

***Petits récits: Creative perspectives of Chinese encounters in
Zambia***

By Stary Mwaba

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for

Master of Fine Art at Rhodes University

February 2019

Practical Supervisor: Heidi Sincuba

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Ruth Simbao

ABSTRACT

This mini-thesis, which supports my MFA exhibition *Black Mountain*, articulates on-the-ground creative perspectives of the Zambia–China discourse, through the representation of little narratives – *les petits récits* – connected to personal experiences. Through my creative production as an artist, I respond to perceptions of the Chinese presence in Africa. I utilize historical and contemporary personal narratives to complicate existing perceptions of Chinese presence in my home context of Zambia.

“*Petit récits*”, or “little narratives”, in Francois Lyotard’s term, refers to personal stories of individuals that subvert dominant master-narratives and their legitimization in social-cultural structure. In the case of China’s presence in Zambia, I refer to the dichotomized narratives in the media as metanarratives which pay little attention to the people on the ground and propose the approach of “little narratives” to foreground the lived experiences of Zambians who have individual encounters with Chinese in various social spaces. By employing the narratives of my family members through installations, paintings, and drawings, I intervene in a broader China–Africa discourse that is often driven by economics and politics, and I attach importance to the little narratives.

In my thesis I divide my material into three chapters; each chapter grows out of an encounter with the presence of China (and Chinese people) in Zambia in relation to the very personal narratives of family members – Zoë my daughter, my grandma, and Ngolo my cousin. The first chapter focuses on my work *Chinese Cabbage* as my entry point to this topic, which is based on a school experiment I did with my daughter Zoë. In this chapter I also discuss the current discourses around China’s presence. Chapter two revisits the Zambian–Chinese historical encounters in memory of my grandma’s *insaka* stories about the construction of TAZARA Railway, and thus my works discussed in this chapter attach importance to the individual engagements from a historical perspective. Chapter three discusses in particular the controversial issues around *Black Mountain* and the works inspired by my cousin Ngolo’s stories of mining in *Black Mountain* and dealing with the Chinese traders.

Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete bibliographic references. This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Fine Art at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at another university.



Stary Mwaba

5th March, 2020

Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | i |
| List of illustrations | ii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1: First Encounters: The Chinese International School (Zoë's little narrative). | |
| 1.1: The Metanarratives | 13 |
| 1.2: The School Science Experiment | 18 |
| 1.3: Chinese Cabbage | 19 |
| Chapter 2: First Encounters: The Uhuru Railway (Grandma's little narrative). | |
| 2.1 Projecting the old little narrative through the contemporary media narrative..... | 26 |
| 2.2: The Freedom Railway..... | 26 |
| 2.3: The Chambeshi Bridge: A route destroyed..... | 28 |
| 2.4: Black Bodies..... | 30 |
| 2.5: Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambia The New Colony..... | 33 |
| 2.6: The Legitimate Little Narrative "The Stamps", Authorizing the Small Narratives and Creating a Palimpsest. | 35 |
| Chapter 3: The Mining Encounters: (Ngolo's little narrative) | |
| 3.1: Mining on the Copperbelt | 45 |
| 3.2: Black Mountain | 47 |
| 3.3: Drawing cartographies: <i>Mapping Black Mountain Land (2018)</i> | 50 |
| 3.3:1 <i>Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive</i> | 51 |
| 3.3: 2: Scorched Land: polluted landscape | 52 |
| 3.3.3 The Copperbelt..... | 53 |

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Conclusion | 63 |
| Bibliography | |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God for His grace, and I would sincerely like to thank my wife Sheila for the support, patience and endurance through the time I have been away. Special thanks go to my children Mapalo, Zoë-Helena and Cyrus for their constant inspiration and love.

Sincere thanks go to my supervisor Professor Ruth Simbao; I cannot thank you enough for your patience, wisdom and guidance. I am deeply grateful for your help in enabling me to realize my concepts and project.

Mx Heidi Sincuba, my practice supervisor, thank you for fine-tuning my concepts, and for dialogue about work that will go beyond the Rhodes University Fine Art studios. I would also like to thank the *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* research team; special mention goes to Lifang Zhang and Gladys Kalichini for feedback on my work.

I would like to acknowledge my Grandmother Chisanga Nkole (RIP) for the wisdom and insights that have been important in the formalization of my concepts. Thank you for the impartation of knowledge.

Danny Ngolofwana and Stanley Ngolofwana (RIP), thank you for sharing your experiences and above all your life stories.

Last but not least, I acknowledge the National Research Foundation (NRF)/Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) SARChI research programme in *Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa*, and the Andrew W. Mellon *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* programme for financial support.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction Figures

Fig. i. *Map of Uhuru Railway Line* (2011), photograph courtesy of Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA).

Fig. ii. *Nchanga smelter slag dumpsite in Chingola, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. iii. *KCM Nchanga mine smelter in Chingola, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. iv. *Children walking on Nchanga water pipes in Chingola, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. v. *Children drinking water from leaking Nchanga water pipes in Chingola, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. vi. *Nchanga Mine Pipeline in Chingola, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. vii. *Blue water from the Black Mountain in Wasakili, Kitwe, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. vii. *Truck ferrying acid, Nchanga, Chingola, Zambia* (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Chapter 1 Figures

Fig. 1.1. Michael Soi, *China Loves Africa, No. 75* (2018), acrylics on canvas, 122.5 x 225 cm, photograph courtesy of Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya.

Fig 1.2. Michael Soi, *China Loves Africa, No. 65* (2018), acrylics on canvas, 122 x 245.5 cm, photograph courtesy of Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya.

Fig. 1.3. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *We dey beg* (2017), digital animation printed on paper photograph source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>

Fig. 1.4. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *Them Threaten* (2017), digital animation printed on paper photograph, source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>

Fig. 1.5. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *Occupation* (2017), digital animation printed on paper photograph, source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>

Fig. 1.6. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *For Life* (2018), digital animation printed on paper photograph courtesy of <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>

Fig.1.7. Sary Mwaba, detail of *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of Chinese cabbage, food colour, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig.1.8. Sary Mwaba, *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of Chinese cabbage, food colour, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig.1.9. Sary Mwaba, *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of Chinese cabbage, food colour, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Chapter 2 Figures

Fig. 2.1. Sary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on canvas, 150 X 180 cm, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.2. Stary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on board, 40 X 60cm, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.3. Stary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on board, 40 X 60cm, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.4. Stary Mwaba, Detail of *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint, Chambesia The New Colony* (2018), newsprints, variable sizes, photograph courtesy of Stary Mwaba.

2.5. Uhuru Railway or Freedom Railway, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.6. Detail of Uhuru Railway or Freedom Railway Bridge, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.7. Old Chambeshi Bridge that was bombed, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.8. Chambeshi River, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.9. General Von Lettow-Vorbeck Monument, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.10. Detail of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck Monument, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.11. Hu Xiangqian, *Sun* (2008), single-channel video (color, sound), Ed. 5/5, duration: 7 minutes and 59 seconds, photograph courtesy of <https://rfc.museum/28c-hu-xiangqian>.

Fig. 2.12. Stary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.13. Stary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.15. Stary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, view of test installation in studio, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.16. Lung Wu, President of Chambia (2018), photoshopped image of the president of the Republic of Zambia, Edgar Lungu and anonymous Chinese character, image courtesy Eric Musamba.

Fig 2.17. Flag of Chambia (2018), image courtesy of Jeremiah Parford.

Fig 2.18. TAZARA passengers, Bana Mukupa and grandson, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 2.19. Sary Mwaba, *The repatriation stamp 2* (2018), polystyrene, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Chapter 3 Figures

Fig3.1. The Black Mountain, Wusakile, Kitwe, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.2. A mining slag or waste dump, Wusakile, Kitwe, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.3. Sary Mwaba, *Traces* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.4. Sary Mwaba, *Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various sizes, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.5. Sary Mwaba, *Black Mountain* (2019), Sary Mwaba, *The Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various sizes, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.6. Sary Mwaba, *Black Mountain* (2019), Sary Mwaba, *The Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various sizes, photograph by Mwaba.

Fig 3.7. Sary Mwaba, *Mapping Black Mountain land* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.8. Map of Chingola and other towns on the Copperbelt siting mining activities, image source: Journal of Geochemical Exploration.

Fig. 3.9. Stary Mwaba, *Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, various sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.10. Stary Mwaba, *Scorched Land* (2018), mixed media shade cloth, various sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.11. Stary Mwaba, *Scorched Land* (2018), mixed media shade cloth, various sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

Fig. 3.12. Sammy Baloji, *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden. Episode 1* (2017), Installation: Video, photographs, copper plaque, copper crosses and coins, installation view at Documenta 14, Athens, photograph Source: Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren.

Fig. 3.13. Sammy Baloji Raccord, #6, *Mine à ciel ouvert noyée de Musonoï* (2011), Kolwezi, *Imaging the Congo–China Nexus* (2011), digital inkjet print on Baryta paper, 80 x 267.35 cm, photograph source: Axis Gallery.

Fig. 3.14. Sammy Baloji, *Raccord #3, Mine à ciel ouvert noyée de Musonoï* (2011), Kolwezi, *Imaging the Congo–China Nexus* (2011), digital inkjet print on Baryta paper, 80 x 267.35 cm, photograph Source: Axis Gallery.

Fig. 3.15 Sammy Baloji, *Portrait #1, Cité de Kapata, Creuseur artisanal à l'intérieur de sa tente en bâche* (2011), Kolwezi, *Imaging the Congo–China Nexus* (2011), digital inkjet print on Baryta paper, 80 x 267.35 cm, photograph Source: Axis Gallery.

INTRODUCTION

China–Africa Discourse

While I was in a residency at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin in 2014, I began exploring the topic of Chinese presence in Africa. Coming back home and having been away for over a year, I was excited to explore further the subject of the Chinese presence in Zambia. I decided to drive to the Copperbelt where I grew up, inspired by the interest that I saw in the work that I exhibited at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. The *Chinese Cabbage* piece that I had exhibited in Germany attracted a lot of attention simply because many people assumed the work was addressing Chinese economic colonization. Informed by narratives from the media, I decided to go back to my birthplace, Chingola. I spent my formative years in three towns of the Copperbelt; Chingola, Kitwe and Mufulira. I was eager to expose the bad elements of the Chinese presence in the Zambian mining sector. I was following up a story I had read about water pollution, in which it was assumed that the water sources had been polluted by a Chinese mining company (VOA 2009). With the help of my cousin who took me around, I quickly realized to what degree I had been misinformed about the happenings in the Copperbelt regarding the subject; in the first place, Konkola Copper Mines¹, the mining company that was responsible for the pollution of the river, was not owned by the Chinese.

The smells of the Copperbelt bring back the nostalgic happy feelings of my childhood days – happy moments spent with my grandparents, but also the difficult times of my high school days in the 1990s, when I experienced funeral after funeral, including my own father’s funeral. Before his passing, my father talked about his early retirement. These were trying times for a lot of miners, as the country’s Structural Adjustment Programme was taking its toll. A lot of people were laid off from their employment. Visiting my cousin’s Black Mountain mining spot as an adult started me thinking of why we never questioned a lot of things; I have seen these mountains but never realized what they really are.

¹ Konkola Copper Mines is a copper mining and smelting company in Zambia. It is a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources, a mining conglomerate based in Mumbai and London. Konkola's name is abbreviated to KCM. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konkola_Copper_Mines

Historical background

Historically, the China–Zambia relationship was deemed by China as one of “the poor helping the poor”, as one underdeveloped country reaching out to another. China claimed a shared history of imperial conquest and colonization with its “brothers in the Third World,” against the forces of imperialism and neo-colonialism and to be part of a common “Third World struggle”. The focus was mostly about ideologies as the Republic of China supported the liberation struggle of southern African countries during the 1960s and 1970s in the Cold War context (Keith 1985; Chongo 2016; Simbao 2019).

The Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) railway line (also known as the Uhuru Railway) (Fig.1) was constructed with assistance from China in the 1970s, which helped Zambia reach the coastal city of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania. The Uhuru, (Freedom) Railway, (see chapter 2), was the critical link to the sea that landlocked Zambia desperately needed in order to break free from her dependency on the Southern Rhodesian (now Zimbabwe), Angolan, and South African railways and ports (Monson 2009). The construction of the railway provided employment and, after completion, transportation for the local villages, just as it provided the much-needed transportation of the copper ore from the Copperbelt. The railway line since its inception has been essential to life and livelihood in rural communities in the remote regions. At the same time, the railway came to depend upon the agency and initiative of the rural users. The TAZARA ordinary passenger train, which stops at the smallest village settlements and stations, provides services that people from these villages have come to depend upon.

The rail line also facilitated the easy migration of people from the Northern Province of Zambia to the Copperbelt to seek employment in the mines that needed the labour force. Along with the railway, the Chinese government also helped construct the TAZAMA Pipeline (Tanzania-Zambia Mafuta Pipeline, *mafuta* meaning ‘oil’ in Kiswahili) a 1710 km crude oil pipeline from the Single Point Mooring terminal at the outer anchorage of in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, to the TIPER refinery in Dar Es Salaam and the Indeni refinery in Ndola, Zambia. The refinery was commissioned in 1968 (TAZAMA operations 2016).

In this chapter, I introduce the historical context of China–Zambia relationships. I was born on the Copperbelt of Zambia, one of the biggest copper reserves in the world. My parents lived in

Kitwe; however, as I was the first child and tradition required that my mother return to live with her mother in Chingola, which became my birthplace. Chingola has one of the world's largest open pits. Traditional practices such as these played a significant role in the life of the migrant worker (Ferguson 1999).

