

***Zed Beats: A Historical Ethnography of Musical Production and Musical Labor in  
Zambian Popular Music***

by

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# ***Zed Beats: A Historical Ethnography of Musical Production and Musical Labor in Zambian Popular Music***

Mathew Tembo, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2024

Drawing on participant-observation, interviews, musical analysis and published literature on Zambia's socio-economic history, I analyze shifts in musical labor and musical production of Zambian popular music between 1986 and 2024. I define musical labor as any activity that contributes to the production of music in recording studios and other creative spaces for financial gain or otherwise. *Zed Beats*, a blend of indigenous Zambian musical elements with musical influences drawn from R&B, reggae, rap, Jamaican dancehall, hip-hop, and other music genres, exposes these shifts.

Socio-economic conditions prevalent in the late-1980s and 1990s, including the decline of Zambia's economy, the rise in the number of disk jockeys (DJs) and their mobile discos, the dominance of foreign music on Zambia's radio and television, the demise of many musicians due to HIV/AIDS, and the economic liberalization of Zambia's economy, facilitated shifts in musical labor and musical production in recording studios.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In Chapter 1, I present the history of Zambian popular music and examine the socio-economic conditions that led to the emergence of *Zed Beats* and its subgenres in home studios. In the second chapter, I analyze musical labor and musical production in semi-professional studios between 1986 and 2000 before the emergence of *Zed Beats*. In chapters three and four, I examine shifts in musical labor and musical production based on ethnographic research I conducted in Zambia between 2021 and 2024. In Chapter 5, I analyze the seeming omnipotence of producers in home studios as they transformed their Digital Audio

Workstations (DAWs) into musical instruments. The producer's omnipotence in the production of *Zed Beats* has significantly influenced its sound and blurred the roles of the musician, engineer, composer, arranger, songwriter, and producer in home studios. In this chapter, I further explore "liveness" as an aesthetic choice by producers who have reincorporated live instrumentation in the production of *Zed Beats*. I demonstrate how producers' access to more affordable audio recording equipment, music software, computers and other related accessories has given them a new kind of influence and power over the production of popular music in Zambia.

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## Preface

I was born and raised in Zambia. The first time I traveled overseas was in 2001. I was in my mid-twenties then. Ten years later I moved to the United States of America for my master's degree in music performance at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. As an international scholar who is rooted in Zambia's music culture but also one who has lived and studied in the United States of America for over ten years, I possess an understanding on how to navigate Euro-American scholarship without having to lose my cultural identity.

I am so grateful to my dissertation committee, and I appreciate your contributions to my academic growth. To my supervisor, Professor Andrew Weintraub, I am grateful for your mentorship. Professor Nicole Constable, Professor Michael Heller, Professor Jennifer Kyker, and Professor Shalini Ayyagari, I am grateful for your guidance and your time. I am sincerely thankful to my family in Zambia for believing in me. To my friends, Trust Mufune and Kondwelani Tembo, thank you for always encouraging me to keep forging ahead. I am grateful to all my interlocutors for their contributions during my fieldwork. I dedicate this dissertation to you. To my daughter Nzinzi, it was always a joy to hear you play your bass guitar as I struggled to write. I love you.

In 1986 and 1989, Central Studios and Mushima were established. By the late 1990s, many more semi-professional and home studios had emerged. However, corporate-funded professional studios still dominated the production of popular music in Zambia. The availability of professional, semi-professional, and home studios, particularly in the seminal stages of my music career, gave me an opportunity to witness and experience first-hand shifts in musical labor in these spaces. In 1997, when I worked as a producer at Michel Billiouw's Studio in Chipata, I learned how to produce music by programming sequences on keyboards and looping those sequences in MIDI on

a computer. That was my first experience recording in a home studio. My first encounter recording in a professional music studio came in 2001 when I recorded my second album *Save My Soul* at Blaisdell Studio in the northern town of Groningen in the Netherlands. My experience there was totally different from the one I had at Michel Billiouw's Studio in Chipata. I recorded live with an ensemble of five musicians: a drummer, a percussionist, a bass player, a guitarist and myself on keyboards and vocals. We recorded the instruments first and then the vocals followed by overdubs. The process was similar when I recorded in Sunset Studios in the Makeni neighborhood of Lusaka in 2004. Recording with an ensemble of five musicians, we recorded drum kit, bass, keyboards and guide vocals first (the rhythm section). Guitar and keyboard melodies and solos were overdubbed on selected sections after which vocals were redone. Michael Linyama, the sound engineer at Sunset Studios, focused on facilitating the recording process while my band and I took on the role of producer and arranger.

When I returned to Zambia in September 2001 from my trip in the Netherlands, home studios still dominated the production of popular music. The situation accorded me an opportunity to work with different producers and musicians. In the years that followed, I co-produced my own musical works as well as those of John Njebe with producers Jerry Banda (Jerry Fingaz), and Mainza Chipenzi (Mainza) among others in their home studios. I am grateful to all these creative individuals for sharing their music and talent with me. The experiences I had with them over twenty years ago formed a baseline on which the idea of this dissertation was born.

## 1.0 Introduction

Drawing on participant-observation, interviews, musical analysis and published literature on Zambia's socio-economic history, I analyze shifts in musical labor and musical production of Zambian popular music between 1986 and 2024.<sup>1</sup> I define musical labor as any activity that contributes to the production of music in recording studios and other creative spaces for financial gain or otherwise. *Zed Beats*, a blend of indigenous Zambian musical elements with musical influences drawn from R&B, reggae, rap, Jamaican dancehall, hip-hop, and other music genres, exposes these shifts.

Socio-economic conditions prevalent in the late-1980s and 1990s, including the decline of Zambia's economy, the rise in the number of disk jockeys (DJs) and their mobile discos, the dominance of foreign music on Zambia's radio and television, the demise of many musicians due to HIV/AIDS, and the economic liberalization of Zambia's economy, facilitated shifts in musical labor and musical production in recording studios.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In Chapter 1, I present the history of Zambian popular music and examine the socio-economic conditions that led to the emergence of *Zed Beats* and its subgenres in home studios. In the second chapter, I analyze musical labor and musical production in semi-professional studios between 1986 and 2000 before the emergence of *Zed Beats*. In chapters three and four, I examine shifts in musical labor and musical production based on ethnographic research I conducted in Zambia between 2021 and 2024. In Chapter 5, I analyze the seeming omnipotence of producers in home studios as they transformed their Digital Audio

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<sup>1</sup> The first semi-professional studio, Central Studio, was set up in the Northmead neighborhood of the capital city Lusaka in 1986. The fieldwork for this dissertation concluded in 2024.

Workstations (DAWs) into musical instruments. The producer's omnipotence in the production of *Zed Beats* has significantly influenced its sound and blurred the roles of the musician, engineer, composer, arranger, songwriter, and producer in home studios. In this chapter, I further explore "liveness" as an aesthetic choice by producers who have reincorporated live instrumentation in the production of *Zed Beats*. I demonstrate how producers' access to more affordable audio recording equipment, music software, computers and other related accessories has given them a new kind of influence and power over the production of popular music in Zambia.

Youth typically refer to Zambia as "Zed." During my fieldwork in Zambia (2020 to 2024), the term *Zed Beats* was youth-culture slang for popular music produced in people's homes on Digital Audio Workstations on their computers. A Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) is a multi-track recording system that facilitates recording, editing, mixing, processing, and mastering audio signals. Although the term is used to refer to both music software and hardware in a studio setup, it is also used to refer to only the software aspect of the system, "with the understanding that the software runs on a computer and requires hardware audio inputs and outputs in order to function" (Hosken 2011:86).

Primarily popular among youth, *Zed Beats* is produced on DAWs in home studios. The music foregrounds vocals (either male or female) in local languages, mostly urban vernaculars of *Chibemba* and *Chinyanja*, the two most widely spoken lingua franca, interpolated with some English phrases, and dance moves created to accompany the performance of the music. In typically moderate to fast tempos, *Zed Beats* features lyrical delivery in short melodic phrases based on Western diatonic scales. Harmonic progressions employ mostly permutations of the I, IV, V, and vi chords. The lyrics deal with topics including male-female relationships, accumulation of wealth, and socio-economic issues such as poverty, unemployment, sexual abuse, and inequality.



The earliest published reference to *Zed Beats* is in anthropologist Laura Hubbard's 2007 dissertation *Idol Hopes: Media Dream Worlds and the Politics of Youth Futures in Zambia*.

Hubbard states:

Everyone at Qfm, in particular Moses and Asan Nyama, offered a peek into Africa's modern radio and taught me that modern has a sound, an African youth sound. Cliff Sichone and Kamiza Victor Chikulu, allowed me to drift through television's world in Lusaka and made bets, which they lost, on who would win and lose the continental televisual games. Kamiza, the "Zambian Shrek", owes me a lunch I can't wait to laugh over. The Zedd records crew - Ndiwa, Langa, and Savior - let me sit with their belief in Zed beats on too many occasions. Mutinta Musokotwane, dragging on her cigarette, gave me more than the insider's view as she drove me from studio to studio in the Mondo- mobile [2007: v]

According to Hubbard, *Zed beats* [beats spelled with a lower case 'b'] is Zambian youth sound, or the sound of modern Zambia.<sup>2</sup> Q FM radio, founded in 2001 in Lusaka, highlighted 'Africa's modern radio' as its mission statement. Abiding to its mission statement, the radio targets a youthful middle-class audience.

