englebert won the African Champions Cup in 1967 and 1968, and qualified to the finals of the cup a number of times in the years that followed. The Congo national team also won the 1968 African Cup of Nations held in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, qualified to the World Cup that was held in Munich, West Germany in 1974, and won the African Cup of Nations in 1974 held in Cairo, Egypt. To prevent Congolese players being recruited as professionals by Belgian and other European clubs, Mobutu nationalised the football federation and turned soccer players into national wealth at the same level with copper and diamonds, arguing that he was protecting them. He politicised the game and used it as a tool for challenging his former colonisers and strengthening his popularity in Zaire (Dietschy, 2006; Goldblatt, 2008).

During his so-called Africanisation process, he renamed the country Zaire and also changed the nickname of the national team from Lions to Leopards to match his leopard-skin headgear, a self-crafted symbol of 'African' power and authority. He renamed the powerful Katanga based football club TP Englebert (Tout Puissant Englebert), which was named after a brand of tyre to TP Mazembe. Unfortunately, the Zairian national team was eliminated from the 1974 World Cup finals without winning any match, thrashed 9 – 0 by Yugoslavia. Following this embarrassing defeat in Munich, Mobutu discarded his soccer project. This shows that he was not really passionate about the game, but only wanted to use it to propel his power and popularity (Dietschy, 2006; Goldblatt, 2008).

In Zambia, the Copperbelt also became the hub for nationalist politics towards the end of colonial rule, and later the politics of Zambian national unity in the post-colonial period. The African Urban Advisory Councils and African Welfare Advisory Boards, formed by colonial and mining authorities to replace the Tribal Elders of Native Courts and support the implementation of social welfare activities, offered emerging African nationalists opportunities to challenge the Europeans' monopolisation of power. (Epstein, 1958) These structures also offered Africans opportunities to demand more support for leisure activities in their communities, such as football, that had become popular. For example, Lawrence Katilungu challenged Kitwe District Commissioner, T. D. Thomas, during a Kitwe African Advisory Council meeting in 1951 saying that "welfare [in Kitwe] was at low ebb and people did not know where and when

football matches were to be played”.⁷ The District Commissioner tried to suggest that Africans should take over welfare activities in their communities, but members of the meeting supported Katilungu’s argument that Africans should not be doing work that European welfare officers were engaged to do. Katilungu later became leader of the powerful Northern Rhodesia African Mineworkers Union that was formed in 1949 (Chipande, 2016).

Some of the African nationalist leaders who emerged from the Copperbelt had links to sports structures. For instance, Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula who became the leader of the first political party in Northern Rhodesia, the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress, was a member of the Kitwe Urban Advisory Council and also a football referee. Kenneth Kaunda who became the first president of independent Zambia was a footballer during his school days at Munali School in Lusaka and worked for the Nkana Mine welfare department from 1947 to 1948 (Berger, 1977). These prominent men exemplify why Africans on the Copperbelt did not reject the European welfare schemes. Instead, certain individuals and interests used European welfare and football structures for a variety of reasons, such as to foster soccer development; and occasionally challenge harsh colonial and mining policies and gain leadership experience crucial for the independence struggle (Chipande, 2016, 62).

Like other post-colonial African leaders, Kenneth Kaunda, as president of Zambia, also employed football as a tool for nation building, articulating his political ideology of African humanism, consolidating power and authority, and to gain international visibility (Chipande, 2015). A few years after independence, in the Mulungushi Reforms (1968) and Matero Reforms (1969) Kaunda’s government proposed to take 51% ownership of foreign-owned companies, including the copper mines. The strong control that Kaunda’s government gained over the mines, through the Zambia Industrial and Mining Corporation (ZIMCO), made it possible for him to influence the mines to expand the welfare schemes that were introduced by colonial authorities in the late colonial era to provide miners with leisure activities. Football emerged as one of the main activities in the schemes (Mining Mirror, 1984). Colonial sports infrastructure such as soccer stadiums were renovated, recreation officers were employed, and each mining division sponsored at least two football clubs. Mine football clubs such as Mufulira Wanderers, Nchanga Rangers, Roan United, Nkana Red Devils, and Power Dynamos dominated the Zambian football league for a long time, with Power Dynamos regularly representing the country in the African Champions Cup (Chipande, 2015).

