

Dlamini importantly also questions if, when switching sides, Askaris actually adopted “the value system of the ‘other side’”. A suitable analogy in post-apartheid South Africa would be the example of Cyril Ramaphosa who was an active trade unionist in the mid-1980s and one of the negotiators for South Africa’s transition to democracy, who subsequently turned to the private sector in the mid-1990s, becoming a multi-millionaire. Has Ramaphosa adopted the value systems of capitalism that he opposed ideologically in the 1980s or is activism and African National Congress (ANC) politics not at odds with monetary gain? Many have questioned if South Africa’s first two decades of democracy under the ANC have sidelined the masses in its pursuit of control over the economy. In the same vein, did Sedibe give up his aspirations for a free and aspirant South Africa, even while working for the state?

Dlamini quotes Adam Michnik to explain the ending of apartheid, “We have entered freedom with the luggage of unsettled accounts about our history”. Surely apartheid did not end with elections in 1994 and there remain stories that still need to surface, and others that may never see the light of day. Sedibe’s story thus “...complicates how we think about apartheid and its legacies, and reminds us of the stories that still refuse to be told. As a nation we would do well to examine the taboos, the secrets and the disavowals at the core of our collective memories” (p. 260).

Yet, in looking back are we not unsettling our future? Dlamini has shown that we can look into apartheid to understand our past so that we can understand our present realities and future. He has shown that history offers us lessons about what we choose to remember and choose to forget. He reminds us that the South African story was not/is not simply a black and white one; it is far more nuanced.

Zambia, the freedom struggle and the aftermath: The personal story of freedom fighter and leader Sylvester Mwamba Chisembele

(Devon, Axminster, 2016). Pp. 337 + xvi. ISBN 9780993409509)

Sophena Chisembele

Ackson M Kanduzama
Zambian Open University, New Foundland Campus
kanduzama@yahoo.com

Introduction

This is an erudite biography of Sylvester Mwamba Chisembele who was born on 1st March 1930 in Mansa and died in Lusaka on 5th February 2006. His wife, Sophena Chisembele, displayed at least two unique qualities in writing this book. First, she is an unusual archive. She had recorded useful information in her diary over a long time. That archive was complemented by her astute liberal values and superb memory. Second, Mrs. Chisembele writes and presents her thoughts clearly and in simple style. Thus, the book is easy to read, understand and is highly recommended to an ordinary reader. That is an appropriate honour to Chisembele who was aware that it is the grassroots he represented that gave him public standing and political power. In my attempt to follow her and his footsteps, I decided to review this book about the life of a renown Zambian nationalist and patriot under three themes. First, I shall comment on what the book says about Sylvester Chisembele's youth. Second, I review what the book says about Sylvester Chisembele as a democrat. Third, Chisembele represents enduring participation and active engagement through life and death. Any review is a process of selection; and at the moment, I shall speak about the book under those three themes.

Youth

The author demonstrates that a combination of Chisembele's intellectual, philosophical and moral curiosity resulted in the Catholic White Father's to deregister and remove Sylvester Chisembele from Lubushi Seminary in 1948. He was 18 years old and had joined the institution in 1942. Chisembele sought to understand why Zambians at the Seminary and in the Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia were treated as second class human beings. He found discrimination particularly puzzling and worrying in a Christian institution. On the other hand, the White Fathers found Chisembele's inquisitiveness disruptive. All outposts of colonization throughout Northern Rhodesia carried elements of discriminating Africans. During the colonial era, or before October 1964, Africans referred to the indigenous Black population. Paul Mushindo, when working on the first Bible in Chi Bemba at Lubwa, was puzzled that he was given second class status by European Christians who preached that God created all human beings, regardless of skin colour, as equals. Mushindo found strength in his belief that the sacrifice he was making for his people to know God could not be nullified by any human weakness. Chisembele was of similar moral and spiritual fibre.