Angel Phiri, film maker and former manager at one of the first semi-professional studios, Music and Video Studios (MUVI), reported that the new technology of recording music digitally with music software on a computer in the late-1990s into the early-2000s came with its own

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<sup>2</sup> Hubbard conducted her fieldwork in Zambia between 2003 and 2006. However, based on conversations she had with her interlocutors, who mostly were musicians in Zambian popular music scene at the time, the term Zed beats was already in use before 2003.

lingua (interview, April 19, 2023). The first time he heard musicians and producers refer to a *beat* as the basis of musical production was in the late-1990s when music producers Innocent Maboshe and Che Mutale (a.k.a. Che) worked with him at MUVI Studios. Che and Maboshe were aspiring hip-hop artists at the time. Both were influenced by American hip-hop culture. It was common in hip-hop circles to refer to an accompaniment track as a *beat*. “Particularly, we called instrumentals *beats*” (Mutale, interview, August 4, 2023).

The new generation of producers and musicians referred to the process of making music on keyboard synthesizers, drum machines, and later digital audio workstations *beat making* and the music they made *beats*. Modern recording technologies have been central to the creation of *Zed Beats* since the 2000s when the genre emerged on the Zambian music scene. In this dissertation, I trace the history and development of *Zed Beats* as a *sound* that eventually became a *genre*. *Zed Beats* grew out of earlier forms of popular music in Zambia, but it is produced in entirely different ways. It emerged during a period of major political and economic restructuring in Zambia. The genre reflects technological changes in music-making and the effects of those changes on musical labor.

Fabian Holt defines genre as a “type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation, and signification” (2007:2). He further asserts that “genre is not only ‘in the music,’ but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions. These conventions are created in relation to particular musical texts and artists as well as the contexts in which they are performed and experienced” (ibid.). Fabri and Chambers define musical genre as “a set of musical events, real or possible, whose course is regulated by a definite arrangement of socially acceptable rules” (1982:136). Bonnard observes that musical genres are not based on the formal features of the music (2013: 8).

Instead, they have a tendency to possess a strong contextual anchorage determined by historical period, geographical provenance, or a specific sociological origin. Similarly, Moore observes that genre is normally thematized as socially constrained (2001:441). Holt (2007), Fabri and Chambers (1982), and Bonnard (2013) all point to the fact that genres are shaped by the social context in which the music is created.

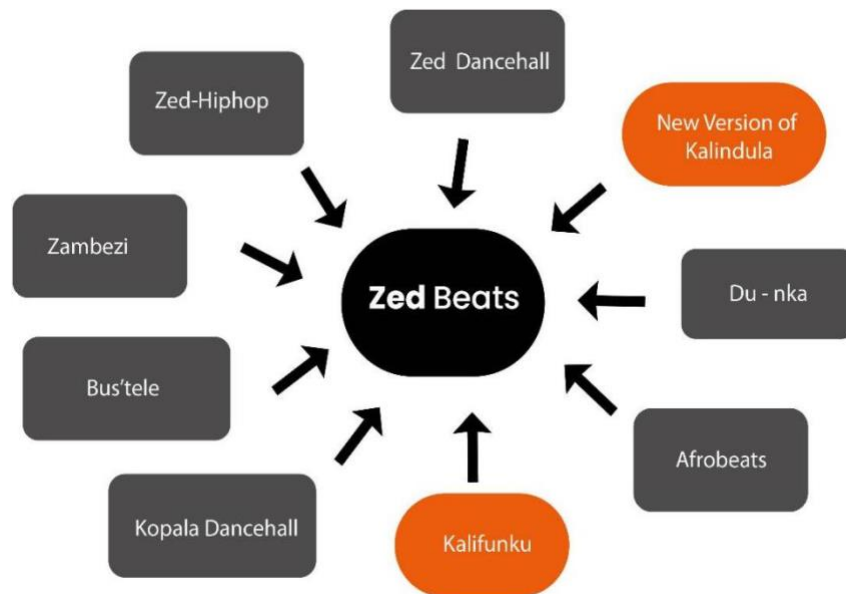
In a similar vein, the emergence and evolution of *Zed Beats* signals a contextual link to historical period, geographical provenance, and a specific social origin. Music producer Mainza Chipenzi explained that *Zed Beats* emerged in the early 2000s when musicians and music enthusiasts began experimenting with recordings of Zambia's local and foreign musical elements in their backyards and garages (personal communication October 26, 2023). Over the years, *Zed Beats* has evolved into many subgenres, which offers consumers more choices and demonstrates the strength and staying power of *Zed Beats* in the music economy of Zambia.

### **1.1 Subgenres of *Zed Beats***

The categorization of a subgenre potentially involves three types of relationships: the vertical relationship of subgenre to parental genre; the horizontal relationship to the 'sibling' subgenres; and the oblique relationship to [other genres] through hybridization. The process of creating music, including production technique, composition technique, as well as performing technique define a subgenre (Hider and Lee 2023:20). Similarly, subgenres of *Zed Beats* follow similar composition, performance, and production techniques of the parental genre.

It is important to note that due to hybridization of the subgenres of *Zed Beats*, properties from one subgenre can also be found in other subgenres creating a horizontal relationship among

subgenres but simultaneously maintaining a vertical relationship with the parental genre, *Zed Beats*. For example, elements of the *du-nka* subgenre can also be heard in *Zed dancehall* or *Zed-Afrobeats* but all of these subgenres maintain a relationship with *Zed Beats* in terms of how the music is produced. Therefore, it is appropriate to discuss them in terms of the musical labor in home studios where the genre is produced. *Zed Beats* includes subgenres *Zed hip-hop*, *Zed dancehall*, *Kopala dancehall*, *du-nka*, *Zed-Afrobeats*, *zambezi*, *bus'tele*, *kalifunku*, and *new version of kalindula*, as indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Subgenres of *Zed Beats* Chart**

*Zed Beats*' subgenres developed at different times in the 2000s. Although the name *Zed Beats* was not in use in the Zambian music scene until the early 2000s, music in home studios of the 1990s was produced in similar ways and also fused foreign musical elements with indigenous elements. Sonically, the music of the 1990s and *Zed Beats* exhibit similar production aesthetics. It is not a particular sound or production technique that separates *Zed Beats* from the sound produced

in the home studios of the 1990s. It is rather that in the 2000s, musicians, producers, and fans applied a new name to crown the new sound, *Zed Beats*. However, it is important to note that the recording technology used in the production of *Zed Beats* has greatly improved over the years since the emergence of home studios in 1989. Also, producers have gained experience in working with their music software. For example, the *Zam ragga*<sup>3</sup> productions by Anthony Kafunya (a.k.a. Daddy Zemus) and Mukosha Chembe (a.k.a. M.C. Wabwino) of the 1990s are stylistically similar to the *Zed dancehall* style of Danny Siulapwa (a.k.a. Danny) and Petersen Mundia (a.k.a. Petersen) of the early- 2000s and were produced in a similar manner. However, the latter's productions are of better quality due to technological advancements in audio interfaces, music software and more knowledgeable and experienced producers.

In the following section, I describe each subgenre, with representative examples. All the subgenres I examine in this dissertation are still actively produced in home studios (at this writing). *Kalifunku* and *new version of kalindula* have to date only been practiced by the duo Black Munthu and Afunika respectively, but they are important because they are a part of the evolution of the genre of *Zed Beats*.

### **1.1.1 *Du-nka***

*Du-nka* is percussion-dominated music in a moderate to fast-tempo. It is derived from the sound made by the snare or rim shot hit and the kick drum in a 4/4 pattern. While the kick maintains a steady rhythm on the downbeat of every other beat, the snare hit alternates on the fourth sixteenth-note sub-division of beat one and the third sixteenth-note subdivision of beat two

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<sup>3</sup> *Zam ragga* is the precursor to *Zed dancehall*

onomatopoeically producing the *du-nka* sound: *du* on the kick and *nka* on the snare or rim shot (Lazarous Chewe, personal communication 2017). The music is meant to be played in clubs and at other celebratory events such as weddings and birthday celebrations. Figure 2 shows the *du-nka* drum pattern.



**Figure 2: *Du-nka* Drum Pattern**

### 1.1.2 *Bus'tele*

When I was in high school, between 1988 and 1991, students sang to bolster support for the school sports teams, particularly soccer. We called the music *bus'tele*. The songs formed the basis for a fast-tempo vocal-dominated music influenced by Zambian indigenous folk songs and accompanied by percussion, often hand-made drums. I began hearing about *bus'tele* popular music in 2001 when singer Jordan Katembula (a.k.a. JK) released his debut album *JK*. However, the *bus'tele* that transitioned to the popular music scene was made on computers using synthesized sounds. Justin Chipimo (a.k.a. Mozegator) dominated the *bus'tele* subgenre after releasing *Chikokoshi* (Waist Dance) [2005]. Chipimo called his version of *bus'tele* *chiunda*. In most of his songs Mozegator praised Zambian national soccer team although sometimes he wrote about non-sports-related subjects. The style is accompanied by dance routines that involve jumps and skips.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Others who performed in the *Bus'tele* subgenre include King David and Saan Saan. Although the subgenre is associated with Mozegator's *Chiunda*, it encompassed other fast paced dance subgenres that highlighted dance more than they did lyrics.

