

2022

Book Review

Cheela Chilala
University of Zambia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/zssj>



Part of the [African Studies Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Chilala, Cheela (2022) "Book Review," *Zambia Social Science Journal*: Vol. 8: No. 1, Article 5.
Available at: <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/zssj/vol8/iss1/5>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarship@Cornell Law: A Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Zambia Social Science Journal by an authorized editor of Scholarship@Cornell Law: A Digital Repository. For more information, please contact jmp8@cornell.edu.

Book Review

Cheela Chilala
University of Zambia

Nation-Building in the Context of 'One Zambia, One Nation'.

By Mubanga E Kashoki. (Lusaka: Gadsden Publishers, 2018), 107pp.

Consisting of seven chapters, *Nation-Building in the Context of 'One Zambia, One Nation'* may be described as a collection of writings published or presented in a variety of contexts during earlier phases of the author's academic life. While Chapter 1 (What is Zambia's Cultural Identity?) was published for the very first time and provides a foundation for the rest of the book, Chapter 2 (Language and Nation in Zambia vis-à-vis National Integration) was first published in 1971 in *The Journal of the Language Association of East Africa* before being published in *The Language Factor in Zambia* (1990), a book authored by Kashoki and published by the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, now known as Zambia Educational Publishing House (ZEPH). Chapters 3 (The Dilemma of National Integration) and 4 (The Path to National Integration) were also initially published in *The Language Factor in Zambia*. Chapter 5 (Language, Tribe and the Concept of 'One Zambia, One Nation') was first published in 1973 in *The Bulletin of the Zambian Language Group*, while Chapter 6 (Variety is the Spice of Life: The Place of Multilingualism in the Concept of 'One Zambia, One Nation') was first published in 1977 in *Zango* 21, 11. Chapter 7 (Language, Communication, and National Unity in Zambia into the 21st Century) was first published in 2007 in the *University of Zambia Journal of Humanities*.

It is worth noting that the oldest chapter was first published in 1971 while the latest was first presented in 2012. This means that the content spans a period of four decades. This point is further buttressed by the fact that the book exhibits evidence of the author having made efforts – albeit minimal – to revise some aspects of earlier versions of the publications.

Despite originating from different time periods and source texts, the chapters were purposefully selected to confront the difficult but pertinent questions of nation building, national integration and national unity. These questions are still very relevant to present-day Zambia.

The only downside, if indeed it is, of the book is the risk of anachronism emanating from the fact that much of the content deals with the period between the 70's and 80's. To illustrate: in Chapter 3 the book talks about the attempt to turn the bush suit into a national dress for Zambian men during the 70's and 80's (p23). The young generation of Zambian readers, unfamiliar with life under

Book Review

the Kaunda government, might not understand the significance of the point because the bush suit has lost currency as a form of national dress. That said, the author provides a caveat by clearly indicating the date of initial publication, therefore placing the point in the appropriate historical context.

However, what might appear to be the downside is also an advantage, if for no other reason than at least because it eloquently demonstrates that, first, the question of nation-building has been at the core of Zambian life and politics since independence and, second, that the factors that drive the process of nation-building remain largely the same despite changes at social and political level. And as Kashoki argues in the book, nation-building is an ongoing process which cannot be achieved by merely pursuing unity without diversity but rather by pursuing unity in diversity.

Kashoki's book is not only a laudable attempt at tackling the complex question of nation-building in the context of a multilingual and multiethnic country like Zambia, but it is also a brave attempt: it tackles the uncomfortable topics and concepts of tribe, language and nation. It points out, for example, that one of the major challenges of nation-building and integration in Zambia – and a source of tribal conflict – is the misconception that language and tribe are the same. He thus disputes the common belief that Zambia has 73 languages and 73 tribes, postulating that Zambia might only have about 20 languages and about 80 variants.

Kashoki's book confronts the question raised by Surer Mohamed: "What is the trouble with 'tribe'?"¹ Like Mohamed, Kashoki recognises the challenge of defining tribe. In defining tribe, however, Kashoki fundamentally differs with the view expressed by, among others, Chinua Achebe who argues against the classification of some African groups as tribe instead of nation. Achebe contends that the Igbo people of Nigeria, for example, are not a tribe but a nation.² Thus, what Kashoki calls tribes Achebe calls nations.

After conducting a poignant analysis of the challenges of nation-building, Kashoki concludes that, first, government alone cannot foster national unity through imposition of language policy without the involvement of ordinary citizens; second, that tribal conflict is more than just a product of tribal division: it is also a result of inequitable distribution of national resources; third, that what Zambia needs is unity in diversity, not unity without diversity because tribal identity will remain regardless of the changing times and should be treated as a national asset rather than a liability; and fourth, that nation-building is also influenced by constantly changing communication patterns, residence patterns and increasing cases of intermarriages. Fifth, that in Zambia it is not possible to pick a single language as a means of building national unity – not even English. The only realistic future for Zambia, as Kashoki sees it, is one where English *Cheela Chilala*

continues to be used as the language of government and commerce while the local languages all continue to play a role – to varying degrees – in the process of nation-building.

¹ Surer Mohamed. 2014. “The Trouble with Tribe: Beyond a Monocausal Explanation for Ethnicized Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa.” In The Undergraduate Awards, Paper 1. ² Chinua Achebe. 2000. *Home and Exile*. Canongate: London:3-8.