Zambia has had a unique relationship with China, but in the contemporary discourse little is said about the human aspect of the relationship as the focus is largely on the broader trade relations of China and Africa. My work engages with the China–Africa relationship from a personal perspective; the historical context in this regard, the construction of the TAZARA railway, becomes the starting point for me. My family settled along the railway line and were involved in its construction. Through my *Black Mountain* exhibition at the Gallery in the Round² and the accompanying mini-thesis, I engaged also with one of the most important aspects of the discourse that interrogate the racial issue implicating the Chinese as they engage with Africa and the Black body. I tried contrast contemporary engagements with the historical engagements even as I exposed the hopes, aspirations, and determination of the Zambia community to create a freedom railway on one hand, and the Chinese aspiration to assert their position as a global player and, importantly, as Jamie Monson (2006:3) writes, “brothers”, in the Third World.

China–Africa art practice

In relation to art practice in Africa a number of artists in recent years have engaged with the subject of the Chinese presence in Africa. However, while much research has been conducted on China–Africa in disciplines such as economics and sociology, writing on China–Africa in relation to the visual arts is relatively new. As one of the foremost writers on artworks that engage with the China–Africa theme, Ruth Simbao (2012) stresses that, rather than accept rhetoric that makes sweeping statements, “Research on China–Africa relations would benefit from a comparative approach that compares—through deep, qualitative research—not just regions or nations, but also locally embedded communities, specific families, individual experiences, cultural contexts, different time frames and histories”.

² The Gallery in the Round is in the 1820 Settlers Monument in Makhanda. (Just as Grahamstown is now referred to as Makhanda, the name of the monument is currently being debated). Please note that once the exhibition has been installed, I will add new installation images to the thesis.

In her article, “China–Africa Relations: Research Approaches”, Simbao (2012:7) argues that the contemporary arts and media give a channel for individuals to “talk back” to the popular press, political commentaries, and against stereotypes. The arts can capture the contradictions and complications of the discourse as well as individual’s expression, and as such are critically important to conversations and negotiations regarding the notions of “China” and “Africa” that are too often constructed from the outside (Simbao 2012:7). Through analysis of China–Africa relations, Simbao's (2012) research highlights Africans’ experiences in China in a short artistic film by South African filmmaker Lebogang Rasethaba who made the film trilogy *Sino* (2010), *Metro* (2011) and *Cosmo* (future) (2017). Of direct relevance to my research in Zambia is Simbao’s (2017) essay “*A Song of Uhuru and a Difficult Dance: Anawana Haloba’s Sound Memories of TAZARA*”.

In 2012, Simbao curated the exhibition *Making Way* which featured artists from China and various African countries, and through this exhibition pushed for more in-depth and grounded research that goes beyond broad, top-down China–Africa discussions that are driven by business and government. The exhibition showed at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 2012, and then travelled to the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2013. The artists included Maleonn, Dan Halter, James Webb, Dotun Makun, Qin Ga, Hua Jiming, Randolph Hartzenberg, Vulindlela Nyoni, Kudzanai Chiurai, Gerald Machona, Michael MacGarry, Brent Mestre, Lebogang Rasethaba, Chen Qiulin, Doung Anwar Jahangeer and Wu Junyong.³

Photographs from Hua Jiming’s performance “*Walking into Africa in a Chinese Way*” (2010) were included in the *Making Way* (2012) exhibition. In this work, performed in Cape Town, the artist walked through the commercial zone wearing a suit that he fashioned out of newspapers from Beijing and Cape Town, calling attention to the “costuming” of China–Africa relations by media portrayals (Simbao 2012; 2016). Of the many artistic works that Simbao highlights, several examples showcase the diversity of artists’ views and approaches. While many of these artists produce, present, and perform their work independently, art exchanges between African and Chinese artists also emerge.

South African Artist William Kentridge’s contribution to the China–Africa discourse comes in the form of film, titled *Notes Towards a Model Opera* (2016) that premiered at the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art in Beijing in 2016. It was then shown at the National Museum of

³ See www.makingway.co.za

Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, and later exhibited at Goodman Gallery Johannesburg. According to Payal Uttam, writing about Kentridge's work for the *South China Morning Post*, "China certainly hovers over us like a huge Zeppelin. The scale of it, the scale of its hunger for resources, the scale of everything. China in Africa today, a sense of a series of questions rather than any answers," (Uttam 2015).

The exhibition *Chinafrika. under construction* (2017) (at the GFZK [*Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst*, or Museum of Contemporary Art]) in Leipzig was curated by Jochen Becker (metroZones, Berlin) together with Julia Schäfer (Museum of Contemporary Art, Leipzig) and Daniel Kötter (Berlin). The *Chinafrika. under construction* (2017) organizers collaborated with Juliette Leeb-du Toit and Ross Antony who organized the *Chinese Presence in Southern Africa* (2017) to develop a two day symposium of discussions at the Goethe Institute in Johannesburg in 2017. Participants at the joint symposium presented academic papers, artists' talks and group discussions that focused on cultural responses to the relationship between the African continent and the People's Republic of China, both historical and contemporary. As part of the *Chinese Presence in Southern Africa* (2017) discussions, I presented a paper titled *Chinese Cabbage* (2017) that drew from my early work on the topic.

*Chinafrika. under construction*⁴ (2017) is an ongoing project which claims that the goal of its artistic research is to trace cultural relationships between China and Africa and to portray a global process. The project concentrates on the Copperbelt in northern Zambia and the south-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo as a hub for the extraction and the transportation of raw materials, as well as on the megacities Lagos (Nigeria), Johannesburg (South Africa) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). In China, they focus on the Pearl River Delta with its African trade centres in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and the free-trade zone in Shenzhen. My art piece *Chinese Cabbage* (2015) (fig.1.4, fig.1.5, fig.1.6) (see chapter one) featured in that exhibition.

⁴ The project offers African, Chinese and European artists and curators, theorists and protagonists the chance to develop shared artistic, as well as theoretical positions. These are presented in a mobile format in workshops and conferences, exhibitions, performances, film screenings and publications. The tricontinental project approach disengages itself from unilateral fixations along former colonial routes (North/South), by instead offering alternatives (South/South), new options of mutual reflection (South/North/South) and contrasting, multiple perspectives. See website of the project, <https://chinafrika.org/>

Zambia–China

While research on China and Africa in the visual arts is relatively new, China's expansion of bilateral trade and investment links in Africa has gained intense media and political focus over the past decade. China's presence on the continent is evident in many sectors. In particular, the growth of Chinese communities in Africa has become a prominent trend, attracting global journalism and attention. The number of immigrants is not exactly known; the lack of respectable quantitative estimates impedes both critical analysis and allows wildly speculative estimates to fill these gaps. Such claims have sparked political tensions and contributed to the overwhelming perception that China is building a new empire in Africa (French, 2015).

Late Zambian President Michael Chilufya Sata (in)famously claimed that the country had been “infested” by 80 000 Chinese people. These sentiments contributed to a xenophobic political campaign and sometimes to racial tensions at work sites in Zambia (Postel 2017). In 2006 Sata used anti-Chinese rhetoric in his presidential campaign, stating that if he were to win the election, he would expel the Chinese. This was in reaction to a host of frustrations felt by the Zambian population with regard to employment malpractices of Chinese investors (Dymond 2007).

During the campaign the former president's negative sentiments resonated strikingly with Western analysts' concerns about China's role in the so-called “Scramble for Africa”. In 2011 Sata, a strong critic of the Chinese, was voted into office, and later toned down his rhetoric just a few months into his presidency, learning to accommodate the Chinese rather than expel them as he had threatened in his previous election campaign (Guo Solange, 2012). However, the political rhetoric has continued, according to the opposition leader for the United Party for National Development (UPND), Hakainde Hichilema, who instructed his parliamentarians to initiate impeachment proceedings against President Edgar Lungu for allegedly abrogating the republican constitution by selling land to the Chinese and constant reckless borrowing from the Chinese (Lusaka Times 2018).

Grand and small narratives: Lyotard (The use of *petits récits*)

When I went back to Chingola for my research in 2017, I went to the Nchanga dumpsite (Fig.3.3), and Kitwe's Wasakili dumpsite, also known as the Black Mountain (Fig.3.5, Fig.3.6). With nostalgic feelings about the place, we passed through the same routes we used as young

teenagers, a place that was once full of life and activities, but all there is to see and feel here now is abandonment and neglect. Starting from this trip, I develop my *Black Mountain* project.

My MFA exhibition, *Black Mountain*, draws from the history of mining in Zambia, and I interrogate the current and historical activities on the mineral-rich Copperbelt province. Through this work, I highlight the encounters with the Chinese, the current and colonial mineral exploitation as well as the ongoing global capitalistic trends. Through installations and paintings such as *Black Mountain* (2018), *Mapping Black Mountain Land* (2018), *Scorched Land* (2018) and *Traces*, (2018), I stand on my head. I place myself around the black mountain and remove any predetermined notions of how I can or should speak about the space of Black Mountain and the Copperbelt, and I speak from the knowledge built from personal experiences and narratives. A key point of departure for me is my own use of personal narratives, and in my thesis, I connect this to Lyotard's (1984) notion of *petits récits*.

The concept of *petits récits* is from Jean François Lyotard's work *Postmodern Condition*, in which he defines postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives" and he discusses the metanarratives in particular as implying "a philosophy of history which is used to legitimate knowledge" (Lyotard, 1984:xxiv). Arguing against the legitimization of metanarratives within the infinite progress found in cultural, religious, political and social structures, Lyotard (1984: 60) proposes an 'alternative', what he terms as little narratives (*petits récits*) which remain "the quintessential form of imaginative invention". In addition, he argues that "the principle of consensus as a criterion of validation seems to be inadequate" (Lyotard, 1984:60). Following this trajectory in the case of China's presence in Zambia, I refer to the dichotomized narratives of the media as metanarratives that pay little attention to the people on the ground, and I propose the approach of "little narratives" to foreground the lived experiences of Zambians who have individual encounters with Chinese in various social spaces.

In my thesis, I divide my material into three chapters, and each chapter grows out of an encounter with the presence of China (and Chinese people) in Zambia. Each encounter relates to the very personal narratives of family members – Zoë my daughter, my grandma, and Ngolo my cousin. I have titled my chapters: 1. **The First Encounters: the Chinese International School** (Zoë's little narrative), 2. **The First Encounters: The Uhuru railway** (Grandma's little narrative), and 3. **The Mining Encounters** (Ngolo's little narrative). In my MFA exhibition titled *Black Mountain* and, in this thesis, I use these small, personal narratives to

“talk back” (Simbao 2012:7) to the sweeping China–Africa metanarratives that overlook specific individual and community experiences.

FIGURES: Introduction

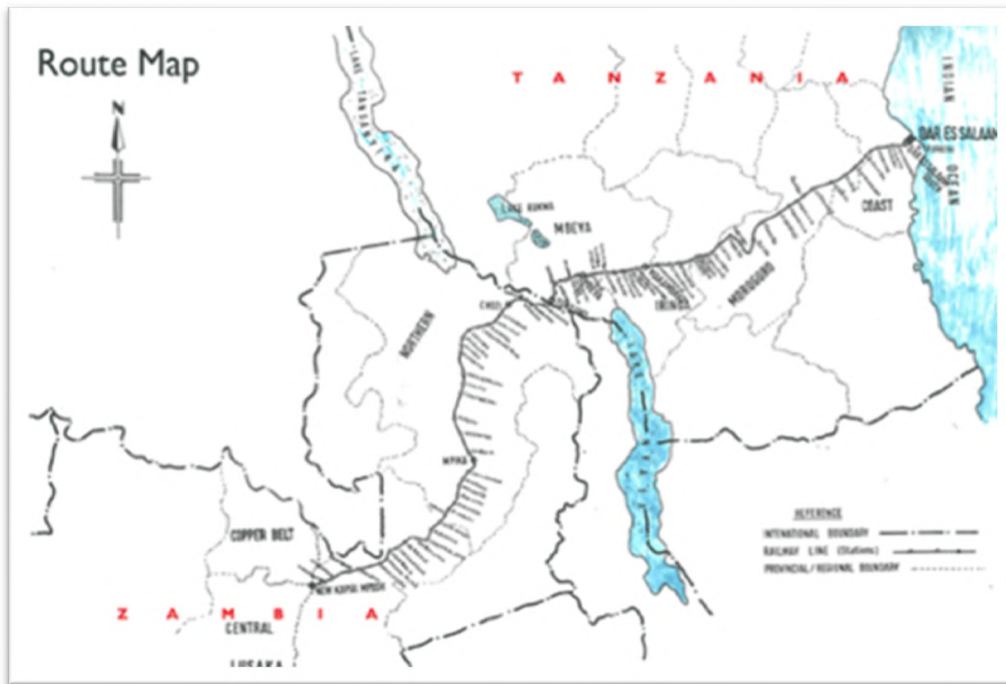


Fig. i. *Map of Uhuru Railway Line (2011)*, photograph source: Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA).



Fig. ii. *Nchanga smelter slag dumpsite in Chingola, Zambia (2017)*, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. iii. *KCM Nchanga mine smelter in Chingola, Zambia (2017)*, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. iv. *Children walking on Nchanga water pipes in Chingola, Zambia (2017)*, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. v. *Children drinking water from leaking Nchanga water pipes in Chingola, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.*



Fig.vi. *Nchanga Mine Pipeline in Chingola, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.*



Fig. vii. *Blue water from the Black Mountain in Wasakili, Kitwe, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.*



Fig. vii. *Truck ferrying Acid, Nehanga, Chingola, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.*

CHAPTER 1. FIRST ENCOUNTERS: THE CHINESE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (ZOË'S LITTLE NARRATIVE)

1.1 The Metanarratives

This mini-thesis intends to provide a supporting document to the exhibition of paintings and installations titled *Black Mountain* (2019) in the Gallery in The Round, at the 1820 Settlers National Monument in Makhanda, South Africa.

In this chapter, I begin with the metanarratives that perpetuate simplistic understandings of the China–Africa discourse, and consider the role of the media in perpetuating stereotypes about China and Africa. I briefly consider the works of Kenyan artist Michael Soi (Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2) and Ghanaian artist, Bright Ackwerh (Fig. 1.3, Fig. 1.4, Fig 1.5 and Fig. 1.6), and then use the narrative of Zoë, my daughter, as an entry point into my artistic exploration of Chinese and African encounters. As such, this chapter sets the backdrop for my more in-depth analysis on the work in the *Black Mountain* exhibition in chapters two and three.