*Chiunda* and *Zed dancehall* have specific dances associated with them. However, the other subgenres do not have specific dances that accompany them although their performances are always accompanied by dance of some sort.

### **1.1.3 *Zed Hip-hop***

*Zed hip-hop* is influenced by American rap music, which dominated the Zambian music scene in the 1980s. When home studios emerged in Zambia, one of the first genres to be recorded was hip-hop. It was natural to record hip-hop in home studios because digital sounds in form of samples sourced from a sampler or keyboard synthesizer defined the aesthetics of the subgenre. According to Tabitha Lilungwe, staff member at Bloggers, *Zed hip-hop* involves excess use of programmed sounds in its production. Bloggers is an NGO that works with youths, especially musicians, to democratize online spaces. Lilungwe told me that the subgenre “is a fusion of different styles sung in Zambian local languages but modeled on American hip-hop. *Zed hip-hop* has no lyrical content [and] lacks authenticity. Lyrics are usually mumbled on spot . . .not having a clear story” (interview, June 2020). Some of the practitioners of the subgenre I talked to insist that coming up with lyrics on the spot is a skill that artists of other genres do not possess. The lyrical content focuses on girls, wealth, and the struggles of life in underprivileged communities. Mwila Musonda (a.k.a. Slap D), Mulaza Kaira (a.k.a. Macky 2), Kondwani Kaira (a.k.a. Chef 187), and female rappers Racheal Mwewa (a.k.a. Xaven), and Clementina Mulenga (a.k.a. Cleo Ice Queen) are some of the artists associated with *Zed hip-hop*.

#### **1.1.4 Zed-Afrobeats**

The term *Afrobeats* with an ‘s’, not to be confused with Nigerian Fela Kuti’s Afrobeat, was coined by DJ Abrantee, a resident of London (Hancox, 2012). Originally, the term was used to refer to Nigerian and Ghanaian pop styles of the mid-1990s and early-2000s that blend western music with contemporary Ghanaian and Nigerian music. The music mostly appeals to young adults. In 2024, *Afrobeats* is used to categorize a variety of pop music genres rooted in African musical elements. In Zambia, some pop musicians and their producers categorize their music as *Zed-Afrobeats*. According to producer Chinx, *Afrobeats* refers to a fusion of Nigerian music and other pop music styles such as hip-hop and dancehall. He further explains that in the context of Zambian music, *Zed-Afrobeats* is a fusion of Zambian musical elements, Euro-American and West African *Afrobeats* (interview, August 21, 2022).<sup>5</sup> I define *Zed-Afrobeats* as a blend of West African musical elements, Zambian indigenous rhythms and American influences sung in local languages including *Chibemba* and *Chinyanja* and some English. The music is mostly performed in clubs.

#### **1.1.5 Zed Dancehall**

To better understand *Zed dancehall* (a localized version of Jamaican dancehall), a brief history of the emergence of dancehall in Jamaica is necessary. The dancehall culture began in the 1950s in the yards, lawns, and public halls of Jamaica, especially in the capital Kingston. In these spaces, public address systems referred to as sound systems in reggae/dancehall circles were set

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<sup>5</sup> He mentioned Roberto, Chile 1 and Yo Maps as progenitors of the subgenre in Zambia.



up. Jamaica's indigenous music, but also American jazz and R&B were played on the system. Patrons were lower-class citizens who used these spaces to cement their black identity in colonial Jamaica (Niaah, 2008:36-37). In its initial stages, dancehall practice required a conceptual interpretation more than a sonic one. Dancehall was a space in which lower-class Jamaicans converged to be entertained but also to forge their sense of freedom and identity.

As a music genre dancehall emerged in Jamaican music scene in the early 1980s (Hope, 2006:116). Influenced by technological shifts, the genre morphed into a fast-tempo rhythmically complex type of music (Niaah, 2008:37). The more affordable digital recordings enabled the proliferation of DJs or "toasters." By the 1990s, Rexton Fernando Gordon (a.k.a. Shaba Ranks) and Mark Anthony Myrie (a.k.a. Buju Banton) developed dancehall into a global popular music style.

In the late-1990s, one of the most prominent musicians in Zambian popular music Anthony Kafunya (a.k.a. Daddy Zemus) was inspired by Shaba Ranks. Ernest Izaizai, Daddy Zemus' producer of his early works, argues that the toaster revolutionized Zambian popular music. While most of Zambian dancehall acts of the time aspired to sound Jamaican singing in English and Jamaican Pidgin English (Patois or *Patwa*), Daddy Zemus localized Jamaican Dancehall by singing mostly in *Chinyanja*. The genre was called Zam-ragga<sup>6</sup> (personal communication 2022). In 2024, it is commonly referred to as *Zed Dancehall* and sung in Zambian local languages (mostly *Chinyanja* and *Chibemba*) and interpolated with some Jamaican *Patwa* (personal (Chinx, interview, 2021).

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<sup>6</sup> Zam ragga is short for Zambian ragga muffin.

### 1.1.6 *Kopala Dancehall*

*Kopala dancehall* emerged in Zambia in 2008 when the group Danger Zone Crew dominated the music scene in the Copperbelt where the group was based. *Kopala* is street lingua for the mineral copper, but it is used to refer to the Copperbelt region of Zambia. Unlike Zam dancehall, which was influenced by Jamaican dancehall, *Kopala dancehall* draws inspiration locally. It is an umbrella term used to refer to percussive dominated fast-paced tempo *beats* sung in *Chibemba* and accompanied with dance moves produced in home studios. In its early stages, *Kopala dancehall* had a regional appeal. However, over the years, the subgenre has gained massive national recognition. Emmanuel Zulu (a.k.a. Silentt Erazer) reports in the following excerpt (interview, July 13, 2021):

Mathew Tembo (MT): What's the most common music style that you record here? I know you record anything. Everything. But most of the people that come here, what kind of music do they do?

Emmanuel Zulu (EZ): Apparently, it's this same new *Zed Kopala* (*Kopala dancehall*) type beat that has just come up now. The Dancehall type of music.

MT: Okay, *Kopala Dancehall*.

EZ: Yes. That's what's trending right now.

MT: So here in Lusaka, you also do that?

EZ: Yeah. It's all over. Hmmm [Emphasizing his argument].

*Zed Beats* has in recent years dominated Zambia's soundscape on social media, radio, music festivals, family events such as weddings and birthday parties and bars and clubs. Bars and clubs are the leading spaces where one can hear the music. Club DJs typically include many examples of *Zed beats* on their playlists. Clubs are also spaces for *Zed Beats* performances. Artists make appearances in clubs for a fee. The more famous performers get invited to perform at local festivals. For example, John Mwanza who owns Chansolo Lodge in the city of Chipata in the

Eastern region of Zambia described to me how he hired Elton Mulenga (a.k.a. Yo Maps) to perform before a small crowd of twenty consisting of his close friends and family members at Chansolo and paid him K20, 000 (US\$ 1,250). Performances involve artists lip syncing to their own music in the company of dancers. In the next section, I provide an overview of Zambia's geography, politics, and economy to highlight the social conditions that laid the foundation for the emergence of *Zed Beats*.

## **1.2 Zambia: Geography, Economy, Politics and Music History**

Zambia, centrally located in the southern part of Africa, is a landlocked country sharing its borders with Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Royson Mukwena & Fanuel Sumaili, 2016:42). The United Nations Data reports Zambia's population to be at 19.61 million, out of which about 8.09 million live in the capital Lusaka, Central and Copperbelt, the three regions along the line of rail <https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/2022-census/reports/> (accessed February 24, 2023). Figure 3 is a map of Zambia showing its location in relation to its neighboring countries.



**Figure 3: Zambia’s Location in Africa**

During the colonial era (1924-1963), Zambia’s economy depended immensely on copper exports. By the time of independence in 1964, Zambia was one of the most industrialized and urbanized of the new nation states in Africa (Rakner 2003:44). However, due to the slump in copper prices in the 1970s, the country’s economy collapsed a few decades later: “[T]he 1970s-80s collapse of copper export earnings – exacerbated by Kaunda’s UNIP<sup>7</sup> government’s failure to adequately address the economic decline – triggered the political opposition leading to the 1991 transition to multiparty politics” (Ibid). After twenty-seven years of one-party rule by Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP) government, Frederic Chiluba and the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) displaced Kaunda’s UNIP. Chiluba got

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<sup>7</sup> UNIP was the ruling and only political party at the time.

tremendous support from civil servants, trade unionists, students, intellectuals, activists and peasants (Carmody, 2004:4).

