

THE 'SOUTH AFRICANISATION' OF SOUTHERN CENTRAL AFRICA: GLOBAL MEETS LOCAL IN THE UPPER ZAMBEZI VALLEY

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South African influence in the Western Province of Zambia (previously the Barotseland Protectorate) and the Caprivi panhandle of northeastern Namibia is not a new phenomenon. The region, which forms part of the Upper Zambezi Valley, has been linked with the south through social, political and economic networks since the early part of the nineteenth century. Such links have taken the form of invasion, networks of trade, missionary activity, colonialism, labour migration and, particularly since 1994, an economic invasion. It can reasonably be argued that the region has "looked south" from the early part of the nineteenth century, despite attempts by the first Republic of Zambia under the direction of its founding President, Kenneth Kaunda, to sever these links.

Globalisation and the infusion of the capitalist world economy arrived slowly in the Upper Zambezi Valley. This was partly due to the physical remoteness of the region and partly due to the fact that, during the colonial era, the region was seen purely in terms of a labour reserve for the mines of South Africa and the Copperbelt, and the plantations of Southern Rhodesia. Meanwhile, in the postcolonial era, the independent government of Zambia is perceived to have withheld development of the Valley, partly due to jealousy and suspicion concerning relations with South Africa.

Today, South African influence is set to take on new dimensions with the decision to go ahead with the building of a new road between Katima on border with Namibia and Mongu, the capital and chief town of Western Province located in the heart of the region. This will catalyse processes of change already begun in the south with the opening of a refurbished road between Katima and Livingstone as part of the highway linking Walvis Bay in Namibia with the Zambian Copperbelt and the DRC. That new conduit of globalisation has brought a welter of political, economic, social and cultural change as new people, goods and money arrive, mostly from or via South Africa resulting in new notions of identity largely based on contested discourses of modernity.

This paper catalogues growing influence from South Africa in the Upper Zambezi Valley and describes current trends associated with a particular brand of globalisation that is catalysing social change the Upper Zambezi Valley.

Keywords: Globalisation, Identity, Modernity, Socio-economic change