Through small personal narratives linked to my relatives and drawn from lived experiences, guided by specific situations in my home contexts of Lusaka and the Copperbelt, I intervene into a broader, top-down and Northern-driven discourse of “China–Africa” often espoused in the media. Through paintings and installations, I engage with the urban spaces of Kitwe and Chingola in order to respond to the broader Chinese presences on the continent.

These are specific situations to our home contexts; these encounters are individual pursuits, which Amartya Sen (1999:3) refers to as human freedoms. Some of these narratives are about things that are not allowed and things that have not been said. Employing creative, on-the-ground ways of relaying the “unspoken”, I intervened into a broader China–Africa discourse that is too often driven by the economics and politics of the West (Simbao 2016). In my practical work and my thesis, I address this by not simplistically stereotyping Chinese residents in Zambia, who in the mainstream have been thought of as neocolonial and economic aggressors (Marks 2006).

Through the work and the narrative portrayed therein, I highlight the complexities of China–Africa relations, which have become a hot topic both in the general media and for scholars worldwide. Despite China being a unique catalyst for growth and development in the 21st-century Global South, many critics fear that China is a new colonial power, exacerbating

existing patterns of corruption and inequality and plundering of Africa's natural resources. These critics, by conflating the multiple stakeholders and actors on both sides, and generalizing about China exploiting African raw materials, accuse China of violating local laws, depleting the continent's resources and taking advantage of corrupt leaders through its "neocolonialist" strategies (Solange 2012; Giese 2014).

Monson (2009) and Giese (2014) argue that the Western media is working to paint the big picture of the relationship between China and Africa as a neocolonialist and economic aggressor that undermines all Western efforts to reform the continent by supporting non-democratic systems. Furthermore, they note that the story of the Chinese presence in Africa is often flattened by stereotypical perceptions that feed international socio-economic and socio-political agendas. I noted with curiosity how Mr James Lukuku's one-man protest story was recently covered in many "international" media outlets including the *Voice of America* (Solomon, 2018). The newspaper cited James Lukuku, the lone protestor, highlighting the quote on a poster he was holding that says, "China EQUALS Hitler", also wearing a tee-shirt with the hashtag "Say No to China", while walking in the streets of Lusaka. There has been a take on China's use of so-called debt-trap diplomacy in most Western media, especially with regard to Zambia. Many have alluded to this particular story without considering the nitty-gritty of the specifics of the Zambian debt to China. Through the installation and painting *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), I have explicated how the media biases and misinformation have created an image of a state. I interrogate such stories as Lukuku's, the single protestor who is portrayed and characterized as popular resistance. Lukuku's protest was based on the rumours that the Chinese would seize Zambian national assets in the case of a default in payments on loans and take over institutions such as the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) and Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (ZESCO). Salem Solomon (2018), the writer of an article titled *Zambia's Sovereignty Concerns Put China in Crosshairs* treats the rumours that formed the basis of Lukuku's one-man protest as basic facts about the Chinese presence in Zambia. She goes on to discuss in detail how there is popular resistance against the idea of China taking over, without really refuting or unpacking the complexities of the issues.

The complexity of emotions is closely linked to individual Zambian responses to China's growing influence in the country. Individual encounters and engagements vary across the board, having some condemning the cheap Chinese imports undercutting local companies, others talking about launching new careers on their new Chinese smartphones. On one hand

some complain about working conditions at Chinese companies, while on the other hand others are learning Mandarin in the hope of studying in China (Van Staden 2017).

In the recent past, the Chinese presence in Zambia has been a contentious topic and has been a subject of intense socio-political debate (Alden 2007:5). In 2005, an explosion that left approximately 50 workers dead occurred on the premises of the Chambeshi mine, owned by China Nonferrous Metal Mining Africa Plc, at the Chinese-owned Bgrimm Explosives Plant, which sells explosives to most mines in Zambia and the region (Giese 2014). The accident left a bitter taste with many Zambians, who viewed the Chinese as reckless. Moreover, the sale of the Black Mountain in Kitwe on the Copperbelt to Chinese businessmen has been a subject of debate, and most recently, through the Ministry of Agriculture, the sale of land belonging to the Natural Science College in Lusaka to Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), a Chinese state-owned aerospace and defence conglomerate (Lusaka Times 2018).

The complaint by marketeers about the loss of business to small-scale Chinese farms in the market has been a source of tension as well, especially in poultry farming (Face2Face Africa 2018). Recently, the government enlisted Chinese recruits in the police service, provoking debates in various media outlets, which saw the decision overturned by the inspector general of police. “Zambia’s police force has scrapped plans to employ eight Chinese nationals barely 24 hours after it unveiled the scheme, following a public outcry” (BBC News 2017). People were outraged that the Chinese would now control the police service, with some suggesting that the Chinese have become so powerful and influential in Zambia that they can get anything they want at the expense of the citizens. These views have compounded the negative view of the Chinese in the country.

Simbao (2012: 1) writes about “Trembles in the Media” and argues that, “The largest hurdles to meaningful research on China–Africa relations are the distortions and exaggerations that infiltrate the media and the perpetuation of stereotypes”. The “phobia and threat perception about China in Africa are largely products of Western-inspired hypocrisy and arrogance, which are increasingly finding echoes among Africans themselves” (le Pere, cited in Simbao 2012:1). Unfortunately, this rhetoric is finding its way into the work of artists as well, and it often relies on sensationalism, such as Andrew Malone’s statement that “In the greatest movement of people the world has ever seen, China is secretly working to turn the entire [African] continent into a new colony” (Malone cited in Simbao 2012:1). A decade later, the deliberate and continuous use of the word “colony” has been translated into a nation called

“Chambria” that exists online in the virtual community, which I will elaborate on later.

The recent engagement in this century departs in significant ways from earlier times in China’s historical relations with Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. A number of African nations seem to be moving away from Western influence in strategic and calculated ways, and Africa is not always the victim it is assumed to be and at times is in more control of its own destiny than one might assume. African leaders see some potential for their African nations to be recognized as mutual development partners rather than being in the position that the West frequently puts it into – that is, in the position of always being a problem that needs to be solved (Van Staden, 2017).

However, although those relations are widely covered, they are also under-researched. This is driven in part by the wider resurgence of China in world affairs, but much is also the result of the recent visibility and interest in the growing presence, roles, and impacts of Chinese actors throughout the continent. In 1968 George Yu, a leading contributor to China–Africa research, wrote that “studying China in Africa is much like pursuing a dragon in the bush. The dragon is imposing but the bush is dense” (Large 2007).

The notion of a Chinese “dragon” operating in the African “bush”, its actions constrained but yet selectively visible against unfamiliar terrain, persists in much of the language and stereotypes used to describe China–Africa relations today. This is particularly the case in Western coverage. The effect is often emotively used to describe China’s rise in Africa in terms of a monolithic Chinese dragon in an unvariegated African bush stripped of historical and political content (Van Staden, 2017). According to AfricaSpeaks4Africa, Kenyan artist Michael Soi’s series *China loves Africa* (2018) (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2) is loaded with profound messages, seductive in nature that uncovers the exploitative character of China’s partnership with Africa, and “explicit satirical paintings which explore the contentious China–Africa partnership; a view that places China as the continent’s neo-colonial master. Informed by his observation, his work views the relationship as a ‘love affair’ profiting only one side. In his work, Soi points out that China is hungry for raw materials from Africa. Africa is poor and desperate, African leaders are seeking trade partners who will not ask questions; So, China is African’s ‘sugar daddy’ ” (Africaspeaks4Africa, 2014).

Soi’s work is popular on social media as an artist working on the Africa–China relationship. Kenya is a strategically positioned country for China. A new Chinese-funded rail network

has been built which will link the interior of Kenya to the port of Mombasa on the country's coast, and future extensions will connect to an existing Chinese-built line between Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa and Djibouti. It forms part of the plan of China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (Van Staden 2017).

In his paintings that featured in the solo exhibition *China loves Africa* (2018), Soi in some ways taps into fears and anxieties that are perpetuated by "fong kong hype" (Simbao 2012:1) and sensationalist media portrayals of Chinese people being nothing more than peddlers of cheap goods. In other ways, though his work does address the legitimate fear of many Africans. The recent "debt-trap diplomacy"⁵ is of genuine concern. Many fear that the \$60 billion debt of African countries coming out of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is going to make Africa's indebtedness far more severe and far more chronic (Pilling and Hornby 2018).

In the recent past, we have seen various rumours spread in Zambia and Ghana; there were rumours in Zambia that China was going to take over the state electricity company, ZESCO, because Zambia was going to default in paying its debt, while in Ghana, it was rumoured that China was going to take over the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), a broadcasting spectrum that was to be handed over to the *Chinese Star Times* media. This was denied by the Ghanaian Ministry of Commerce. All this is anchored in the fear that the debt levels are highly unsustainable, so there is a lot of nervousness and anxiety that is further fuelled by the lack of explanation from the Chinese and their hosts about their position. So, understandably, a lot of people do not believe that they are as benevolent as they say they are. In his solo exhibition titled *Where de cho dey?* curated by Ruth Simbao, Accra-based artist Bright Ackwerh reacts to the Chinese engagement with Africa in some of his works. "Where de cho dey?" means "Where is the food?" in Ghanaian Pidgin (Falakahla 2018). The works in *Where de cho dey?* that focused specifically on Chinese presence in Africa were *We Dey Beg* (2017) (Fig. 1.3), *Them Threaten* (2017) (Fig. 1.4), *Occupation* (2017) (Fig. 1.5) and *For Life* (2018) (Fig. 1.6). As Simbao (2019a) writes:

In *We Dey Beg* (2017), the Chinese Ambassador to Ghana, Sun Baohong, gleefully shows Xi Jinping the gold she has found, while he pours President Nana

⁵ Debt-trap diplomacy is a type of diplomacy based on debt, carried out in the bilateral relations between countries. It involves a creditor country intentionally extending excessive credit to a debtor country with the alleged intention of extracting economic or political concessions from the debtor country when it becomes unable to honour its debt obligations. The conditions of the loans are often not made public and the loaned money is typically used to pay contractors from the creditor country.

Akufo-Addo and his Minister of Lands and Natural Resources a drink from a Ming vase. While Xi's bottled water is crystal clear, the water that he pours for the Ghanaian dignitaries is filthy, alluding to the water quality crisis that has arisen from illegal mining (*galamsey*) in Ghana that is largely blamed on the Chinese.

In his work, Bright reveals a breakdown in communication and a lack of transparency that contributes to the anxiety of the populace. There is also a breakdown in trust between the African population and its leaders, and the level of corruption and lack of transparency has not helped. African leaders are seen to acquire bad debt, which they leave afterwards for others. Like many parts of the world, there is a growing lack of trust in the economic society and governing systems, and this has been a problem in many African contexts for a long time.

In the Zambian case, critics have accused President Lungu for not being transparent enough about the country's debt. The government has been accused of hiding the true amount of debt, with speculation of there being a secret debt, as in the case of Mozambique. The lack of transparency on the African side is also mirrored on the Chinese side; there is also lack of trust in the establishment, as regards the lending of billions of dollars to Africa, a lack of trust in the news rumours, and social media has made for a toxic environment (Solomon 2018).

1.2 The School Science Experiment

My first piece on China–Africa was inspired by a primary school science project I conducted with my daughter Zoë when she attended the Chinese International School in Lusaka, Zambia. We considered this particular school for a number of reasons. As parents, a friendly and safe learning environment for our little child naturally comes as the first consideration. The future of our daughter is of utmost importance; for her to stand a better chance of getting good employment and having a successful career henceforth, we decided on sending her to a school where she could learn Mandarin. This was a wise choice, considering many factors of the current situation in Zambia. There are now an estimated 200 Chinese companies operating in Zambia, and the Chinese government is building an US\$800 million multi-facility economic zone in the Copperbelt: one of five officially declared Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Africa (Pádraig Carmody and Ian Taylor 2010). A large number of schools have now introduced Mandarin as a subject starting from primary school level.

For Zoë's science fair project, we decided to do an experiment on how plants absorb minerals and water from the ground. The material I used for the experiment and subsequently the art piece titled *Chinese Cabbage* (2014) (Fig. 1.7, Fig 1.8 and Fig. 1.9) is a vegetable, originally from China, that has transformed the vegetable landscape in Zambia in the recent past. Chinese cabbage has been grown in most parts of the country, but until only a few years ago, it was not part of the landscape as far as vegetables are concerned. When Chinese cabbage actually arrived in Zambia is not so clear; some suggest that at the time of the construction of the TAZARA railway line the Chinese railway workers might have brought it to Zambia as they grew their own vegetables and reared their animals.

For the artwork titled *Chinese Cabbage* (2014) (Fig. 1.7, Fig 1.8 and Fig. 1.9), I used this vegetable because of its availability and accessibility – it is easy to access in most parts of Zambia – secondly for its properties. For the experiment, we needed a plant that is partially transparent for the reaction to be seen; the colour should be visible, it should simply change the plant's initial colouring. Lastly, the Chinese cabbage is the best metaphor and representation of how the presence of the Chinese has influenced and brought change to Zambian communities. The vegetable is a source of nutrition, can be cultivated throughout the year, unlike Zambian traditional vegetables which are grown seasonally, adding another valuable aspect to the development of the society in terms of nutrition. Due to its foreignness, the vegetable has also brought with it environmental challenges, as foreign plants do. Interestingly, other foodstuffs that are now considered to be “traditional” Zambian food, were originally foreign and were imported from South America.