Although I was only a teenager in the 1990s, I remember life being so difficult for my family and many other Zambians. I surely did not understand the politics of the day, but I recall standing in long lines at grocery stores to purchase groceries. Shortages of basic needs such as sugar, cooking oil, corn meal (Zambia's staple), and bread was the talk of the day. At Petauke Secondary School where I went for my high school education, some of my teachers showed up to teach in class only a few times in a three-month term due to perpetual work strikes; sometimes they did not get paid at all for months. When I began seeing young men and women in the MMD branded T-Shirts chanting *kuya bebele* and "the hour has come," I sensed something significant was about to happen in Zambia's political scape. *Kuya bebele*, contextually translated as "time to leave," was an address to Kaunda's UNIP regime which had been in power for twenty-six years. Thus, when the UNIP government lost the elections to the opposition MMD in 1991, it did not come as a shock to me or to most Zambians.

The multiparty politics of the 1990s Zambia made way for the emergence of opposition political parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These institutions provided platforms on which the Zambian citizenry could participate in social and political conversations (Mainga, 2001:92). Since 1991 when Zambia transitioned to multi-party politics, the country has conducted parliamentary and presidential elections every after five years. The elections in 1991, 1996, and 2001 indicate that Zambia's democracy is far from consolidated (Rakner 2003). After Chiluba's two five-year terms in office, Levy Mwanawasa was ushered in as president in 2001. Mwanawasa was better liked by both the local and international communities for his fight against corruption during his term in office. A decade later, the opposition Patriotic Front (PF) was ushered

into power under the leadership of Michael Sata (Prokopenko 2018:64). After the demise of Sata in 2014, Edgar Lungu, also of the PF party was elected president. In August 2021, Lungu lost the presidential election to Hakainde Hichilema. Although international observers noted that most of the elections in Zambia have been marred with irregularities and governments' intolerance to criticism from the opposition, transfer of political power has generally been peaceful. Zambia has over the years acquired an image of a politically stable country even though the majority of the population still live in poverty.

### **1.3 Rationale and Purpose of the Study**

Scholarship on Zambian music is minimal. In the past two decades, only two books (Alapatt 2017; Koloko 2012); two doctoral dissertations (Hubbard 2007; Lamba 2024); two master's theses (Kazadi 2014; Tembo 2019); and two journal articles (Nchindila 2008; Banda and Mambwe 2013) have been published. The paucity of published research can be attributed to a few factors. There are no graduate-level music programs in Zambia's higher institutions of learning. Evelyn Hone College, University of Zambia (UNZA), and Chalimbana University in Lusaka, Rusangu University in Monze, and Copperbelt University (CBU) in Kitwe offer undergraduate programs in music education but nothing at the graduate level. The absence of graduate programs in music limits its research and negatively impacts music scholarship. Also, inadequate funding and poor infrastructure in higher institutions of learning have led to work stoppages, student protests at some of the institutions, and limitations in research.<sup>8</sup> The low standards of education

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<sup>8</sup> Zambia daily Mail Limited, <http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/unza-can-overcome-its-challenges/> (accessed March 7, 2021).

due to government's lack of investment in the education sector has made it unattractive for collaborations with other scholars in the region, making *Zambian scholarship* invisible on regional and global platforms. Furthermore, the citizenry's lack of access to higher education in general has limited the amount of data available in other fields that would be useful for research on *Zambian popular music* (for example, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, among others).

The lack of scholarship on *Zambian popular music* stands in contrast to the many studies conducted on popular music in other parts of southern Africa.<sup>9</sup> Considering this level of output in the region, *Zambia* still lags behind and therefore stays disconnected from the scholarly dialogue that is going on in the region.

My dissertation, the first on popular music in *Zambia*, seeks to engage my study of musical production and musical labor in *Zambia's* home studios with scholarship on popular music in Africa.<sup>10</sup> In *Sound of Africa* (2003), Meintjes discusses the production of music in Gallo Music's Downtown Studios of Johannesburg in the early 1990s. Meintjes observes that recording sessions in the studios alienated musicians because they did not fully understand how producers and sound engineers manipulated, recorded, and produced music. But musicians became fascinated by the new technology, and quickly learned how to control aspects of musical production. Perullo (2011), who examined the commodification of Tanzanian music in the 2000s, writes that in the absence of a formidable music industry, individuals had to become more innovative to ensure the sustainability of the production and consumption of music. Perullo notes that the production of Tanzanian *Bongo Flava* in the 1990s involved producers composing and *making beats* on drum

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<sup>9</sup> For example, research on Zimbabwean popular music has been conducted by Berliner (1993), Eyre (2015), Dutiro (2007), Howard (2007), Kyker (2016) and Muwati (2016). In South Africa, see Muller (2008), Steingo (2016), Martin (2013), Olsen (2014), Meintjes (2003), and Lucia (2005), among others.

<sup>10</sup> Ethnographic studies of popular music and technology in Africa by Meintjes (2003), Perullo (2011), Koloko (2012), Steingo (2016), Alapatt (2017), Kazadi (2014) and Hubbard (2007) inform my work.

machines and keyboard synthesizers and recording and mixing those *beats* on their computers (2012:193). Similarly, built around music software-computer-generated drum patterns, percussion, sampled bass, strings and piano sounds, the producer in Zambia's home studios has become a co-composer and arranger. Steingo (2016) traced the production of South African *Kwaito* in Soweto's home studios as well as discussing the marginalization of youth in Johannesburg's Soweto neighborhood. Musicians found more affordable and innovative ways of producing music on computers in their homes, even when computers had broken down.<sup>11</sup> Steingo's and Perullo's studies speak to my study because *Zed Beats* emerged when Zambia's economy could no longer support corporate recording businesses. In place of music corporates, individuals in home studios provided recording facilities that sustained the production of popular music in Zambia. In home studios, *Zed Beats* artists learned how to make their own recordings on digital audio workstations.

Alapatt (2017) and Koloko (2012) provide an understanding of the history of Zambian popular music. Koloko's work discusses genres, history, and biographies of individuals who have contributed to the emergence and rise of Zambian popular music and the history of radio from the 1940s (when Zambian music was first recorded by ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey and broadcaster Alick Nkhata) to the 2000s (coinciding with the emergence of *Zed Beats*). Kazadi's thesis (2014) examines Zambia's music economy and foregrounds some aspects of the production of *Zed Beats*, including its circulation and consumption. My dissertation draws on Kazadi's work and goes further to provide an in-depth examination of the process of producing *Zed Beats* in home studios, a topic that is not covered in Kazadi's study.

My MA thesis (2019) analyzed how female singer Mirriam Mukape (a.k.a. Mampipi), one of Zambia's renowned *Zed Beats* female artists, articulated feminist messages in her music and

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<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon parallels the experiences of producing *Zed Beats* in home studios in Zambia where power outages are common, and yet practitioners are able to produce hits.



the changing role of women in music in the 1990s. Hubbard's dissertation theorized the reimagining of Zambian youth futures through music and its circulation in the media. Particularly, Hubbard examined the commodification of Zambian pop culture, including music, and the politics of connecting it to regional and global audiences. Although Hubbard's dissertation did not specifically discuss *Zed Beats*, it did investigate the history of a music company, Mondo Music, and its contribution to the evolution of the genre. Hubbard's conversations with music producers Joseph Chibangu and Mainza Chipenzi provided a glimpse into the production of *Zed Beats*. Hubbard's data provides me with some historical information on how *Zed Beats* was produced in the late-1990s and brief accounts of some of the pioneers of the genre. Lamba (2023) examines how politicians influence messaging and lyricism in the production of Zambian popular during presidential and parliamentary elections.

Nchindila (2008) and Banda and Mambwe (2013) examine the use of popular music in Zambia's politics and show how the music is used to transmit messages about HIV/AIDS in Zambia. Although these two articles do not directly engage with the production of *Zed Beats*, they underscore the song texts and social conditions in which the music was produced. My scholarship will further strengthen the existing meager literature on Zambian popular music by foregrounding the history, production, sound, technological mediation and musical labor in *Zed Beats*. My dissertation study aims at bridging the gap that exists in the available scholarship about Zambia and creating more links to the existing literature on popular music in Africa.

While most Zambian youth of ages between fifteen and thirty-five hold *Zed Beats* in high esteem, music critics argue that the genre is mediocre and inauthentic. They denigrate the music as low-class, cheaply made on machines, and hastily produced. Elvis Zuma, entertainment journalist, music critic, and former entertainment columnist of the now defunct *Post Newspaper*

argued that Zambian pop music is negatively impacted by musicians' low educational background levels (Zuma, 7 March, 2014). Therefore, it is difficult for musicians to articulate social issues in their music rendering its lyrical content irrelevant to Zambian society. Some music fans have argued that music was more relatable in the 1990s, a decade before the emergence of *Zed Beats*, because the musicians of the era, including Ballad Zulu, Robert Mapara (a.k.a. Omart), and Victor Kachaka were university graduates and therefore could fluently articulate societal issues in their music (Lazarous Chewe, personal communication, July 22, 2022). Furthermore, according to music journalists, the lack of formal music training among musicians results in musically less appealing productions and of poor quality (Zuma, March, 7, 2014). In *Times of Zambia*, one of the state's tabloids, an entertainment journalist reports that most musicians are not skilled enough to create music that can stand the test of time ( Ndlovu, 13 June 2014). The lyrics are reputedly not well-thought out and the production of music [in home studios] can be done even by the least talented musicians, negatively impacting the quality of the music. However, these music critics have ignored the sophisticated mode of production and musical labor, and the way that the music signifies meanings for its large target audience. For these reasons, *Zed Beats'* popularity calls for a serious study of the genre and its production.