Sylvester Chisembele saw his expulsion from Lubushi Seminary as an opportunity to pursue economic development and independence. His first business undertaking was to supply millet to local traders in Mansa. He further supplied the Copperbelt. He also set up fishing camps on the Nganda and Sosa beaches on the western side of Lake Bangweulu. Chisembele lived by the vision to be independent. He established a bakery and restaurant because he believed in economic diversification as a pathway to self-sustenance. Government was his major constraint during the youth of his business and in his old age. The colonial administration undermined Chisembele's business. They stopped his supplies to the Copperbelt. In his old age, the Government of the Republic of Zambia repossessed his farm in Chisamba between 2002 and 2006. In following age as a key factor in defining youth in Zambia, Chisembele was about to end his 'minority' when colonial rule ended on 24 October 1964.

Sophena Chisembele displayed exceptional understanding of information she received about Chisembele before they married. He was a politically active youth in Luapula and in Zambia since the 1950s. Chisembele played an active role in extending the African National Congress (ANC) in Luapula. He was a leading figure in establishing the Zambia African National Congress (ZANC) and its successor, the United National Independence Party (UNIP). He was an effective mobiliser at grassroots level. He listened to grassroots and supported their political empowerment. Between the late 1950s and 1964, Chisembele evolved ideas that democratic practices, traditions and institutions required accountability to grassroots organisations. The colonial administration recognised Chisembele's role in the development of the most sophisticated and advanced branch of nationalism in Luapula. In 1962, at the Magoye conference of UNIP, Chisembele led articulation of the position of Luapula on political strategy UNIP needed to adopt in order to end colonial rule. Through Chisembele, Luapula advocated rules that required ordinary membership to elect all party leaders. The party leaders also needed to be accountable to all party structures. Unfortunately for Zambia, UNIP rejected proposals from Luapula. Instead, UNIP adopted a strategy of democratic centralism. This allowed leaders to appoint leaders. Some leaders would be nominated and approved by grassroots structures. One key factor in taking this direction was fear of tribalism. Sophena Chisembele observed that democratic centralism adopted at Magoye was transformed into 'tribal balancing' which eventually created "One Man Rule" during the reign of UNIP from 1964 to 1991. By and large, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD)

followed the route of democratic centralism. Thus, in examining the foundation of Chisembele's political seed, Sophena Chisembele's goes beyond many studies in demonstrating debates and struggles inside nationalist and political parties in Zambia.

Chisembele as a democrat

Sylvester Chisembele was popular in Luapula because he was an organic leader and a democrat. In 1956 and 1957, he was part of the leadership that planted the ANC in Luapula. Chisembele's best effort produced the worst failure in Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, president of the Northern Rhodesia African Congress (ANC). That made it easy to transfer support from ANC to ZANC and UNIP in Luapula Province. Chisembele easily became a leading champion in turning ZANC and UNIP organisations for grassroots membership. An authority on nationalism in Zambia, David Mulford, and Miles Larmer's subsequent reassessments, acknowledged Chisembele's unique contributions. Senior colonial officials, including the Chief Secretary who became the last Governor, Sir Evelyn Hone, warned leaders of UNIP in 1963 and 1964 about Chisembele and the strength of local party mobilisation in Luapula.

Post-colonial leadership embraced or inherited the attitudes of the colonial administrators towards Chisembele and Luapula politics. UNIP sidelined Chisembele and other organic leaders in Luapula in 1964, 1968 and 1973 national elections. Yet, these organic leaders continued to be elected. There was a general surprise that Chisembele was not in the first cabinet of UNIP. In course of time, UNIP leaders had courage to express their attitudes clearly and publicly. In particular, Northern Province based Bemba politicians did not contain advocacy of democratic principles in Luapula. Following the appointment of Aran Mulwe as Youth Regional Secretary in Ndola in 1969, leading Bemba politicians protested about being led by "ba Tubulu" (foolish fishermen) for a long time. Probably the most influential Bemba politician in Zambia, Simon Kapwepwe, considered Chisembele a mosquito that he could effortlessly crush if he wanted. The leadership of Chisembele and other organic leaders from Luapula were neither politically foolish nor easy to crush. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chisembele was part of a Committee of 14. The Committee represented aspirations to develop democracy by weakening the national democracy and strengthening power of the provinces. Each Province would elect two representatives to a national council that would counter-balance power which the independence constitution had concentrated in

the presidency. Ackson Soko, Dingiswayo Banda and Nephas Tembo, who were radical activists on the Copperbelt but were branded as Easterners, were among rebels in UNIP that came to embrace what Chisembele had advocated since 1958 when ZANC was formed.