1.3: *Chinese Cabbage*

In 2015, during my residency programme at *Künstlerhaus Bethanien*, I created an installation of coloured Chinese cabbage leaves (bok choy). The installation was one of the pieces in my exhibition *Life on Mars* (2014). I also made monochrome drawings with wax crayons: one yellow, one red and one blue cabbage leaf. The drawings were titled *Copper, Manganese and Cobalt* (2014), revealing the colours that represent the commodities mined in Zambia: yellow copper, red manganese, and blue cobalt. These are substances used to produce the objects that define our modern life today: electronic cables, measuring devices and mobile phones. The installation consisted of Chinese cabbage leaves that I placed inside plastic cups absorbing variously coloured liquids (Fig. 1.7, Fig 1.8 and Fig. 1.9). The leaves turned yellow, red and

blue, while the stems and veins remained white (Elliott 2015). The title and the appearance of this work seemed to suggest to many people that I was addressing the Chinese appetite for natural resources and China's aspirations to economically colonize Zambia. Some described the work as beautiful, yet intoxicated by the colouring, which most assumed is a chemical substance that would be harmful to consume. On the contrary, though, the vegetable could still be consumed because the colour was obtained from the food colouring solutions mostly used in baking.

After the exhibition and after thinking about the feedback that I received from people in Berlin, I was eager to explore the subject further. When I came back home, I found that things on the ground were mostly very different from what was being reflected in the media. In some ways, I was a bit disappointed that things turned out to be different, but it was this slippage that motivated me to conduct more in-depth research. My research and the resulting artworks created ways of focusing on small narratives by ordinary people that were complex in nature. In order to reflect something meaningful about the China–Africa presence, I made work that I believe does not fall into the trap of offering “blind solidarity ... to either Africa or China (depending on whether one sits on the “curse” or “cure” side of the fence) with little understanding or inward reflection” (Simbao 2010:5). As I unpack further in the following two chapters, I attempt to consider various perspectives that resist easy rhetoric, and as I discuss, my inroad to this analysis is the stories of my grandma (chapter two) and my cousin (chapter three).

FIGURES: Chapter One



Fig. 1.1. Michael Soi, *China Loves Africa, No. 75* (2018), acrylics on canvas, 122.5 x 225 cm, courtesy of Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya.



Fig. 1.2. Michael Soi, *China Loves Africa, No. 65* (2018), acrylics on canvas, 122 x 245.5 cm, courtesy of Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya.



Fig. 1.3. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *We dey beg* (2017), digital animation printed on paper.
Source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>



Fig. 1.4. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *Them Threaten* (2017), digital animation printed on paper.
Source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>



Fig. 1.5. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *Occupation* (2017), digital animation printed on paper.
Source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>

Fig. 1.6. Bright Tetteh Ackwerh, *For Life* (2018), digital animation printed on paper.
Source: <https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/>



Fig.1.7. Stary Mwaba , detail of *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of Chinese cabbage, food colour, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig.1.8. Stary Mwaba, *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of Chinese cabbage, food colour, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig.1.9. Stary Mwaba, *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of Chinese cabbage, food colour, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

CHAPTER TWO: FIRST ENCOUNTERS: THE UHURU RAILWAY (GRANDMA'S LITTLE NARRATIVE)

2.1 Projecting the old little narrative through the contemporary media narrative.

In this chapter, I look at history as a backdrop to create new thinking and a new understanding of the contemporary engagements with the Chinese people. The work that I have created for this exhibition engages with the historical background, using the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (also known as TAZARA or the Uhuru Railway). I argue that discussions around the presence of the Chinese have mostly been limited to the economic aspects, overlooking the historical aspect that is crucial to the discourse because it speaks of China not only in terms of economics but as an ideological partner.

My series of paintings titled *Black Bodies* (2018) (Fig. 2.1, Fig. 2.2 and Fig. 2.3) that features in this MFA exhibition centres on the individual narratives of both the Zambians and the Chinese on the construction site of the railway. The work highlights the desires and hopes of the people who were involved in the construction of the Uhuru (freedom) Railway. Through the work *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint, Chambia The New Colony* (2018) (Fig. 2.4), I interrogate the grand narratives of the Western-inspired media that are often perpetuated in the local Zambian media, which in turn influence many people's perceptions of the Chinese in Zambia.

2.2 The Freedom Railway

The Uhuru Railway or Freedom Railway (Fig. 2.5 and Fig 2.6) as it was fondly referred to, was a tripartite arrangement by the governments of Zambia, Tanzania, and China. China constructed the railway between 1965 and 1975, linking the Zambian Copperbelt from Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia's Central Province through the Northern Province to the Tanzanian seaport Dar Es Salaam accessing the Indian ocean (Lee 2009).

Zambia desperately needed to break free from her dependency on Southern Rhodesian (Zimbabwe), Angolan, and South African railways and ports, controlled by then white colonial regimes. The railway was a critical link to the sea, as landlocked Zambia depended on the South African ports for its copper export and the import of consumer goods. At the time of independence, and after the breaking up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963, Zambia – then Northern Rhodesia – had to find alternative routes to the sea. It earlier relied on

the ports at Beira and Lourenço Marques (present-day Maputo) in Mozambique, and Durban in South Africa, which was controlled by the colonial and apartheid government (Monson 2009).

The southern African railway route, which Zambia was dependent on before TAZARA, was a railway system developed around copper mining, intended to benefit the colonial government. The railways had been developed as an integral part of a larger southern and central African transportation network, driven primarily by British and South African mining interests between 1890 and 1909 (Monson, 2009). Zambia needed an alternative to the sea route that was not controlled by the colonialists; it needed a route that had the development of its people in mind.

The TAZARA railway was a very important infrastructural development project for the Zambian community, exporting more than 60% of its copper. It was also important for the migration of the rural community to the urban areas, especially the Copperbelt, which needed more labour (Ferguson 1999). It is a significant structure that has contributed not only to the development of the country but also to the liberation struggles of the neighbouring countries. “TAZARA was therefore also an anti-apartheid railway, a symbol of revolutionary solidarity and resistance to the forces of colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism” (Monson, 2009:2).

The construction of the 1 860 km TAZARA took 10 years and was completed before schedule in 1975. The TAZARA connects more than 43 towns in Zambia and 61 towns in Tanzania. It was a costly undertaking particularly for China at that time, considering that the Peoples Republic of China was going through the Cultural Revolution. The establishment cost more than US\$500 million (Mohan and Power 2008). The TAZARA was China’s largest international development project and the third-largest infrastructure development project in Africa (after the Aswan and the Volta dam projects) at the time of its construction (Monson 2009:2). China agreed to construct the railway after an appeal by the newly independent country to Britain and the USA proved futile (Zambia et al 1979) after an assessment by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Many African observers denounced the bank for supporting British mining interests in the region rather than the development needs of the newly independent states.

The World Bank report and its supporters implied that Julius Nyerere (the first republican president of Tanzania) and Kenneth Kaunda (the first republican president of Zambia) had a

political approach to railway development, while the approach of the World Bank and other Western donors was based on rational economic decision-making (Monson 2009:16). Jamie Monson (2009:147) states, “at the time of independence, presidents Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda dreamed of a pan-territorial project that would end the ‘balkanization’ of colonial spheres of influence while liberating the landlocked states of central Africa from their dependency upon routes through their still-colonized neighbours to the south.” As part of the Chinese government’s engagement with African comrades, the railway was intended to support the fight against colonialism and imperialism.

China at the time sought not only to consolidate the independence gains of the two countries but also to aid the liberation struggles in the other neighbouring countries, which included Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The headquarters of these countries’ liberation struggle movements, such as the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, (FRELIMO), African National Congress, (ANC), and Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF), were situated and operated in Dar Es Salaam and Lusaka (Chongo 2016).

The TAZARA was a project for many who lived along the line of rail. Guarding the railway from any sabotage was every villager’s responsibility. This was both on the Zambian and the Tanzanian side, as was portrayed in a speech by the Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere in a 1970. Part of speech declared:

It is quite likely that the agents of the southern Africa regimes will intensify their efforts to sabotage our freedom and our work. It is therefore essential that, throughout the construction period, and when the railway is completed, all the peoples of Tanzania, and of Zambia, should accept a responsibility for guarding this railway. We must guard it against sabotage, and we must also guard it against the effects of hostile propaganda (Monson, 2009:83).

2.3 The Chambeshi Bridge; A Route Destroyed

The Chambeshi Bridge (Fig. 2.7) is located in Chambeshi, a town that derives its name from the Chambeshi River (Fig. 2.8) in Zambia’s Northern Province. The town is famous for its river and for the historical General Von Lettow-Vorbeck Monument (Fig. 2.9 and Fig. 2.9) that was unveiled on 14 November 1953 as a National Monument of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The monument (Fig. 2.9 and Fig. 2.9) is a stone memorial, which marks the spot where the

fighting of World War I is believed to have finally ceased (Reid 2002). The monument is situated a few metres away from the bombed Chambeshi Bridge (Fig. 2.7). My grandparents settled in Chambeshi in the 1940s. The town holds fond memories for the family, particularly the stories about the bridge from the time of its construction, which was told by my grandmother when I was a child, including stories about Chinese people eating snakes, growing vegetables and walking with the “Little Red Book”⁶ (Chisanga 1995).

On the evening of 11 October 1979, Evelyn Mwansa, who is considered to be the first female Zambian locomotive driver, drove the south-bound TAZARA 12-coach passenger train over the Chambeshi Bridge, which was bombed minutes afterwards. Driving the train on this fateful day is a story that has been told over and over by my grandparents who were in town at that particular time. Between October and November 1979, Zambia suffered a wave of bombing raids. Rhodesian security forces destroyed 12 roads and railway bridges in Zambia. On 13 October 1979 *The Times of Zambia* reported that Zambia’s vital link to the sea was blown up by Rhodesian commandos who planted explosives on the railway and road bridges across the Chambeshi River in Northern Province. The destruction of the railway bridge rendered the TAZARA railway inoperative. The railway line was the only alternative access to the sea via Tanzania, apart from the Rhodesia Railway; the Benguela Railway line, connecting Zambia with the port of Lobito on the Atlantic Ocean via Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) was cut off in 1975 during the independence struggle in Angola (Chongo 2016:234). A few years later China constructed a new bridge a few metres away from the bombed bridge. Through this development, China demonstrated its commitment to the liberation struggle in what it termed brotherly solidarity (Monson 2009:29).

Chambeshi in the Northern Province is a significant site in relation to my research on Zambia–China engagements. Some of my family members still live there, although most of them migrated to cities. We used to visit the place regularly. It remains a burial site for my mother and grandmother, and it holds, therefore, a special place in our hearts. Through Chambeshi I engage not only with my own personal story but also with the stories of my family’s first encounters with the Chinese. The bridge tells the tales of the relationship between the villagers

⁶ Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung (simplified Chinese: 毛主席语录; traditional Chinese: 毛主席語錄; Pinyin: Máo Zhǔxí Yǔlù) is a book of statements from speeches and writings by Mao Zedong (formerly romanized as Mao Tse-tung), the former Chairman of the Communist Party of China, published from 1964 to about 1976 and widely distributed during the Cultural Revolution. The most popular versions were printed in small sizes that could be easily carried and were bound in bright red covers, becoming commonly known in the West as the Little Red Book.

and the Chinese during the construction as well as the bombing. These encounters form the background of the relationship on a personal as well as on a national level.

2.4. Black bodies

The *Black Bodies* (2018) (Fig. 2.1, Fig. 2.2 and Fig. 2.3) series is inspired by a story narrated by Sun Yongfu, a young engineer responsible for building the railway from Kapiri to Serenje:

When we hung a single white coloured plumb line, we could barely see it from afar, as local people were dark skinned, they were so kind to put the white coloured plumb line in front of their chest so that we were able to identify quickly the line through the theodolite because of the colour contrast (Sun Yongfu cited in Feng et al 2015).

In this series of works, I draw from the historical encounters of the locals with the Chinese and how they worked together to achieve the goal of completing the 295 km railway. In the process of making *Black Bodies* (2018) (Fig. 2.1, Fig. 2.2 and Fig. 2.3), I painted black and white images using black enamel paint. The enamel paint, for me as an artist, is a way of navigating notions of the black body and of its colour. I created a body of 50 portrait paintings over a period of six months. These portraits are a result of an exploration of various individuals' encounters along the railway line, and aboard the train on the TAZARA. These portraits narrate the experiences of the locals and their involvement in the building of the railway line, its history, and usage. In these portraits, I consider the ways in which the bodies of local Zambians were used to aid the survey works of the "Uhuru" railway line. The use of the body in the marking and mapping of land has occurred before in colonial times. Holdich (1930) discusses the use of "native labour" to mark colonial territories in Africa. He further expresses the importance of the "natives" being involved in national constructions (Holdich cited in Collier 2006).

The simple logic expressed by Holdich (cited in Collier 2006) was based on the belief that the local people knew their terrain better. He asserts that local labourers were to be forced to participate in many instances, and as such were used as cheap labour. Using local labourers could also be perceived as a sign of subjugation and a manifestation of colonial prowess. However, I take the standpoint that in the case of the construction of the Uhuru line, the relationship between the Chinese and the local labourers is not as simplistic as portrayed in Holdich's (cited in Collier 2006) notion. Rather, my work presents that there are contradictions, tensions, complexities and relationships in the personal narratives and

metanarratives along the Uhuru Railway line. Some locals perceived the Uhuru project as a route to freedom. “Uhuru” is derived from the Swahili word that means “freedom”; it has been appropriated and used as a slogan by African nationalists whose main purpose was to fight for the freedom of Africans on African soil and wherever Africans are being treated as less than humans.

I do, however, agree with part of Holdich’s (cited in Collier 2006) notion; that the locals knew and understood their terrain better. The Chinese had to use an instrument known as a theodolite to map and survey the landscapes of Zambia and Tanzania. A theodolite has been used in Zambia and on the continent as a whole for many centuries in the mapping, demarcating and appropriation of land. In the case of the Uhuru construction, the theodolite is used as an instrument for development, not as a tool of oppression during the colonial era.