As a Zambian scholar and musician writing about Zambian music, I offer a fresh perspective on the study of Zambian music. I belong to a network of producers and musicians in the Zambian popular music scene. My ability to speak *Chinyanja* and *Chibemba*, Zambian local languages spoken in Lusaka and the Copperbelt region where I conducted my research, enabled me to follow conversations during recording sessions. My fluency in these languages also enabled me to transcribe texts of the songs. Following Meintjes (2003), I paid close attention to the ways that producers and musicians talked about music during studio sessions.

The historical dominance of Western scholars in African music scholarship is a scenario that aligns ethnomusicology with the history of colonialism. To address this imbalance, Gourlay (1982), proposed a “humanizing ethnomusicology” that resists “dominant Western ways of knowing, doing, and being in relation to music, and seek[s] to bring the worldviews of Self and Other” into conversation. Gourlay’s notion of “humanizing ethnomusicology” is a precursor to the discourse of decolonizing ethnomusicology that emerged in the 2010s (Kale, 2017).

In the early 1900s, ethnography was used to report on the social and cultural lives of “the Other” to the West, and publications legitimized its truth value (Magnat 2020:66). A millennium later, the situation has not changed much, particularly in the field of ethnomusicology where Euro-American ways of thinking, knowing, and researching dominate. Yang (2020: 28) notes that it is difficult for international scholars to break into the mainstream discourse of ethnomusicology due to the hegemony of the dominant culture, language barriers, and limited resources, among other factors.

Literacy and print culture are at the center of Euro-American scholarship, a scenario that disadvantages societies that still employ oral traditions as a primary means through which they preserve and transfer knowledge to people. As long as knowledge based on oral tradition is not published in print, its truth value remains illegitimized, and the voices of its people suppressed.

In decolonizing studies, Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012:3) observe that “the starting point...is not a rejection of colonialism. Rather than replace the dominant with the marginalized, the decolonizing project seeks to *reimagine and rearticulate* power, change, and knowledge.” As a Zambian scholar conducting research on Zambian music in the scanty but mostly Western-dominated scholarship on Zambian music, my research provides an opportunity to reimagine and

rearticulate power and knowledge, and to contribute toward the decolonization of ethnomusicology.

## 1.4 Methodology

This dissertation grew out of my MA thesis research. Although my MA focused on feminism and women's participation in *Zed Beats*, it was the beginning of my inquiry into the production of Zambian popular music. Between 2017 and 2024, I made several site visits to Zambia for research although extensive fieldwork for my dissertation began in May 2021.

I used three primary methods to collect data during my fieldwork. First, I observed studio sessions where the music was being made. Secondly, I made repeated visits to home studios to observe recording sessions and conducted interviews with some of the progenitors of *Zed Beats*.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, I interviewed musicians<sup>13</sup> who produced music in all the eras I discuss in this dissertation. I recorded most of the interviews on my phone after which I transcribed them for further analysis. I also took handwritten notes during studio sessions and interviews.

To demonstrate shifts in musical production and musical labor between 1986 and 2000, I interviewed sound engineers, musicians, and producers who recorded in dB, Malachite, Mushima, Central Studio, MUVI, and Mondo Music Studios. I further interviewed music producers and musicians and observed recording sessions at Kula Music, Sling Beats Studios, Jerry Fingaz Studios in Lusaka and Chalila, Collabo, and Gene B Studios in Kitwe.

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Linyama, Elijah Tembo, Jerry Banda, Che Mutale, Chali Mulalami, Moses Phiri, his brother Jayson Phiri, Maurice Malowa, Emmanuel Zulu, Julius Paul Taptap, Siyanga Munalula, Gerald Mulenga, Patrick Chama, Felix Phiri, Mzenga Mwale, Ian Silwamba, and Wilson Mkosha.

<sup>13</sup> Mau Mwale, Alice Chali, Mutinta Mwanza, Teresa Ng'ambi, Leah Taptap, Jones Kabanga, and Jagari Chanda.

Malachite, Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation studios and dB were the only professional corporate-sponsored studios in Zambia. All of them had closed their doors to recording music by the time of my fieldwork. However, I had an opportunity to interview sound engineers James Phiri and Lawrence Lupiya and musicians Jaggari Chanda, Khuzhwayo Chisi, Jones Kabanga and Mau Mwale who produced music in these studios. The interviews I had with them highlighted music recording technology semi-professional and home studios were established. Semi-professional studios Central Studio, MUVI, and Mondo Music had also been shut by the time of my fieldwork. I relied on information from producer Che and musicians Ballard Zulu and Jones Kabanga.

During my fieldwork, I observed recording and mixing sessions at Chalila, Cozy, Chinx Music, and Collabo studios in Kitwe, Sling Beats, Kula, Silentt Erazer, M-Beats Productions, and Jerry Fingaz studios in Lusaka, among others. I chose these studios because they exposed different modes of producing music tracing shifts in music technology and musical labor.

My knowledge of recording music dates to my experience as a musician in the mid-1990s. A few home studios had emerged by then but professional studios still dominated the production of Zambian popular music. The availability of both spaces and technologies gave me an opportunity to witness and experience the shift in musical labor firsthand. My first encounter recording in a professional recording studio was in 1994 when I recorded a song for Chanda Chimba's music program *Zilile* at Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) studio. At ZNBC, we were recorded performing live in one take. When I recorded my second album at Blaisdell Studio in Groningen, in the Netherlands, I experienced a different approach to recording music in a professional studio. In 1997, when I worked as a producer and sound engineer at Michel

Billiow's home studio in Chipata, I learned how to produce music by programming sequences on keyboards and looping those sequences in MIDI on computers.

My fieldwork was based along the railroad line starting with the capital Lusaka, and continuing through Kabwe, Ndola, and Kitwe (see Figure 4). I chose these towns because they have the highest concentration of home studios, and their neighborhoods are easily accessible. For my dissertation project, I visited a total of twenty-two studios: eight in Lusaka, two in Kabwe, one in Ndola, and eleven in Kitwe. In Kitwe, apart from the three studios I visited on my own, and one that a friend took me to, film maker Angel Phiri, who has worked with a lot of music producers in his career, introduced me to producers in seven more home studios.

As a musician and an aspiring producer myself, I employed autoethnographic methods during my fieldwork. Autoethnography as an approach to research employs personal experience to understand cultural context (Ellis 2004). Autoethnography attempts to interrupt conventional ethnographic narratives by offering alternative voices that break normative patterns and encourage collaborations with others in social contexts (Spry 2009). Furthermore, autoethnography provides a platform to share personal narratives and unique insights and realities (Schmid 2019). Personal experiences influence the research process in myriad ways because autoethnography acknowledges subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011).

Autoethnographic approaches emerged in music scholarship during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ellis and Burtlett observe that "while some creative art forms such as performance and visual arts have gained increasing prominence in the field of autoethnography, musical ventures in this area have remained relatively uncharted. The absence seems to be indicative of a widespread lack of musical voices in the burgeoning conversations about the arts in qualitative research more broadly"

(2010:7). *Music Autoethnographies* by Bartleet (2009) focuses on the use of personal stories, music compositions, and poetry among other literary works in ethnographic research. I found this approach relatable as I used some of my personal experiences working in the studios to examine the production of *Zed Beats* in home studios. Manoviski's *Arts-Based Research, Autoethnography, and Music Education* (2014) shares personal experiences of a queer artist, researcher, and educator to highlight marginalization in education systems based on sexual orientation. *Queering the Field*, edited by Barz and Cheng (2020), draws on ethnographic research and personal experiences to highlight studies of queer music and identity in the field of ethnomusicology. Ender (2021), in his article "Incorporating the Critical Music Framework," articulates an autoethnographic narrative of using songs to counter dominant interpretations of gender, class, immigration, slavery, and education in classroom settings. Autoethnographic experiences challenge dominant narratives and provide opportunities for marginalized voices to engage in scholarly conversations with others. Autoethnography further provides perspectives of people who otherwise would not have a chance to engage with the dominant other.

I found it necessary to draw from my personal experiences as a musician to enhance my research. My perspective as a performer contributes to music scholarship in Africa. When I produced the reggae band Bantu Roots at my home studio in 2011, the only section of the music that was orchestrated on my digital workstation was percussion. Everything else was recorded live. However, the experience I had producing music in recording studios was similar to those I had when I observed recording sessions in home studios.