The emergence of government-controlled Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) in the early 1980s, led to the evolution of a comprehensive football development programme that involved recruitment of sports advisors and full time coaches to identify young talented footballers and groom them into elite

players. Experienced British expatriate coaches such as Jeff Butler were hired as sports advisers, to coordinate and train fulltime football coaches in all mining divisions.⁸ Despite the collapse of the copper-dependent national economy as a result of the fall of the copper prices on the international market, Kaunda encouraged the mines to turn five Copperbelt clubs into professional football clubs in 1989: Nchanga Rangers, Mufulira Wanderers, Nkana Red Devils, Power Dynamos, and Roan United. (Times of Zambia, 1990) ZCCM chief executive officer Francis Kaunda (no known relative of Kenneth Kaunda) stated that the mines “will continue to support the development of sport in the country even in the face of existing financial difficulties” (Mining Mirror, 1982).

President Kaunda, as chairperson of ZIMCO, played an important role in encouraging the abundant flow of sponsorship money from the mines to the football clubs. Kaunda saw football as an opportunity to bring together different ethnic groups to make his new nation and make his “One Zambia, One Nation” slogan a reality, link football successes to his government’s independence achievements, and use the game to cement his philosophy of African humanism (Chipande, 2016). When sending the national soccer team to Cairo Egypt for the African Cup of Nations finals in 1974, where they emerged second to Zaire, Kaunda stated, “We send you to go and win and bring the Cup. But in case things do not go well, know that in humanism, we know how to win well and to lose well” (*Times of Zambia*, 1974). This shows how much he believed in the role of the game to propagate his ideology of African humanism, a positive image of his country, and his leadership in the whole African continent. While Kaunda loved football so much, it is also possible that supporting the game financially during a severe national economic meltdown could have been a plan to divert people’s attention from the critical financial challenges and lack of foodstuffs and basic necessities they were experiencing.

Katanga and the Copperbelt dominated football in Zaire and Zambia respectively, and were involved in post-colonial football politics. In Zaire, Mobutu used the game as a tool for asserting power and popularity, using the Katanga based soccer clubs such as TP Mazembe, and going as far as declaring national team soccer players ‘national wealth’. Similarly, his Zambian counterpart Kaunda used the Copperbelt mines to invest in football that he could use as a tool for uniting his country, propagating his ideology of African humanism, and cementing his power and popularity. Copper mining regions played critical roles in the development of football; they also demonstrate how soccer continued being used as a tool for political control in independent Africa.

Conclusion

Comparing the history of football in Katanga and the Copperbelt cannot be done without putting at centre stage Belgian and British colonial mining capital,

and Christian missionary racial hierarchies and paternalism. In both regions, Africans appropriated the game from Europeans who intended to introduce and use it as a tool for controlling, and 'civilising' them. This paper argues that, despite these efforts, Africans appropriated soccer, used it to build urban social networks and, sometimes, even to express aspirations of independence. Katanga and the Copperbelt exchanged football tours, which played a role in strengthening commercial networks for the Europeans and camaraderie for the colonised Africans who shared a rich ancestral and economic history.

Post-colonial leaders, Mobutu and Kaunda, also used the strong influence they had over the copper mines in their regions to sponsor and develop the game and use it as a tool for propagating their popularity and power. This shows a continuation of the use of football as a tool for controlling local people in both the colonial and post-colonial periods.

End Notes

- ¹ According to Allen Guttmann, "modern sports are best defined not by specific chronology, but rather by the presence or absence of a distinctive set of systematically interrelated formal-structural characteristics" that include: secularism, equality, bureaucratisation, specialisation, rationalisation, quantification and the obsession with records. (Guttmann, 1994)
- ² Godfrey Wilson points out how the territory was rapidly changing with Africans becoming urbanites and 'detrified' as part of the world community. He mentions the desire for European clothing as one of the main reasons that drove Africans to seek paying jobs in urban areas. Adoption of Western-style dress was an easy way Africans could acquire 'civilised' status in Broken Hill as racial segregation restricted them from investing in houses. (Wilson, 1941)
- ³ The ideal of 'Muscular Christianity' evolved in Victorian England and stressed a connection between 'healthy' sport and the civilising properties of Christianity.
- ⁴ Minutes, Native Football Committee, Ndola, 26 April 1937, SEC 2/174, National Archives of Zambia.
- ⁵ Letter from Mufulira senior welfare officer to the secretary, Copperbelt African Football Association, Mufulira, 12 May 1960, 10.7.10C, Mining and Industrial Archive, Ndola.
- ⁶ Luanshya African Welfare 2nd Quarterly Report, Luanshya, June 1951, WP 1/5/1 Loc. 5266, National Archives of Zambia.
- ⁷ Minutes of the Urban Advisory Council 1945-1947: "Dead Welfare Work," WP1/1/4 Loc.5271, National Archives of Zambia.
- ⁸ Minutes of Divisional Coaches meeting held on 5 September 1984, ZCCM 15.1.7E Sports Clubs & Councils, Mining and Industrial Archive Ndola.

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