In *Black Bodies* (2018) (Fig. 2.1, Fig. 2.2 and Fig. 2.3), I am primarily intrigued by the use of the human bodies in relation to the mechanics involved in using a theodolite. According to the knowledge I acquired from the account of Chinese engineer Sun Yongfu (in Feng et al 2015), to use a theodolite, human bodies were lined along the construction site, behind what is described as a string. I am not sure of what the situation really was, because I have not obtained any first-hand information from any of the men who lined up to create this human black-body background. Linking Sun Yongfu’s account to the stories told by my grandparents, it seems as if most men were enthusiastic about the project, and one might assume that they were happy to lend their bodies, so to speak, to achieve the dream of the Uhuru Railway. Nonetheless, the China–Zambia discourse has a racial undertone, which cannot be ignored. (This was earlier alluded to when President Sata campaigned for the presidency, there were instances of xenophobic attacks reported (Smith-Höhn 2009)). My interest in this comes from how I view the act of projecting a line onto bodies, and how this borders on the thin line of discrimination and sacrifice. I try to link this tension of the past to contemporary conversations about Chinese presence. In my work, I use this episode as a small narrative to unravel the issues of race and identity that have in recent times become a topic for concern on both sides.

In the video titled *Sun* (2008) (Fig. 2.11), Hu Xiangqian addresses issues of race and identity in southern China with the increased presence of Africans, particularly in Guangzhou. “Inspired by his African friends living in Guangzhou, Hu spent two months sunbathing naked until his skin darkened significantly, playing on stereotypes of ‘race,’ identity, and skin color” (Simbao 2012:4). As Simbao points out, there are examples of racism from both sides – when

Chinese people arrived in Cape Town, South Africa centuries ago they faced “unbridled racism” and were referred to as “filthy, dirty, terrible thieves [who were] nearly all opium smokers, and great gamblers...” (Yap and Mann cited in Simbao 2019b:15), and more recently “the 2017 exhibition *This is Africa* in the Hubei Provincial Museum sparked an outcry when portraits of Africans were juxtaposed with photographs of wild animals” (Simbao 2019b: 4).

In the *Black Bodies* (2018) series (Fig. 2.1, Fig. 2.2 and Fig. 2.3), I consider, in part, the kind of solidarity with Africans that Hu seems to explore in *Sun* and imagine the degree to which people on the ground might have felt some solidarity when building the Uhuru Railway – particularly the situation described in the narrative of the Chinese engineer. (Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that the agency of an artist working for himself, cannot easily be compared to the agency of a group of labourers who are working for someone else). In this installation, comprising 50 portrait paintings, I employ a laser line emitting from a laser line level⁷, a device that is used in the construction industry for drawing level lines⁸. The laser line inscribes a temporary red line on the torso of the painted bodies, which are hung onto the wall, and in proximity to the laser line level; these selected images are painted on either board or canvas.

To produce this series of paintings I worked with enamel paint on hardboard. Black enamel paint is a readily available cheap paint that is frequently used to sign-write adverts in most towns in Zambia. The paintings are produced from photographs that I took during my research trip to Kasama and Chambeshi in 2017. The images come from a trip that I took on the TAZARA train, riding from Kapiri to Kasama. I interacted with other people on the train throughout my journey in order to hear about their experiences on the train. I also collected photographs from relatives from Kasama. Besides these sources, a large number of images painted for the series are from drawings from my imagination.

In this piece (Fig 2.2), I am interested in how this industrial instrument is used against the background of the black body. What comes to mind in this instance is a reminder of the

⁷ A laser line level is a tool combining a spirit level and/or plumb bob with a laser to display an accurately horizontal or vertical illuminated line on a surface the laser line level is laid against. Laser line levels are used wherever accurate verticals and horizontals are required, typically in the construction and cabinetry industries. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laser_line_level

⁸ I was introduced to the tool during a residency programme in Germany when hanging my exhibition.

exploitation of the body and its use during the colonial era: the use of the native to demarcate land during the colonial border marking, as mentioned earlier (see Holdich, 1891).

2.5 Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambia The New Colony, (2018)

On social media⁹, Zambia has been portrayed as the first colony of China in Africa and is named “Chambia” (Chambia is derived from the combined words from China and Zambia). This is one of the prevailing stories on social media owing to the Patriotic Front (PF) government’s excessive borrowing, as Hakainde Hichilema (2018), the president of Zambia’s opposition party, United Party for National Development (UPND), stated that the country had fallen in the hands of Chinese control (*Lusaka Times* 2018).

In the work *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambia The New Colony* (2018) (Fig. 2.12, Fig. 2.13 and Fig 2.15), I draw from the distortion of information and the misinformation by the media which has led to an imaginary colony. Images of a new colony (Fig. 2.16 and Fig 2.17) have been created based on rumours and stories circulated by local and foreign media corporations. The media reports that Zambia is the first victim of China’s so-called debt diplomacy. Zambia could become Africa’s first casualty in China’s takeover after defaulting on loan repayment (John, 2018). The media plays a major role in portraying China as a neo-colonizer of Zambia, with “debt trap” narrative as an example. In his book *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes*, Jacques Ellul (1965) alludes to the fact that public opinion can only express itself through channels that are provided by the mass media of communication – without which there could be no propaganda (Ellul, 1965). In the piece *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambia The New Colony* (2018) (Fig. 2.12, Fig. 2.13 and Fig 2.15), I use newspaper print as a representation of the media narrative for both the current and historical. I reconstruct and rearrange stories, insert and force small narratives into the spaces and gaps that are created by burning parts of the newsprint; essentially I remove some of the words that form the vocabulary of metanarrations. In this case, I remove the words by burning out some the words in the newspaper. Using a soldering gun, I burn out words from various stories, leaving words randomly that can be rearranged to create a new narrative or story. The idea of “forcing the small narrative” implies technically creating openings or spaces that allow for the

⁹ <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/three-events-that-prove-zambia-or-chambia-is-chinas-first-african-colony>

background material to be visible. The tarpaulin colour is seen through the spaces created by the soldering iron¹⁰ (Fig. 2.12, Fig. 2.13 and Fig 2.15).

In the process of making these works, I undertook the painstaking and laborious exercise of burning words out of newspaper articles, some of which I tried to read during the burning process in order to understand the stories. Nevertheless, the choice of words that I leave out is primarily informed by words that come from the various texts I read during my research, and also current affairs on social media. Stories influence my choice of words, which later appear randomly on the newsprint. I identify words that are sometimes central to my opinions on current and historical events. I am interested in keywords that relate to the China–Africa discourse. The idea is to create a different narrative or story from the existing text. By analyzing the texts word-by-word and using a soldering gun I scorch out what in my view is an unwanted word. The scorched newspaper prints are then stuck onto the tarpaulin material (referred to as *tenti*). Tarpaulin (which is the same material I have used for the *Black Mountain*, which I discuss further in chapter three) is a versatile material, primarily used in Zambia to cover copper when it is being exported out of the country through the railway by train or by road on trucks. The worn-out material usually finds itself on various markets to be reused mostly for makeshift shelters, a feature that is prominent throughout Zambia and particularly on the Copperbelt.

I have further used the burnt-out newsprint in the installation *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambia The New Colony I* (2018), in which I utilized the possibility of seeing through the material. The perforated newsprint is used in this case as a background for projecting images and videos of stories that I recorded during the research trip in Chingola. Of particular interest in relation to my cousin, I project still images of young men that I photographed in Chingola at a mining dumpsite. Shining through the perforated newsprint is also a video of Mr. Mukuka, who took me to the site of pollution caused by the spilling of acid into the river by Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) (Iankoid, 2018).

The rationale for this multilayered approach relates to the layered issues being articulated; the process of creating layers also creates a form a palimpsest. A palimpsest is parchment or other writing surfaces on which the original text has been effaced or partially erased, and then

¹⁰ A soldering iron is a hand tool used to melt solder so that it can flow into the joint between two workpieces. It is composed of a heated metal tip and an insulated handle. Heating is often achieved electrically, by passing an electric current (supplied through an electrical cord or battery cables) through a resistive heating element. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soldering_iron

overwritten by another. In other words, a palimpsest is a multilayered record (Vergès, 2015). For the installation of *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambia The New Colony I* (2018), I project videos and images I photographed on site of the Wasakili Black Mountain in Kitwe and the Mushishima stream¹¹ in Chingola. By projecting images and a video onto or through the perforated newspaper, I am creating layers that retell the stories and emphasize the importance of our little narrative (Fig. 2.12, Fig. 2.13 and Fig 2.15).

2.6 The Legitimate Little Narrative “The Stamps”: Authorizing the Small Narratives and Creating a Palimpsest

The resulting work from the practical research I undertook employs the use of imagery derived from a “stamping” or printing technique that I have developed, which involves scratching images onto painted polystyrene plates that I then engrave by using a hot wire. These stamps embody the numinous presence of the unknown and what Elliot (2014:17) refers to in my work as “forgotten individuals”. To me this process embodies the metaphor of a “stamp of approval” in reference to the British colonial policy where adult males were expected to carry a *Chitupa* – an identity book – and if it was not properly stamped one could either be arrested and detained or denied boarding a bus or train. Metaphorically, my use of this technique gives the hidden narratives of my research participants – those with a lived experience – a stamp of approval, legitimizing their stories into the broader discourse of the Africa–China relationship, where otherwise their tales would have gone untold, albeit in a Zambian context.

For this work (Fig. 2.19), I etched or engraved images on the polystyrene material using acetone and a hot soldering gun. In other variations of the same experiment I used petrol. The polystyrene material is usually used in packaging in order to safeguard valuable items. I chose the polystyrene because of its being fragile yet used to protect valuable items. This speaks to the idea that I bring to the fore – the faces of people who have either been erased or forgotten – consequently referencing their stories as being fragile. By engraving them onto this particular material, which I create into a stencil, ensures that the image can be reproduced many times. Printing repetitively means that these faces reappear over and over; therefore, the stories are retold. This retelling of the story repeatedly uses the power of repetition to form lasting images that might be reproduced. These images are developed for display as part of an installation. The final images, both the print and the stamp, will be hung at the 1820

¹¹ See *BBC News*, 2015. “Rivers of acid” in Zambian villages.

Settlers National Monument, Gallery in The Round. I have also used the polystyrene material, in the piece titled *Melted* (2018). In this work, I dissolved the polystyrene pieces I collected from a furniture and hardware store in Grahamstown, into acetone, which forms a liquid that I later mix with enamel paints. I further weave copper wire into a form that resembles the fences around the Black Mountain, which I discuss in further detail in chapter three.

FIGURES: Chapter 2



Fig. 2.1. Sary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on canvas, 150 X 180 cm, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.2. Sary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on board, 40 X 60cm, photograph by Sary Mwaba



Fig. 2.3. Sary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on board, 40 X 60cm, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.4. Stary Mwaba, Detail of *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint: Chambica The New Colony* (2018), newsprints, variable sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



2.5. Uhuru railway or Freedom Railway Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.6. Detail of Uhuru railway or Freedom Railway Bridge, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.7. Old Chambeshi Bridge that was bombed, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.8. Chambeshi River, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.9. General Von Lettow-Vorbeck Monument, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.10. Detail of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck Monument, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.11. Hu Xiangqian, *Sun* (2008), single-channel video (color, sound), Ed. 5/5, duration: 7 minutes and 59 seconds. Source <https://rfc.museum/28c-hu-xiangqian>.

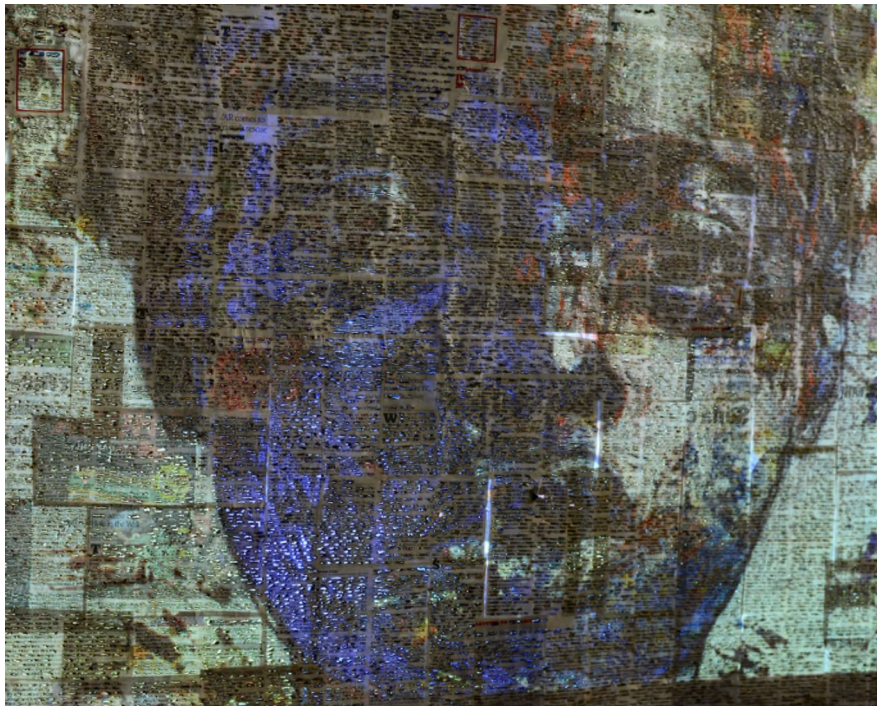


Fig. 2.12. Sary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.13. Sary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig 2.15. Stary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, view of test installation in studio, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 2.16. Lung Wu, *President of Chambia* (2018), photoshopped image of the president of the Republic of Zambia, Edgar Lungu and anonymous Chinese character. Image courtesy of Eric Musamba.



Fig 2.17. Flag of Chambia (2018). Source: Jeremiah Parford.



Fig 2.18. TAZARA passengers, Bana Mukupa and grandson, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017), photograph by Sary Mwaba.