During the course of my fieldwork, I recorded and co-produced music in home studios.<sup>14</sup> I orchestrated accompaniment for songs using Cubase, Pro Tools, and Fruity Loops music software

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<sup>14</sup> In Kitwe, I worked with Gene B at Gene B Studio, and Chinx at Chinx Studio. In the capital Lusaka, I worked with Jerry Banda (a.k.a. Jerry Fingaz) of Jerry Fingaz Studio and Silentt Eraser of Silentt Eraser Studio.

in selected studio sessions for myself as well as other musicians. I observed *beat making*, composing, mixing, and mastering sessions in other studios. During these sessions, I investigated the production of *Zed Beats* and shifts in musical labor firsthand. The autoethnographic experiences working in these studios gave me a deeper understanding on how *Zed Beats* is produced as compared to other genres of Zambian popular music. I learned that the manner in which the music is produced defines *Zed Beats*.

These experiences have shaped me as a scholar. I have learned to be an effective participant observer who is actively involved in the process of my research. My autoethnographic approach to research has further given me an opportunity to learn to navigate insider and outsider perspectives in *Zed Beats* culture, as well as academic culture.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The scope of my dissertation covers the period between 1986 to 2024. I chose to focus on this period because major shifts in the production of Zambian popular music and musical labor occurred in 1986. These shifts were influenced by Zambia's transition from a one-party state to multiparty politics with their liberalization ideals in 1991. Liberalization encouraged private ownership and a free market. In Zambian music scene, individuals and private businesses began to invest in small studio setups that eventually came to be known as home studios. Michael Linyama reported that as a consequence of a free market economy, recording equipment became more affordable and more accessible. Equipment that had become more compact in size did not require big spaces to set up (interview, 2017). As a result of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), an ideal of economic liberalization, formal employment declined from 17 to 11 percent of



the labor force (Hansen 2010:15). A lack of formal employment inspired youth to take up music as an alternative source of income as they waited for college or to be drafted into the formal labor force. It was an easy business to start as the equipment was affordable and could be set up in people's bedrooms or garages. In Figure 4, the black line connects the cities in which I conducted my research.



**Figure 4: Cities in which I Carried Out Ethnography**

### 1.6 Research Questions

My research questions can be grouped into three areas: historical background; social/contextual changes in musical labor; and aesthetic effects on *Zed Beats*. The historical

background helped me understand how the production of Zambian popular music has evolved over the years. The questions I ask here include: How was music produced before the emergence of *Zed Beats*? Who were involved in the production of the music? How has the shift in music production from tracking with ensembles in professional studios to one person [the producer] tracking and manipulating recordings on a computer redefined the role, function, and labor of producers and musicians in Zambian music scene? Answers to these questions shed more light on the history of the production of Zambian popular music, and the emergence of *Zed Beats* in home studios.

To understand the social/contextual changes in musical labor in the production of Zambian popular music, I asked the following questions: Within what social and material conditions did *Zed Beats* emerge? What are the musical elements of *Zed Beats*? When did *Zed Beats* change from a sound to a genre? Now that professional studios are not as involved in music production, who are the main actors in the production of *Zed Beats*? How might this study serve as a model for understanding shifts in musical labor and musical production in other parts of Africa? How is *Zed Beats* produced? In what spaces is it produced and with what technologies? How did the liberalization of Zambia's economy and other social conditions influence the production of Zambian popular music?

The recording sessions I observed in home studios indicate that the process of production requires manipulating sounds on digital audio workstations and making use of excessive plug ins to create a unique *Zed Beats* sound. The set of questions I ask to examine the aesthetics of *Zed Beats* include: What makes a sound unique to *Zed Beats*? What sounds do producers prefer to work with in the production of the genre? What techniques do producers employ to manipulate the sounds to achieve the desired aesthetics? What technology do producers use in home studios and

how has it impacted the aesthetics of *Zed Beats*? In an attempt to answer these questions, I gained insights into how producers continue to shape the aesthetics of the genre.

## **1.7 History of Popular Music in Zambia**

The production and circulation of mass-mediated recorded music in Zambia began in the 1940s after the country (then Northern Rhodesia) acquired a radio service. The main factors that led to the development of commercialized and mass-mediated popular music include high rates of urbanization and rural-urban migrations, the introduction of recording and radio technologies, the introduction of Western musical instruments to Zambia's local population, and the development of venues for hearing live popular music [for example, dance halls]. I will explain these points in the following section.

### **1.7.1 Zambian Popular Music in the 1940s**

Beginning in the late 1930s, towards the end of the great depression, the Copperbelt region in the northern part of the country experienced an unprecedented expansion in its mining activities. The expansion created such a high demand for African labor to work in the mines that the two biggest mining corporates at the time—the Rhodesia African Trust and the Anglo-American Corporation—had to recruit labor from neighboring Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, and Tanzania to supplement the local work force that comprised every ethnicity in Zambia (Mitchell, 1961). By the mid-1940s, with a population of 140,000 Africans and 8,000 Europeans, the Copperbelt was the most densely populated region in the country (Kalusa, 2011:93).

Urbanization in Zambia brought together workers from different regions and backgrounds who were later identified as a market economy for an emergent popular music industry. The European-managed development of Zambia's copper industry led to a high rate of urbanization, mostly in Lusaka where the central colonial government was based, and in the Copperbelt where most of the mining industry flourished at the time (Alapatt, 2017:13). Mass rural-urban migrations, the booming economy and consequently urbanization created a market for Zambian popular music.<sup>15</sup>

Radio was introduced in 1945. At Harry Franklin's initiative, a radio station was installed primarily broadcasting war-related information. Franklin was a British information officer, author, and politician (Koloko 2012:35). Radio also began broadcasting programs focused on the natives and some music, birthing the Central African Broadcasting Station (CABS), later rebranded Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation (ZNBC). After the establishment of CABS, Zambian music was produced and mediated in similar ways to western popular music, which had previously dominated the airwaves (Alapatt 2017:13).

Radio not only exposed the local Zambian population to a variety of foreign and local music styles but also provided a platform on which Zambian music could be shared with the masses. Although recording studios had not been established yet, ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey and his collaborator musician and broadcaster Alick Nkhata began to record musicians on site. Some of their recordings eventually got some airplay on CABS. Local aspiring musicians were inspired to create more musical recordings after they had heard Zambian music on radio broadcasts. By 1949, an inexpensive shortwave transistor radio placed in an aluminum, saucepan-

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<sup>15</sup> Although ensembles that made use of *kalimba*, accordion and hand drums (what Sandberg [2013] refers to as "talking vimbuza") were most common in the rural regions of eastern Zambia and not in the mining districts. Performing indigenous Zambian rhythms on these instruments gave rise to music styles that resembled forms of Western popular music.

shaped case, “the saucepan special,” became available and accessible to most Zambians. In urban regions where some households could afford purchasing one, the radio became a part of household furniture, exposing the listeners to a variety of both local and foreign music genres. Guitarist Jones Kabanga said that most older musicians learned how to play guitar by listening to the radio or recordings of music that were played on the radio (interview, 2022).

Lack of record pressing facilities meant that music of the 1940s could not be stored in people’s homes. However, minstrels who wandered around performing repertoires on their guitars were prominent, particularly in urban regions (Koloko, 2022). The guitar was by far the most commonly accessible musical instrument in the 1940s because it was more affordable than accordions or pianos that were in common in church. In the 1940s, folk music genres played on guitar emerged in Zambian music scene. Most importantly, the 1940s was a time for musicians to learn how to play instruments for the vibrant music scene that was to dominate Zambia’s recreational spaces in the following decade.

### **1.7.2 Zambian Popular Music in the 1950s**

Migrations from rural regions to cities, and from neighboring countries to Zambia’s Copperbelt region spilled over into the 1950s due to the continued demand for labor in the mines and other emerging industries that allied with the copper industry. By the mid-1950s, the African population had grown to 252,764 and the European population to 73,000 by the end of the decade in the Copperbelt (Kalusa, 2011:93). This emerging middle-class population needed to be entertained, and they could afford it. Many acts in groups of quartets, quintets, and sometimes solo emerged to cater to the needs of the emerging market (Koloko, 2012). The guitar was carried over to the 1950s as the main instrument. Tracey and Nkhata continued to record musicians on site

using phonographs and magnetic tape machines during this period although later recordings could be made at CAB studios. Magnetic tape machines made possible longer recordings than the nine-minute recordings that the six-inch cylinders were able to accommodate (Shelemay, 1991).

Access to music venues and eventually recording studios accelerated the development of Zambian popular music in the 1950s. By music venue, I refer to spaces where music was performed by musicians or technologically mediated on a machine for public consumption. Small ensembles were already entertaining patrons in clubs and bars, particularly in the cities of Lusaka, Kitwe, and Ndola, where the European and working-class population was big enough to sustain patronage (Koloko, 2012). During this era, the music was characterized by the rampant performance of arpeggiated syncopated rhythms, call and response, and short melodic phrases on acoustic guitars. Hand-made guitar-type musical instruments such as banjo and *babatoni* also figured prominently. The sound was very much influenced by indigenous musical elements. Song texts were often in local languages including *Chinyanja* and *Chibemba*. Tracey and Nkhata's recordings of Mapiki, Bwalya, Makawa, John Lushi, Stephen Tsotsi Kasumali, William Siwale and Isaac Matafwani were played on the radio. Later, the music of these acts featured on a compilation of music albums from the International Library of African Music such as *From the Copperbelt: Miners Songs and Origins of Guitar Music* (Alapatt, 2017). The album, a compilation of the '50s guitar music from the Copperbelt region' was produced by British ethnomusicologist and promoter of world music John Storm Roberts. Most of the acts were solo or duets but small ensembles of two to three people were also featured.