In 1983 Chisembele retired from open national politics. UNIP, especially President Kaunda made various overtures to Chisembele from the 1980s to the late 1990s. President Kaunda had played cat and mouse games with Chisembele in the 1960s and 1970s by appointing him to what many considered junior positions in the light of Chisembele's political contributions in Luapula. In 1970-71, Chisembele appeared to be a strong bridge between State House and the Litunga (a traditional Lozi leader in Western Province). Yet there was no reward for Chisembele. He was humiliated and demoted. Chisembele ventured into business such as a restaurant in Lusaka and farming in Chisamba in the late 1970s in order to strength his economic and political independence. He saw the One-Party State as lacking democratic ideals and practices. The first Vice-President (1964-1967), Rueben Kamanga, encouraged Chisembele to venture into business despite restrictions of the UNIP Leadership Code. The code was a set of principles and rules Kaunda's UNIP had set in anticipation of creating a socialist economy in Zambia. Even President Kaunda appeared willing at one time in the early 1980s to make special variations for Chisembele to own property in exchange for toying with Kaunda's political directives. President Chiluba in the 1990s courted Chisembele. No political marriage was made. Stubborn holding to democratic ideals resulted in the "State" repossessing Chisembele's farm in Chisamba.

Participation and engagement

Sylvester Chisembele was not a passive participant in the affairs of his motherland from the time he was expelled from Lubushi Seminary in 1948. He engaged in economic projects. We are not adequately informed by Sophena Chisembele about how Sylvester Chisembele raised his initial capital to start trading, bakery and a restaurant in Mansa. We do not know and we are given no guessed estimates of how much capital he had to start his businesses in Lusaka and Chisamba. There are also no indications of incomes generated. Yet, the book leaves no doubt that had colonial and post-colonial governments not stood in his way, Chisembele would have succeeded economically and politically.

Chisembele succeeds in leaving behind his clear thinking on grassroots based democracy. He led provincial politics in Luapula without threatening to break away from UNIP. Chisembele organized a movement that ensured that local leaders be elected and not vetted by Lusaka. It is this that made President Kaunda seek Chisembele continually, yet Kaunda's moves appeared calculated to break Chisembele's opposition to democratic centralism. Chisembele's democratic ideals remain on the Zambian political agenda. The Committee of 14 was, in part, a response to the failure of the 1967 UNIP conference. The Committee was also a response to pronouncements on decentralization in December 1968. President Kaunda and UNIP introduced the office of District Governor as an attempt to decentralize political power. Political decentralization remains on the national agenda. Sylvester Chisembele provided ideals and strategies of how Zambia could develop and entrench democracy.

Conclusion

The book has brought out at least three points that deserve recognition. First, the colonial and post-colonial governments suppressed progressive projects and ideas. Sylvester Chisembele suffered suppression at the hand of the colonial and post colonial governments. Chisembele initiated a variety of economic and political projects. A major factor in his failure was the hostile roles of governments from the 1950s to the early 2000s. Second, citizen participation should be promoted. Leaders in government should not weaken institutions. This was expected when Zambia ended one-party rule and became a multiparty and liberal democracy in 1991. Yet Chisembele was humiliated to the grave. Any government becomes illegitimate from the time a government institution suppresses and takes resources away from a citizen. Third, the book has brought out working inside political organisations and how power functions in Zambian institutions. In the context of these conclusions, Sophena Chisembele made an immeasurable contribution to knowledge about how injustice constrains progressive change in Zambia.