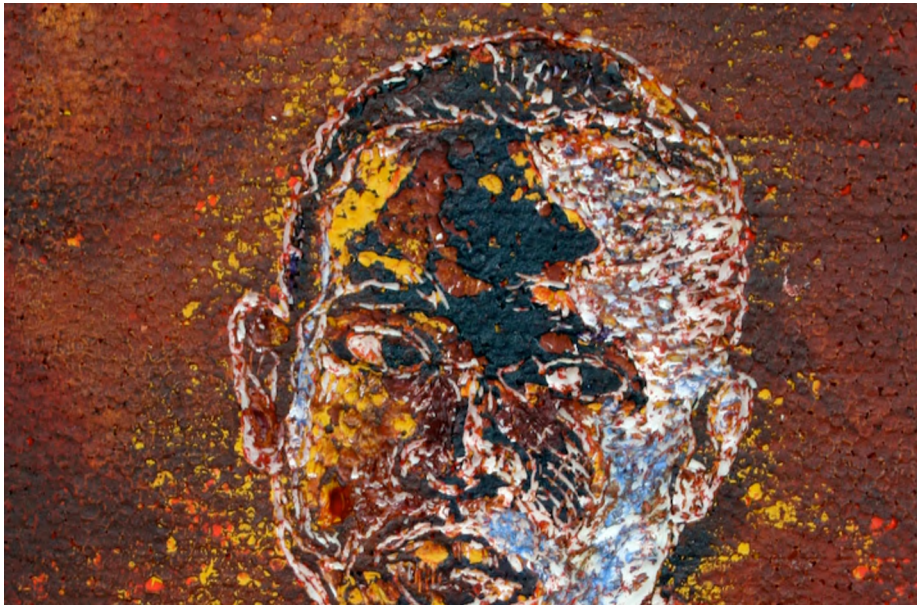


Fig. 2.19. Sary Mwaba, *The repatriation stamp 2* (2018), polystyrene, photograph by Sary Mwaba.

CHAPTER 3: THE MINING ENCOUNTERS: (NGOLO'S LITTLE NARRATIVE)

3.1 Mining on the Copperbelt

In this chapter, I analyze my artworks that engage with mining in Zambia, particularly the Copperbelt where I was born and grew up. Copper mining, more than any other Chinese investment, is discussed in mainstream discourse and feeds into the rhetoric of “China-in-Africa”. In contrast to the sweeping statements that are often made in sensationalist news stories, I highlight some of the smaller narratives around the copper mining area.

A significant aspect of my *Black Mountain* (2019) exhibition that is installed in the Gallery in the Round, is an exploration of issues that relate to the history and contemporary controversies in the mining sector of Zambia, particularly the mineral-rich Copperbelt. This exhibition highlights colonial legacies and ongoing global capitalistic trends. By engaging with my cousin Ngolo's little narratives, and the personal stories of other close relations, I engage with some of the mining activities in two towns in the Copperbelt: Kitwe and Chingola. These are the spaces where I grew up and where I returned to conduct primary research for this mini-thesis and my artwork. *The Black Mountain* (Fig. 3.1) (a mining slag or waste dump, see Fig. 3.2) is deployed not only as an observation platform for understanding the global state of affairs. I use this site to produce specific knowledge that counters the notion that the locals belong to the periphery and are not actors but subjects – or more so, objects.

Zambia has continued to mine its copper from the colonial exploitation era. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, copper mining accounted for more than 80% of the country's foreign exchange earnings, over 50% of government revenue and at least 20% of total formal sector employment (Simutanyi 2008:32). The Copperbelt has been a hub of mining in Zambia since the Northern Territories BSA Exploring Company, first “discovered” copper deposits locally known as *Umukuba* (*IciBemba* term for copper). Although the colonialists framed this as a discovery the copper deposits were already well known to local populations (Fraser and Larmer 2010:4).

Northern Rhodesia was formed in 1911 under a charter administered by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and then in 1924 became a protectorate administered by the British Colonial Office. BSAC held on to the mineral rights... [and] ... in 1895 and the BSAC subsequently agreed deals with the Rhodesian Selection Trust and the Anglo American Corporation to exploit the new mines (Fraser and Larmer 2010:4).

However, after the privatization and having inherited an economic model of the sale of all minerals through the London Metal Exchange (LME), this enabled mostly Western mine owners to repatriate profits from the mine and provided limited benefits to the Zambian people (Fraser and Larmer 2010:6). This system has also enabled the continuous exploitation by the West, as Mususa explains that due to unexplained circumstances the copper mining in Zambia has continued to be hit negatively (Mususa 2010). However, looking at the colonial structure that Zambia inherited, I believe that these fundamental structures of the global economy were designed to maximize the extraction of wealth from Europe's former colonies.

In 1974, one decade after independence, the global price for copper took a sharp downward turn and remained low by the turn of the millennium, causing Western donors to force the government to privatize the mines (Lee 2009). According to Fraser and Larmer (2010:2),

Soon afterwards, the world copper price shot through the roof, and some new private owners made huge profits. Because the state had virtually given the mines away, it secured few benefits. In an effort to claw back some revenue, the Zambian government imposed a windfall tax in 2008. As soon as it did, the price tumbled, and the companies claimed that the new taxes threatened their viability. Fearful of mines closing in the global recession, Zambia removed the windfall tax – and the price shot straight back up.

The exhibition *Black Mountain* (2019) is significant as an artistic response to the broader China–Africa discourse, as it is the first of its kind to engage with the colonial mining aspects through art and specifically highlights the Black Mountain as a multilayered site, told through lived experiences. The Zambian context has implications for how Africa thinks about the causes of and solutions to current global economic instabilities, about hopes for resistance to neoliberalism, about potential new drivers of global development such as China, and about the possible emergence of more dynamic and just economic models.

After visiting the Copperbelt of Zambia, Peter Hitchens (cited in Fraser and Larmer 2010), a British right-wing commentator, summed up the radical version, arguing that, “China’s cynical new version of imperialism in Africa is a wicked enterprise. China offers both rulers and the ruled in Africa the simple, squalid advantages of shameless exploitation” (Hitchens cited in Fraser and Larmer 2010). A great deal has been written about the Chinese presence in Africa, but the image painted by the media makes little room for complex realities. The grand narrative

does not account for the *petit récits* (Lyotard 1984) of individuals like Ngolo, my cousin whose living as a small-scale miner depends on the trade with the Chinese. Little attention is paid to the people that depend on the dumpsites, in places like Chingola and Kitwe.

My work engages with the stories of my cousin Ngolo and his friends who have been mining at the copper dumpsite: about their fears, despair, excitement, and adventures in mining in the Black Mountain. I have been working on this project for the past four years and have created work that focuses on these young people as they search for their livelihood. Their stories are the centre of my engagement with the space and encounters with the Chinese.

Ngolo was born in the 1980s and has lived most of his life on the Copperbelt. Through his story, I interrogate mining history and how that history continuously affects the lives of young people such as Ngolo. Through paintings and installations, I question the predominant narrative around the Black Mountain that neglects the small stories of these young people who have to make their decision every day to go into this dangerous space for their livelihood. In my artwork titled *Traces* (2018) (Fig. 3.3), I attempt to redraw maps of Chingola and Kitwe dumping sites by following the tracks of these young men as they scrounge for copper in the dumps.

Ngolo has been trading with Chinese traders for ten years now; despite the hardships he faces, he is a success story, and his story is similar to his compatriots engaged in the mining trade with the Chinese. With the improving growth of the economic indicators and lifestyle on the Copperbelt, certainly in Nchanga, the image of frustrated Western investment potential, African passivity, and harsh Chinese exploitation can be challenged on every level. Like Ngolo, I was born in the Copperbelt of Zambia, which has some of the world's largest copper reserves. Chingola is located in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, a stone's throw away from the Democrat Republic of Congo, and Nchanga open pit mine is one of the world's largest pits. Copper is a metal that is as essential to the world economy as oil.

3.2 Black Mountain

The Black Mountain (Fig. 3.4) is a copper waste dump. Mining waste dumps are a common feature of the Copperbelt landscape, and clearly capture the extent of how much copper wealth has been exploited through the colonial epochs to the period of Zambia's Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) and now.

The Black Mountain is made up of pyrometallurgical slags that come from three copper-cobalt smelters (Kitwe Nkana, Mufulira, Chambeshi) in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. According to Vítková (2016), a mineralogical and chemical study indicates that “the slags are enriched in metals and metalloids, copper and cobalt. The mineral composition indicates that the slags are reactive on contact with water or the atmosphere and that their environmental stability and release of potentially harmful gases ” (Vítková 2016: 26).

In recent years, the dumps from the copper ore have been a source of building materials; the slag are used for brick-making, and small groups of women and children are seen digging and sorting out flux stone and copper ore (Mususa 2010). With its highly rich content of cobalt and copper, the Black Mountain was sold by the Patriotic Front government (the political party founded by Michael Sata, discussed in chapter one), who came into power through a lot of support from the youth from the Copperbelt, promising them development and a cake of the national treasure in the form of the Black Mountain. In 2014 the ruling party, now under the leadership of Sata’s successor, President Edgar Lungu, sold the mountain to a Chinese multinational company (*Daily Nation* 2014).

Of the seven “packages” after the privatization of ZCCM, Chambeshi Mine was the only mine originally bought by a Chinese company. It was purchased by NFC Mining Africa Plc (NFCA), a Chinese state-owned enterprise (see chapter 1). “NFCA’s investment immediately extended a closed mine’s life and offered hope of jobs to former miners living in the already depressed Chambeshi Township. However, in 2006 the company paid the lowest wages of any of the Copperbelt firms and, even then, only allowed a tiny share of the workforce into permanent, unionized contracts, making extensive use of subcontracting firms that paid even less” (Fraser and Larmer 2010:17). The reading of the occurrences has been highly politicized, and many refer to China as a neocolonial aggressor, with the rhetoric playing into the grand narrative of China being a new colonizer and land grabber. “The Harvard historian and leading conservative public intellectual Niall Ferguson, in his 2012 U.K. television series on China, averred that Chinese copper mining in Zambia may be ‘the beginning of a world empire’ ” (Niall Ferguson cited in Hairong and Sautman, 2013:135). For Ferguson, this imagined Chinese empire would be a threat to Western elites and ordinary people; it presents competition and imposes “Chinese” conditions of labour wherever it goes, claiming that the Chinese practice a neocolonialist authoritarian capitalism (Ferguson 2011).

The Chinese in Copperbelt Province are involved in various mining activities, trading in various forms of copper, from the ore to the scrap metal cables and everything in between. However, the overwhelming discussion around Chinese presence on a grand level has overshadowed the on-the-ground experience of the ordinary people. The Chinese in Zambia are not a homogeneous and cohesive community organized along nationalistic lines. Solange Guo Chatelard (2012) points out that “China does not operate as a bloc, but is composed of a myriad of private investors, state agencies and hybrid actors that spend more time in Africa competing with one another than worrying about Communist Party slogans” and “Instead, they are a mixed bag of ordinary men and women willing to endure hardship to improve their fate despite the cultural and linguistic challenges they face”. The happenings at the Black Mountain dumpsites point to this fact.

The boom in copper prices from around 2005 made the dumpsites potentially more valuable assets. Later, the global recession from 2008 led to the second wave of layoffs, increasing the numbers seeking livelihoods in the dangerous and insecure work of illegal mining. Impoverished retrenched men and women living in most mining areas such as Luanshya and Kitwe of the Copperbelt, secured a minimal livelihood by “re-mining” the tailings dumps left behind by historic mining operations (Mususa 2010).

Through my cousin Ngolo’s story as a miner of the mountain who has (il)legally been mining the site and trading with the Chinese, I want to interrogate the notions of China being read as one “thing” driven by a coherent set of state-laid plans and ambitions in Africa. The small-scale mining trader competing with the large Chinese multinational companies brings this to light. The mountain is a dumpsite accumulated since the colonial period when mineral exploitation commenced. These toxic wastes have been deposited close to habitats and have been polluting the water ever since, causing various health complications.

Through my installation *Black Mountain* (2019) (Fig 3.5), I address the nature and the layers of the mountain, firstly its historical colonial past and reprocessing of it. The installation draws from another primary school experiment called The Coffee-Mycelium Experiment from the *100th Monkey Mushroom Farm* webpage. The webpage describes how the mycelium made string-like cells called hyphae, colonized (spread throughout) the new substrate (the coffee grounds) to “eat” its nutrients. I am intrigued by the description of the plant “colonizing the host”, which mirrors the dominant narrative of China economically colonizing Zambia. For the installation, I grow mushrooms with coffee grounds as a metaphor of reprocessing and reusing

of discarded copper residue starting from the colonial period and re-mined today. The installations (Fig. 3.6) are displayed in black plastic bags, which are specifically for germinating seed and plants, hanging with copper wires to symbolize the mountain-sized black copper dumpsites located in Copperbelt Province.

3.3 Drawing cartographies: *Mapping Black Mountain Land (2018)*

Mapping Black Mountain Land (2018) (Fig 3.7) draws from the idea of contemporary mapping theories that conceptualize the process of mapping, which enable alternative ways of viewing and engaging space: mapping, as a method of unearthing the erased or hidden and broadening one's sight of a specific area. Through this work, I engage with colonial mineral exploration maps, an archival material that I re-draw. I drew contour lines based on Ngolo's narrations, to replace lines on the maps drawn during the colonial period for the purpose of mineral exploitation, such as the map of Chingola and other towns on the Copperbelt siting mining actives (Fig. 3.8). I use Ngolo's narratives to locate and position spaces and sites that they have been mining. Drawing the routes through which they walked allows me as an artist not only to see certain possibilities in the complexity and contradiction of what already exists but also to actualize a new meaningful narrative about the locals' engagement with space. Rather than posing questions "about" the little narrative, or how "the little narrative" of these (il)legal miners is represented in the broader picture, my work explores the ways we need to negotiate and mediate the contested topographies of the Black Mountain and the young miners' knowledge of the space. Subsequently, I interrogate what it means to know, experience, and encounter the space, recognizing that questions of knowledge are crucial to the contemporary engagement with the Chinese. I argue that such an intervention is important in highlighting the history of the Black Mountain, which has been in many cases consciously overlooked or erased. The Copperbelt has been exploited for minerals since the 1920s for the purpose for the development mostly for the West. This has resulted in the extensive ravaging the space and environment, Mitchell writes that this has been deemed inevitable progressive development in history by the imperialist (1995, p.17). Seeing, imaging and remembering Ngolo's narration, provides the knowledge to deconstruct the geographical knowledge from the existing imperial archival materials. Through the process of remapping the landscape we transform this exploited territory into a space we can relate to and defined by our relationship to the landscape (Darlan-Smith et al., 1996, p.3).