### 1.7.3 Zambian Popular Music in the 1960s

Music was at the center of the struggle that led to the country's independence on October 24, 1964. The music that was used to communicate the messages of the independence struggle, called *Chachacha*, was based on Latin American *Chacha* (Sardanis, 2003:11). Mr. Njekwa Anamela, Vice President of the opposition United Nation Independence Party (UNIP), said that the chachacha spirit, which can be best understood from the perspective of the African people's struggles for emancipation, used music as a rallying point around which people could have a common agenda on the ground to deal with the colonial question. The *Chachacha* consciousness saw different songs being composed in different parts of the country to radicalize the African masses (interview, 2017). Sardanis (2003:91) reports:

The Chachacha has since been immortalized as Zambia's independence struggle. It took its name from the Congolese Afro-Cuban r[h]umba music song "Chachacha Independence," which in 1960 celebrated the end of Belgian rule in the Congo. In typical Zambian folk humor, it portrayed the people of Zambia dancing Chachacha and "shaking" the colonial government out of office.

Nationalist rallies during the struggle that led to Zambia's independence provided a platform to spotlight local music (Koloko, 2012). UNIP funded bands to sing at their rallies as a way of mobilizing people during campaigns, a trend that continued after independence. Amayenge Cultural Ensemble (Amayenge) became UNIP's official band. Since the struggle for independence had been won, Amayenge's role was to perform at state functions. Lusaka Radio Band performed several times at State House at the invitation of Kenneth Kaunda (Koloko, 2012). The

government's support for Zambian popular music encouraged competitive musicianship in the music scene.

Radio continued to influence the development of Zambian popular music in the 1960s. Alapatt reports that “[by] the mid- to the late- ’60s, rock music from a varied bunch—Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Hollies, Chuck Berry—and soul and funk music by musicians including Otis Redding and James Brown—had taken hold among Zambian youth” (Alapatt 2017). Bands imitating these artists multiplied around Lusaka and the Copperbelt and black Zambian bands fluent in Western styles soon found bookings at venues frequented by White European expatriates. These bands pioneered what later came to be known as *Zamrock*, the style that dominated Zambia’s sonic spaces from the 1960s to the 1980s. *Zamrock* blended western rock elements, indigenous Zambian rhythms, and West African music styles, particularly those popularized by Ghanaian British highlife band Osibisa (Brian Chengala, interview, 2018). Thus, inspired by Euro-American rock and funk music cultures, Afro-hairdos and fashion of the folk era of the 1950s were replaced by dreadlocks and plaited hair, faded jean suits and high-heels, styles showcased in funk.

The availability of recording facilities at Zambia Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) in Lusaka and Malachite Film Studios in Chingola bolstered the development of Zambian popular music. James Phiri, a chemical engineer by profession and sound engineer at Malachite Studios in the 1980s, reported that the studio which was launched in 1966 was community-run (interview, March 3, 2022). Malachite Studio was initially set up to facilitate the production of documentaries on mining in Zambia but eventually widened its operations to include music recordings. Collaborations with local record labels were welcome.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Khuzwayo’s Zambia Music Parlour (In British English, Parlor is spelt Parlour) sponsored Elias Mulasikwanda, The Twinkles, Five Revolution and Keith Mlevu to record in Malachite Studio.



#### **1.7.4 Zambian Popular Music in the 1970s**

In Zambia's thriving economy in the 1970s, Teal Records, a subsidiary of South African Gallo Records, set up its office in Ndola in the Copperbelt region in 1971. Decibels Studio (dB) in Lusaka was established in 1974, giving rise to a more formidable music industry (Jagarri Chanda, interview, July 27, 2021). A music industry is one that involves the mediation of music by corporate companies that provide financial support for equipment and resources to record, publish, and market music (Impey, 2000:124).

It can be argued that the only time Zambia has had a music industry was between 1970 and 1980. The music was recorded at Malachite Film Studios, Zambia Broadcasting Corporation Studios, or dB studios. Lawrence Lupiya, sound recordist at dB, told me that individuals could not afford to record in these studios because studio time was expensive (interview, 2017). During this era, dB in Lusaka and Malachite Studios in Chingola were funded by conglomerates including Teal Records, Anglo-American Corporation, and later, Zambia Music Parlour. Teal Records and Anglo-American Corporation provided musical equipment for bands that did not have their own equipment and funded the recording, publishing, and marketing of most of the music recorded in the 1970s. The corporates monopolized the production of music because they could afford booking their artists the most expensive recording facilities of the time.

The dreadlocks and plaited hair faded jean suits, and high heels favored by youth in the 1960s continued into the 1970s. Most bands imitated their Western rock and roll and funk idols both in music and fashion. Zambia's president of the ruling UNIP, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, saw the rock and roll lifestyle adapted by Zambian popular musicians as a form of indigenous cultural erosion. Kaunda turned to the arts, particularly music, to deter further erosion of Zambian culture. Moreover, the arts fraternity criticized the UNIP government for not having an arts policy (Koloko

2012). In a June 1975 speech, Kaunda ordered Zambia Broadcasting Services (ZBS) to play ninety percent Zambian music on radio and encouraged musicians to highlight Zambian culture in their creative work. He went on to say that “the political line of the party is to promote and enhance the dignity of our culture and the moral foundation upon which Zambian culture is built. Any erosion of our cultural values is a threat to Zambian personality. While we are free to borrow positive aspects of other cultures to enrich our own, we must defend ourselves against undermining our nationhood through cultural conquest” (cited in Kololo, 2012:39). As regards government policy on the arts, Kaunda dared the artists: “You wanted the policy. I have given you the policy. Now create the works that are going to satisfy the local market” (ibid). In response to the president’s order, musicians began to incorporate more indigenous elements in rock compositions. Koloko (2012) observes that Zamrock was inspired by Kaunda’s speech and the musicians’ desire for exposure on ZBS radio.

The network of music venues, recording studios, record companies and the political situation of the 1960s greatly impacted musical labor of the time. The era also launched the commercialization of Zambian popular music. Musical labor became highly specialized. Venues employed booking agents to book talent to perform in their spaces. Ensembles employed managers to take care of the business side of their music. Recording studios trained and employed sound engineers and recordists who facilitated music production in their studios. Record companies, which funded the production of the music, employed talent scouts to identify talent and sign them to the labels.

Beginning in the late 1970s, music fans in Zambia were uncertain about the future of Zambian popular music. During this time, the economy was failing. For example, inflation rose from 11.6 percent in the 1980s to 69% in the 1990s; between 1990 and 1993, inflation averaged

around 127% per year and the kwacha depreciated considerably during this time (Mulungu and Ng'ombe 2017:4). Inflation and depreciation of the kwacha made it difficult to invest in Zambia's music industry. Foreign music dominated the music scene, and piracy was rampant making the local music scene unprofitable. By the end of the 1970s, disco music dominated Zambia's musicscape.

### **1.7.5 Zambian Popular Music in the 1980s**

The country's economy collapsed due to the slump in copper prices that began a decade earlier. The decline in Zambia's economy negatively impacted Zambian music scene. By the late 1980s Zamrock was giving way to *kalindula* music, a genre based on ethnic Zambian rhythms inspired by mostly Congolese rumba with acts such as Five Revolutions, Nashil Pitchen Kazembe, Peter Tsosi Juma, and Masiye Band taking over Zambian music soundscape. *Kalindula* was initially a reinterpretation of indigenous music from northern Zambia, particularly *imfunkutu*, played on Western musical instruments or locally made instruments modeled on Western instruments. "Mukamfwilwa" (The Widow) [1980] composed by Morris Mwape and John Mwansa of the Five Revolution Band was the first *kalindula* song (Koloko (2022)). The style dominated the 1980s and early 1990s Zambian music scene (Alapatt, 2017).<sup>17</sup> *Kalindula* was produced in much the same spaces, using similar musical instruments, and technology as those used in the production of *Zamrock*.

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<sup>17</sup> Some of the most notable *kalindula* performers are Masiye Band Spokes Chola, Philipo Chimbini, Labani Kalunga, Brian Chilala, Pontiano Kaiche, Dickson Mponda, Makishi Band, Masalamusi, Mulemena Boys, and Peter Kalumba Chishala.

## 1.8 The Production of Zambian Popular Music in Professional Studios

To examine the production of music in professional recording studios, I will focus on dB and ZNBC studios in Lusaka, and Malachite Studio in Chingola. In these studios, music ensembles tracked simultaneously using multi-track recorders onto one-inch tapes. James Phiri, sound engineer at the Malachite studio, explained that recording equipment consisted of a thirty-two-track console and an outboard of compressors, phasers, both dynamic and condenser microphones, and analyzers (interview, March 3, 2023). Analyzers worked the same way that music software does today.