Through this work, therefore, I not only engage with space and memory in relation to the Chinese encounters through mining the Black Mountain, I also contribute to the construction of social and cultural landscape of the Copperbelt

Through this mini-thesis and work I urge that our experience is interconnected with what we know. This contribution is particularly critical in a world where information is influenced by the Western media. It is becoming increasingly difficult to both imagine and actually to create anything outside of the grand narratives, especially about mining areas in Zambia and Africa.

For this particular work, I wanted to use materials that relate to this site. When I did my research in Wasakili in Kitwe, and in Nchanga, Chingola, going to the site my interest was to find traces of the young people who mined the space. The mining was done in the early hours of the morning, so the miners camped outside the restricted area, and entered at daybreak. Mining at the dumpsite has been controversial and has drifted in and out of legality. When I visited the space, I was looking for something that suggested the presence of the young miners; I hoped to find a material trace that could be used as the primary material of my work so that it could relate directly to this space. There was not much to be found, obviously, because the people doing the (il)legal mining did not want to be traced. We did, however, find the dark carbon ash from burnt tyres and most significant pieces of *amatenti* (pieces of tarpaulin materials, as they are locally known). The tarpaulin material is significant to this piece. The material was used to make shelters outside the dumpsite. The presence of the material at the site intrigued me, particularly for its multipurpose nature. In my installation(2018), *itenti* (singular) forms the base or the platform in my work onto which I draw and paint the cartographic lines. I also use the dark ash carbon from the burnt tyres (used by small-scale miners to keep them warm at night and to heat up a rock to be mined) as a painting and drawing medium.

3.3:1 Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive

Mining at the mountain was illegal, though this has been contested many times (Mususa 2010). Currently, the mountain is still shrouded in political controversies. The ruling political party the Patriotic Front (PF) regarded mining the site as a youth empowerment venture. On one hand, the stories about mining the dumpsite are tragic, as the mines claim lives and shatter families, but on the other hand, the dumpsite brought dignity for the young men in the society as it enabled them to earn a living and support their families. Ngolo shared with me how hard it was to announce the disappearance of a friend to his own family. Young people have been

buried alive by the debris many times (Price 2017). Digging through the debris is risky and some young people have been buried alive in the process. Mining the Black Mountain has become a survival strategy in the eyes of many locals living in an economic system that is failing to meet local needs, and a political context characterized by ever-diminishing state intervention, and corruption. The once illegal has become legitimate. Hardship on the Copperbelt as a result of the global recession from 2008, which led to the second wave of layoffs, resulted in the fear of destitution. The lack of state welfare in any form, regulation, or other interventions set the framework for illegality as a legitimate economic strategy for survival (Ndulo et al 2009). Through the work titled *Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive* (2018), I used tarpaulin material (Fig. 3.9) to engage with the stories of young individuals who went to mine the copper residue dumpsites and never returned. This work engages with space of the Black Mountain site in Kitwe and Chingola to locate the young people's unmarked burial sites – the marking of the site as a ritual of laying wreaths and respect for the missing.

The stories of these young men are highlighted and brought to the fore, when I seek to identify the dying or burial spots. Locating and mapping these sites is important and the starting point of engaging and acknowledging the missing young people's small narratives. In this work, I utilize mapping as a tool to draw cartographies of these areas that are problematic.

3.3.2: Scorched Land: polluted landscape

“We have no water source apart from the river and it is totally polluted. Most of us are very weak and have constant stomach pains. When we bathe using this water our skin itches.” said Leo Mulenga, who spoke to the BBC (‘Rivers of acid’ in Zambian villages, 2015)

“I used to grow cabbages, potatoes, tomatoes, and bananas but now, there's no future here – only poverty and suffering for everyone because this land is damaged and spoiled,” said Leo Mulenga, who spoke to the BBC (‘Rivers of acid’ in Zambian villages, 2015).

Chingola is a place that I am always coming back to. I always remember the distinct smells of the soil from my grandma's *mabala* (garden) and the smoke from the ever-burning mining smelters, and the sounds of the huge mining vehicles starting their engines from time to time. I was born in Chingola's Nchanga area although my parents lived in a nearby city, Kitwe. My

father worked for Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM). My grandparents migrated from Northern Province to the Copperbelt in the late 1950s.

What brought me back this time around was the story of the Chinese invasion of the copper mines and the water pollution. I read the story on the BBC website (2015). I had been engaging with the stories of the Chinese presence for some time and I was on a fact-finding mission on the newly signed contracts on water distribution on the Copperbelt, worth millions of dollars, which raised a lot of speculation against the backdrop of the pollution of the river water by the mines, some owned by Chinese companies (Andiva 2018). The thought of having the source of water colonized was frightening.

The story of Leo Mulenga and his community in Hippo Pool village is a story close to my heart. Hippo Pool village is a few kilometres from my birthplace. Hundreds of villagers who collect their water on the banks of the Kafue River in Zambia's Copperbelt, claim that copper mining operations in the area have poisoned their water source and destroyed farmland (*BBC News*, 2015).

Scorched Land (2018) (Fig. 3.10 and Fig. 3.11) is a series of artworks using a shade cloth as a canvas, stretched onto painted newsprint paper. It is a series of work that speaks to the state of the environment in the mining areas, interrogating the pollution of the land and destruction of the ecosystem from a historical perspective and the current land degradation. Since the start of mining, the environment has suffered a lot of disintegration and abuse. In this work, I address how the plants and humans have suffered because of the mining activities. The mining companies have recently been accused of polluting the water, both underground and on the surface. I explore how, since the colonial era, mining has disrupted certain forms of life and how the pollution of the rivers has an intrinsic effect on the creatures that inhabit the water and the people who depend on it (Iankoid, 2018).

What I have done in this piece is to firstly create layers: I start by laying down plain newsprint onto which I paint in abstract shapes using preferably raw colours from the tube, red, ultramarine blue, yellow, the same colours I have used in the *Chinese Cabbage* (2014) piece (Fig. 1.4). The next process is to cover the painted newsprint. I stretched the shade cloth on top, gluing to the surface with a transparent acrylic gel medium. With a blowtorch, I burn the surface, creating raindrop shapes with the heat.

This work speaks to the violent eating away of the surface water by mixed toxic substances, which include sulphur dioxide. Sulphur dioxide is emitted into the atmosphere every day in a place like Mufulira, and it creates acid rain when the sulphur dioxide mixes with the rain. The rain causes damage to the buildings but also to the environment. Some areas in Copperbelt, particularly in Mufulira and Chingola, have few trees growing.

3.3.3 The Copperbelt: Similarities with Sammy Baloji's Katanga

There are some similarities that can be seen in my work and the work of the artist Sammy Baloji, an artist from the Democratic Republic of Congo who works in Lubumbashi and Brussels. Katanga province, which is very rich in minerals, is attached to the Copperbelt; in fact, it cuts the imaginary borderlines constructed by the colonialists. Baloji's work references histories of Western colonial greed and postcolonial disillusionment, but also alludes to the ongoing effects of predatory global capitalism (Tate2016). In his installation *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden. Episode 1* (2017), the processing of copper is visualized as a choreography of black workers' bodies, as they transform raw material into a product for the global market. In this work he expresses the ever-present relationship between the mining industry, cultural manipulation, and religion (Framer Framed 2018).

I draw similarities from Baloji's work about life in the Katanga province to that of the Copperbelt in Zambia. In an exhibition titled *Kolwezi, Imaging the Congo-China Nexus* (2011), Baloji describes how on his return, he anticipated finding widely shared views of the Chinese presence on the continent. In the West, a great deal has been written on the new wave of colonialism, and the 21st century scramble for Africa, a vision of China triumphantly poised to (re)conquer what was once European domain. This is a narrative that leaves no room for complex realities and pays little attention to ways in which men and women in places like Kolwezi respond to the Chinese presence among them. Like the young Black Mountain miner whose complex realities are a product of colonial history and predatory capitalism, their relationship on the ground tells a different story and portrays a different view of the Chinese trader.

Baloji's juxtaposing of photographic realities, combining past and present, engages with cultural and historical tensions (Fig 3.10). In his series of work *Kolwezi*, he engages with homes for the miners, photographing the interior of makeshift homes in the camps. Housing therein takes the form in the most part of tents made of second-hand tarpaulin, materials discarded by

aid agencies and NGOs (Hendriks and Malaquais 2016:216). In this work, Baloji alludes to the tarpaulin material, which I have also employed in my work, similar to the material used for the makeshift homes in Lubumbashi, just a stone's throw away from Chingola. This material is prevalent in these areas, as I mentioned earlier, because of trade as the main reason for the moving of goods from one place to another.

In Baloji's photographs of posters in the mining camp, he depicts a photoshopped skyline of composite and generic western cities; luxurious western houses and their interior; musicians; Congolese and international football players (Hendriks and Malaquais 2016). As described by Hendriks and Malaquais (2016:216), the posters used to decorate the miners' homes varied from household to household and there was "a picture of a lavishly landscaped amusement park, complete with life-sized plastic dolphins and hippos on which its owner had written four words: *Moi et ma Maison* (Me and my House)". The similarities in the life style of people of Lubumbashi that Baloji's work engages with, speaks of the life on the Copperbelt of Zambia. These pictures with their bright colours not only served to brighten up the dual coloured rooms but also acted as a cover for the cracks on the walls that have been created by the never ending tremors in the ground caused by the mining activities.

Baloji's photograph of a man seated in his makeshift home with a poster of England's Liverpool football club players hanging on the wall (Fig. 3.15) reminds me of my childhood days, when we collected pictures of football stars and, in fact, my early drawing was of Pele and Maradona. While growing up, I was always torn between two football teams: the Kitwe-based Nkana Football club and Chingola's Nchanga Rangers. Football was a huge part of the mining towns, with local rivalries a lifelong occupation for most people I grew up with when the mines were flourishing. After the privatization of the mines, the football fan base reduced, and many teams went into oblivion. The Zambian football league mirrored the state of community on the Copperbelt, a clear description of the way the livelihoods of people living on the Copperbelt have been devastated over the last three decades. The league portrays a dying dream and hope of a middle-class lifestyle for many. When the backing of these clubs was reduced significantly, the football club loyalty of many turned to the colonial English Premier League, televised in most bars and T-shirts of these clubs a common sight on the streets of Kitwe and Chingola (Fraser and Larmer 2010).

Against all odds, Zambia went on to win the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time under the once-strong China critic, President Sata. The revival came through the number of professional

players playing in the other leagues such as the South African and Chinese leagues. Interestingly, the vastly expensive new national stadium in Ndola on the Copperbelt built by the Chinese revived Zambian soccer and the fandom.

FIGURES: Chapter 3



Fig. 3.1. The Black Mountain, Wusakile, Kitwe, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.2. A mining slag or waste dump, Wusakile, Kitwe, Zambia (2017), photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.3. Sary Mwaba, *Traces* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.4. Sary Mwaba, *The Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various sizes, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.5. Sary Mwaba, *Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various sizes, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.6. Sary Mwaba, *Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various sizes, photograph by Sary Mwaba.



Fig 3.7. Stary Mwaba, *Mapping Black Mountain Land* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, photograph by Stary Mwaba.

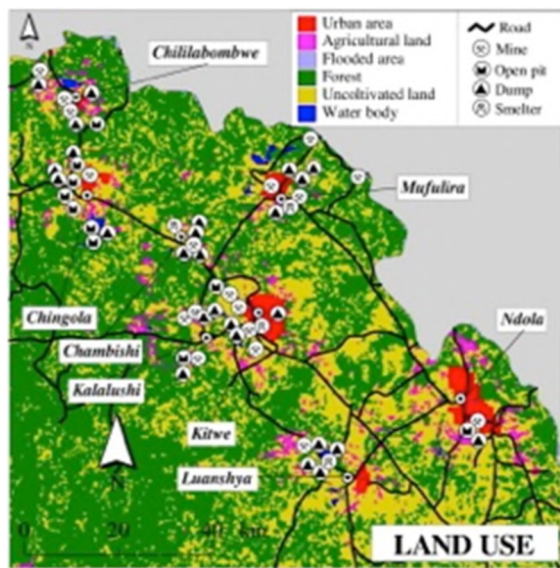


Fig. 3.8. Map of Chingola and other towns on the Copperbelt siting mining activities, image courtesy of Journal of Geochemical Exploration.



Fig. 3.9. Stary Mwaba, *Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, various sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.10. Stary Mwaba, *Scorched Land* (2018), mixed media shade cloth, various sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.11. Stary Mwaba, *Scorched Land* (2018), mixed media shade cloth, various sizes, photograph by Stary Mwaba.



Fig. 3.12. Sammy Baloji, *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden. Episode 1* (2017), Installation: Video, photographs, copper plaque, copper crosses and coins, installation view at Documenta 14, Athens, photograph courtesy of Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren.



Fig. 3.13. Sammy Baloji Raccord, #6, *Mine à ciel ouvert noyée de Musonoï* (2011), *Kolwezi, Imaging the Congo–China Nexus* (2011), digital inkjet print on Baryta paper, 80 x 267.35 cm, photograph courtesy of Axis Gallery.



Fig. 3.14. Sammy Baloji, *Raccord #3, Mine à ciel ouvert noyée de Musonoi* (2011), *Kolwezi, Imaging the Congo–China Nexus* (2011), digital inkjet print on Baryta paper, 80 x 267.35 cm, photograph courtesy of Axis Gallery.



Fig. 3.15 Sammy Baloji, *Portrait #1, Cité de Kapata, Creuseur artisanal à l'intérieur de sa tente en bâche* (2011), *Kolwezi, Imaging the Congo–China Nexus* (2011), digital inkjet print on Baryta paper, 80 x 267.35 cm, photograph courtesy of Axis Gallery.

CONCLUSION

In 2017 and 2018, I travelled several times to Chingola for my research. I went back to the Nchanga dumpsite in Chingola, one of the Black Mountain sites where my cousin mines. With nostalgic feelings and the smell of the place, we passed through some of the routes we once used as young people. The place was once full of life and activities; now all there is to see abandonment and neglect. A lot has been written about the Chinese presence in Africa, but the image painted by the media makes little room for complex realities. The grand narrative does not account for the *petits récits*, individuals like Ngolo whose fortune depends on the trade with the Chinese. Little attention is paid to the people who depend on the dumpsites in places like Chingola and Kitwe.

Through the works showing at the Gallery in the Round in the 1820 Settlers Monument, my MFA exhibition *Black Mountain* tells the tale of these people. I firstly emphasize the importance of a historical perspective in understanding Zambian–Chinese engagement. The series of portraits *Black Bodies*, drawing from stories during the construction of the TAZARA railway, create an artistic archive as a backdrop of the current engagement between Chinese and Zambians.

The main body of works in the exhibition highlights the current exploitation of mineral resources, while speaking to the contemporary Chinese engagements. To start, the legacy, as well as the history of mining, is a significant part of the context in which the incidents related to Chinese engagement must be understood. My installation *Black Mountain*, therefore, is displayed in the centre of the venue to address the nature of Black Mountain, which is a copper dumpsite starting from the colonial period and re-mined currently.

My exhibition then engages with mining through the piece *Mapping Black Mountain Land*. It talks to the dominant narrative about Chinese engagements through the process of mapping, with emphasis on the location of the copper dumpsites. I employ archival maps, which are centred on the space as an exploitation of mineral resources to show a palimpsest, layering with contemporary sites that track my cousin's route into the space. I shift the focus onto the process of a walk through these spaces by young people making their livelihood by scrounging the copper residue mountain. The Black Mountain, because of its composition of slags (see chapter 3), has in the process claimed lives of some of the young people, making it a burial place or gravesite. By searching and marking these spots, this piece also acknowledges the space as a spiritual site of the departed.

To foreground the intensity and effects of excessive mining that has ravaged the environment and the people, the piece *Scorched Land* is hanging on the wall around the installation *Black Mountain*. In this work I employ construction industrial material – or “carport material” – to talk to the increasing demand for resources which affects the environment. The main consideration is also the people’s health that has been affected, and in this regard I focus on the sulphur dioxide. The process of burning in creating this work creates an effect on the material of shapes of rain, to speak to the idea of acid rain. It also brings into question both the colonial and current neglect of mining waste that has polluted the river sources in most mining areas in Zambia. I discuss the ways in which I work with the carport material with a violated surface as a metaphor for the earth that has been polluted with the aid of chemicals, and gases emitted by the mining companies into the air and water.

My exhibition also “talks back” to the discourses on the media which consist of facts as well as myths. Through displaying my foremost installation *Chinese Cabbage*, I pose my questions about the stereotypical narratives of Chinese presence. This work has a special position in the exhibition as it not only shows my entry point to the topic but also implies my approach to the topic, that is to engage with the broader China–Africa discourses from a personal perspective, a “little narrative”. Furthermore, Simbao notes in her writing that particular anxiety about China’s presence in Africa seems to appear in statements made in the media could in part “stem from [the West’s] assumptions about itself as a saviour of benighted Africa” (Wasserman cited in Simbao 2016:199). She suggests that this anxiety often takes the form of panic that reveals more concern with Western interests than the well-being of Africans, and Garth le Pere suggests that this “phobia and threat perception about China in Africa” is largely produced by “Western-inspired hypocrisy and arrogance” (le Pere cited in Simbao 2016:199). I highlight this by engaging with James Lukaku’s story titled, “Zambia’s Sovereignty Concerns Put China in Crosshairs” (Solomon 2018). In my artwork *Creating a nation out of Newsprint: Chambica the New Colony* I explore the manipulation and distortion by the media, and “talk back” (Simbao 2012:7) to the grand narrative about the Chinese in Zambia by the media.

In conclusion, my thesis and exhibition *Black Mountain*, by employing the narratives of my family members through installations, paintings, and drawings, intervenes in a broader, China–Africa discourse that is often driven by economics and politics and attaches importance to the little narratives. I am not arguing the end of findings, as the relationship is dynamic. Therefore,

my thesis and artworks demonstrate that the Chinese presence in Zambia is best understood when it is grounded in deep and fine-grained research. I am currently developing the research further, I have established a studio space at the Black Mountain where I will be working for the next few years.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Africa Speaks 4 Africa, 2014. from <http://africaspeaks4africa.org/china-loves-africa-michael-sois-satirical-paintings/> (accessed 10.19.2017).
- Cauvin, H.E., 2002. "Mining Giant Set to Depart from Zambia". *The New York Times*, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/25/business/mining-giant-set-to-depart-from-zambia.html> (accessed 7.21.2018).
- Chisanga, N., 1995, Private conversation between my grandmother and me, Ubwikashi Pa Chambeshi.
- Chongo, C., 2016. "Decolonising Southern Africa: A History of Zambia's Role in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle, 1964-1979". Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria.
- Collier, P., Inkpen, R., 2002. "The RGS, exploration and Empire and the contested nature of surveying", *Area* 34, 273–283.
- Darian-Smith, K., Gunner, e. & Nuttall, S. (1996) *Text, theory, space : land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia*, London, Routledge.
- Ellul, J., 1965. *Propaganda: The Formation Of Men's Attitudes*, Vintage Books, New York 116-120.
- Feng, C., Williams, J., Compton, N.J., China (Eds.), 2015. *A monument to China-Africa friendship: first-hand account of the building of the TAZARA*. World Affairs Press, Beijing.
- Ferguson, J., 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. University of California Press, California.
- Framer Framed, 2018. "Exhibition: A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes. Framer Framed". from <https://framerframed.nl/en/exposities/solo-exhibition-sammy-baloji/> (accessed 2.4.19).
- Fraser, A., Larmer, M. (Eds.), 2010. *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism*. Palgrave Macmillan US, New York.
- French, H.W., 2015. *China's second continent: how a million migrants are building a new empire in Africa*, Vintage Books, New York.
- Galerie Imane Farès. "Sammy_Baloji1.pdf", from https://imanefares.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Sammy_Baloji1.pdf (accessed 4.25.18).
- Gallery 1957, 2018. "Michael Soi & Bright Ackwerh: Almost True", from <https://www.contemporaryand.com/exhibition/michael-soi-bright-ackwerh-almost-true/> (accessed 11.13.18).
- Giese, K., 2014. "Perceptions, practices and adaptations: Understanding Chinese–African interactions in Africa", *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 43(1) 3-8.
- Hairong, Y., Sautman, B., 2013. "'The Beginning of a World Empire'? Contesting the Discourse of Chinese Copper Mining in Zambia", *Modern China* 39(2) 131–164.
- KB. 2015. "Stary Mwaba: Life on Mars", from <http://www.bethanien.de/en/exhibitions/stary-mwaba/> (accessed 05.12.2018)
- "Kitwe's 'Black Mountain' miners in war of words" 2014, *Daily Nation*, from <https://www.zambiadailynation.com/2014/05/05/kitwes-black-mountain-miners-in-war-of-words/> (accessed 2.4.19).
- Konkola Copper Mines plc, 2015. "The Nchanga Mine", from <http://kcm.co.zm/our-operations/mining/nchanga-mine/> (accessed 10.17.17).
- Lankoid, 2018. "How KCM is killing the Zambian Copperbelt. Part 1: water pollution", from <http://www.foilvedanta.org/articles/how-kcm-is-killing-the-zambian-copperbelt-part-1-water-pollution/> (accessed 11.14.18).
- Large, D., 2007. "Beyond 'Dragon in the Bush': The Study of China Africa Relations", *African Affairs* 107, 45–61.

- Lee, C.K., 2009. "Raw Encounters: Chinese Managers, African Workers and the Politics of Casualization in Africa's Chinese Enclaves", *The China Quarterly* 199, 647.
- Lusaka times, 2018. "Zambia: HH releases confidential documents showing the sale of NRDC", from <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/02/26/hh-releases-confidential-documents-showing-sale-nrdc/> (accessed 12.10.2018)
- Lyotard, J.-F., 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Mitchell, W. T. J. (1995) Imperial landscape. in Mitchell, W. T. J. (Ed.) *Landscape and Power*. Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press.
- Mjasiri, J., 2016. "Tanzania: Uhuru Railway - Chinese Family Experience Both Bitter, Memorable - Part XX", *Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)*, from <https://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t1409105.htm> (accessed 12.01.2017).
- Monson, J. & Rupp, S. 2013, "Africa and China: new engagements, new research", *African Studies Review*, 56 (1) 21-44.
- Monson, J. 2009. *Africa's Freedom Railway: how a Chinese development project changed lives and livelihoods in Tanzania*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Mususa, P., 2010. "'Getting by': life on the Copperbelt after the privatisation of the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines", *Social Dynamics* 36, 380-394.
- Pilling, D., Hornby, L., 2018. "China pledges \$60bn for Africa as Xi rejects 'debt trap' claims [WWW Document]", *Financial Times*, from <https://www.ft.com/content/e46bf2e2-af90-11e8-99ca-68cf89602132> (accessed 2.6.2019).
- Postel, H., 2017. "Moving Beyond "China in Africa": Insights from Zambian Immigration Data", *Journal of current Chinese affairs* 46, 155-174.
- Reuters, 2005. "Blast Kills 46 at a Copper Mine in Zambia", *The New York Times*, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/21/world/africa/blast-kills-46-at-a-copper-mine-in-zambia.html> (accessed 09.12.2017)
- Reuters, 2018. "Ten killed in collapse at Zambian copper mining dump", from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zambia-mining/ten-killed-in-collapse-at-zambian-copper-mining-dump-idUSKBN1JG1H3> (accessed 11.14.2018).
- Schroeder, R.A., 2012. *Africa After Apartheid: South Africa, Race, and Nation in Tanzania*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Sikamo, J., 2016. "Copper mining in Zambia - history and future", *Journal of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy* 116, 491-496.
- Simbao, R., 2012. "China-Africa Relations: Research Approaches", *African Arts* (45), 1-7.
- Simbao, R., 2016. "Walking into Africa in a Chinese Way: Hua Jiming's Mindful Entry as Counterbalance". In *Afrique—Asie: Arts, espaces, pratiques*, edited by Dominique Malaquais and Nicole Khouri. Mont-Saint-Aignon: University Presses of Rouen and Le Havre, 193-211.
- Simbao, Ruth. 2019a. (In press). "Pushing Against 'China-Africa' – slowly, and with small stories", *Something We Africans Got*.
- Simbao, R., 2019b. (In press). "Reaching Sideways Beyond Bandung Audacious Solidarities and Contingent "China-Africa" Scripts in Contemporary Visual Art". *Renjian Thought Review*.
- Siulapwa D. 2018, "The Chinese Debt Trap & The Economic Take Over of Zambia", *The Zambian Observer*, from <https://www.zambianobserver.com/the-chinese-debt-trap-the-economic-take-over-of-zambia/> (accessed 7.17.2018).
- Smith-Höhn, J., 2015. "A strategic conflict assessment of Zambia 72", from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/104311/M158FULL.pdf> (accessed 06.21.2018).
- Solange Guo Chatelard and Jessica M. Chu, n.d. "Chinese Agricultural Engagements In Zambia: A Grassroots Analysis", from

- https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5652847de4b033f56d2bdc29/t/568c474fd8af1097861ed025/1452033871100/CARI_PolicyBrief_4_Jan2015.pdf (accessed 12.11.2017)
- Solomon, S., 2018. "Zambia's Sovereignty Concerns Put China in Crosshairs [WWW Document]", *VOA*. from <https://www.voanews.com/a/zambia-sovereignty-concerns-put-china-in-crosshairs/4586797.html> (accessed 11.5.18).
- Staden, C. van, 2017. "Here's How China Is Changing Africa's Future. Huffington Post", from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/china-africa-obor_us_59a4372ce4b05710aa5dcd02 (accessed 7.13.18).
- Tate, 2011. "Contested Terrains: Sammy Baloji [WWW Document]", from <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibitionseries/project-space/project-space-contested-terrains/contested-2> (accessed 10.7.18).
- Tate, n.d. "Contested Terrains: Sammy Baloji [WWW Document]", from <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibitionseries/project-space/project-space-contested-terrains/contested-2> (accessed 2.4.19).
- Uttam, P., 2015. "South African artist William Kentridge on his Beijing retrospective [WWW Document]", *South China Morning Post*. from <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-entertainment/article/1849508/south-african-artist-william-kentridge-his-beijing> (accessed 1.25.19).
- Van Staden, 2013. *African East-Asian Affairs*. Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University.
- Vergès, F., 2018. "Like a Riot: The Politics of Forgetfulness, Relearning the South, and the Island of Dr Moreau", from http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/25_like_a_riot_the_politics_of_forgetfulness_relearning_the_south_and_the_island_of_dr_moreau?yyue=a21bo.50862.201879 (accessed 4.13.18).
- Vítková M., Ettler V., Johan Z., Kříbek B., Šebek O., Mihaljevič M., 2016. "Primary and secondary phases in copper-cobalt smelting slags from the Copperbelt Province", *Zambia. minmag* 74, 581.
- VOA, 2009. Zambia "Penalizes Chinese Investors for Pollution [WWW Document]", *VOA*. from <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2007-06-12-voa39/332536.html> (accessed 11.14.18).
- "World War 1 Ended in Zambia At Chambeshi Bridge and Not In Europe As Has Been Believed To Have Been The Case All Along'-Brian Mundubile". *Mwebantu.News*, from <https://mwebantu.news/world-war-1-ended-in-zambia-at-chambeshi-bridge-and-not-in-europe-as-has-been-believed-to-have-been-the-case-all-along-brian-mundubile/> (accessed 8.29.2018).
- Zambia, 1979, National Commission for Development Planning, 1979. Third national development plan, 1979-83. Office of the President, National Commission for Development Planning, Lusaka.