The production process of Zambian popular music during the 1970s and 1980s was tedious. Phiri reported that: “The first thing we would do...would [be] to record basic tracks [starting] with the bass guitar, rhythm guitar and drums. Then you overdub the keyboard. When you record those basic tracks then you mix them into stereo” (interview, March 3, 2023). Basic tracks were done for the purpose of creating an instrumental of the song on which vocals, solo performances and some melodic phrases on different musical instruments could be overdubbed.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes new material would be added to sections of the recordings. The vocals, beginning with the guide, would then be recorded followed by balancing and mixing.<sup>19</sup> When I asked how long it took to produce an album, Phiri said that while the recording took between three and four days, the mixing and mastering would take as long as four months depending on how much the band needed to overdub, how much editing was involved, and how busy the studio was. Sometimes it took as long as four

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<sup>18</sup> Overdubbing is the re-tracking of more refined takes of initial recordings.

<sup>19</sup> A guide is a track that is recorded with the intention of guiding a performance of a piece of music. Guide tracks are often replaced with better ones later.

months to produce an album because bands would only be allotted a few hours of studio time per week.

Similarly, in dB Studios, recording involved simultaneously tracking an ensemble performing live. The studio, founded by Draham Skinner from Great Britain, opened its doors in 1974. Although other sound engineers have worked in dB, the longest serving engineer at the studio is Peter Musungilo, an apprentice of Skinner. While Malachite in Chingola worked with the Zambia Music Palour music label, dB mostly worked with Teal Records. Most acts signed to Teal Records including the renowned Zamrock band The WITCH recorded at dB. The studio also facilitated the production of radio programs for ZNBC although it was mainly designed for recording music (Lawrence Lupiya, interview, 2017). Jagari Chanda, lead singer of the WITCH, told me that dB was an upgrade from Malachite Studio (interview, July 27, 2021). Lupiya, who has worked as recordist at dB for over two decades, explains that the studio's BTR4 recorder [in Figure 5], the only one of its kind in Zambia at the time, enabled them to simultaneously record four voices onto a quarter-inch tape (interview, 2017).



**Figure 5: BTR4 Recorder at dB Studios [Photo by the author, July 17, 2017]**

Also available was an eight-track recorder which was mostly used to record the instrumental parts of songs. The production process began with recording the instrumental parts of the music followed by voices. The mixing and mastering (or editing as it was known then), involved balancing the sounds and cutting out unwanted sections of recordings and creating stereo tracks. Instrumentalists and vocalists used outboard preamps for effects. Producing an album at dB took three days on average. Jagari Chanda reported, “... dB, ... you set your equipment and then of course there was a booth... And then we could even have backing vocals coming later...” (interview, July 2021). Chanda further explained that bands produced and arranged their music during rehearsals before going to record in a studio, an observation shared by guitarist Jones Kabanga (interview, August 2021). A good recording in a professional studio depended mainly on the musicians’ skills as sounds could not be manipulated during or after being recorded. The sound

engineers could only mix down the recorded tracks. For example, there was no technology (for example, Auto-Tune) to correct vocals. Replacing badly performed sections of the song meant cutting out pieces of tape on which putting it back together, a difficult task at the time. In these studios, bands had to retake whole performances even in cases where only one musician made a mistake in a small section of the recording. Figure 6 is a photo of the Brenell Six-Track Recorder that was used in dB Studios in the 1990s.



**Figure 6: Six-Track Brenell Recorder at dB Studios (Photo by the author, July 17, 2017)**

The following is a more detailed interview I had with Jagari Chanda (July 27, 2021) on how music was produced in professional studios:

Mathew Tembo (MT): And then dB [Studios]. Who engineered for you?

Jagari Chanda (JC): There was a Mr Skinner. He was like the proprietor of dB.

MT: So, Mr Skinner was actually the sound engineer for dB?

JC: Yes. Yes, for dB Studios.

MT: ...In terms of the music, when you were recording, did Mr Skinner or Nicky contribute anything musically? Did they do any production work?

JC: Oh, like telling us what to do or what to add or subtract? No. No. But if someone went there with an untuned guitar, he would tell and say... number four [string] sounds a bit low. Yeah, things like that. But not on the level of the arranging or, he lent the ear as far as maybe decibels were concerned and the technicalities of the studio.

MT: So, who produced your music? Like, who ...produced for the WITCH?

JC: The WITCH were a very talented lot... If I say I have composed this song and I took to the band, they dissected it and then they would say, why don't we put a bassline there instead of this this. When it came to arrangement, they participated. And everyone had a very keen ear, so we knew what we wanted to get out of there even though we didn't have the experience of the studio. But we could tell if something didn't sound right. So, we wouldn't say this was our sound engineer or producer who helped. Except for those two recordings in Kenya [when the band recorded in Kenya].

As Chanda explained, the arrangement of music was done by the band during rehearsal prior to recording it. The role was not left to the sound engineer. Arranging music and producing it in the studio was participatory although guided by the band leader or the writer of the song. Band leaders were chosen based on the quality of their musicianship but also their personality; the best musician in the group was usually picked as the band leader.

Setting up for a recording session at Malachite Studio was a tedious process which took anywhere between eight hours and a whole day. Ensembles had to set up in the recording room as if they were setting up for a live performance. There were usually three engineers involved in preparing for a recording session. The musicians, guided by the setup technician, set up their musical instruments (interview, December 13, 2023). The setup technician ensured that the right cables, microphones, amplifiers, and compressors were used. During the dress rehearsal, the sound



engineer made sure that the signal was loud enough without clipping. Levels were set and instruments marked on the mixing console. Besides setting up musical instruments for the ensemble, the engineers also set up equalizers, compressors, and flangers according to the sound the band was looking for (interview, December 14, 2023). The sound engineer would then decide what compression and effects to use on what tracks. Setting up for a recording session would take between 30 minutes and two hours.

Although I did not have an opportunity to record at Malachite Studio or dB Studios, I did record in one of the studios at ZNBC. In 1994, Chanda Chimba III invited singer Willbroad Sichilongo and me to record two songs each for *Music Box*, a show that he produced for ZNBC Television. The show was funded by Steve Nyirenda, proprietor of MUVI Studios (Angel Phiri, interview, June 20, 2021). The music series showcased Zambian popular music of the time. Chimba patronized Lusaka venues with a ZNBC outside broadcasting facility to record ensembles performing on site.<sup>20</sup>

ZNBC Studios were some of the best spaces in which to record at the time. The acoustics and lighting were excellent, and they employed some of the best sound engineers in the country. The band set up the evening before our recording the following day. Setup involved miking the drum kit and guitar amplifiers. It was my first time to perform in a professional studio so I was nervous. Sichilongo performed his set, and suddenly it was my turn. After successfully performing the first song “Be Humble,” the ensemble began to play “Man Has the Power,” the last song for my set. About a minute into the song, I missed a phrase and messed up my performance. I turned to the band to discuss re-taking the performance when the studio director told us that our time was

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<sup>20</sup> Willbroad and I paid Afro Vision Band, resident at Mumana Pleasure Resort in Lusaka, to provide accompaniment to our performances in the studio at ZNBC. The ensemble consisted of Bernard Phiri on bass, Shadreck Mwanza on drum kit, Loudon Mutale on guitar, Charles Mumba on keyboards and Willbroad Sichilongo on percussion and vocals.

up. I begged to at least start the performance from where I had erred. This time, it was Chimba who pointed out that the studio was going to be used to record another show. The experience was quite traumatic. I wondered why the studio director and sound engineer could not let me record from the spot I had erred. Chimba further explained after the session that the equipment they used in the studio at the time would not let us do another take because it was difficult to edit two performances into one. I cursed the technology in use at the time but there was nothing I could do.

This anecdote highlights the limitations of technology in use in ZNBC Studios at the time. One band member messing up even a section of the performance meant retaking the whole performance. Technology to enable sound engineers isolate different parts of a performance was not available at the time. Therefore, it was easier and quicker for bands to retake whole performances in those situations (James Phiri, interview, March 27, 2023).

In this chapter, I traced the history, evolution and modes of producing Zambian popular music from when radio was introduced to Zambia in 1945. Radio played a significant role in establishing Zambian popular music. It introduced the masses, including musicians, to a variety of music genres from America and Europe. These genres became templates on which Zambian popular music was modeled. Also, for the first time, the masses were introduced to the aesthetics of rock, jazz, and other Euro-American genres. Furthermore, I examined the history of musical production and musical labor in professional studios where Zambian popular music was produced during the era. I specified the specialized roles that musicians, recordists, and music engineers carried out in these spaces. In professional studios, a successful music production involved several actors: musicians, producer, tape recordist, studio technician, and studio engineer. Each of these professionals played a specific role. Musicians performed and produced the music, the recordist recorded the music on to reel-to-reel tapes and fixed the tape on which the music was to be

recorded, the technician made sure that the routing of the cables correctly done and every instrument line worked. The sound engineer supervised the recording process, bounced the tracks onto tape and mixed the music. In cases where apprentices did the mixing, the sound engineer's role was to approve the final mixes. The band composed and arranged the music during rehearsals. The band leader guided the production process in the studio.

## 2.0 The Production of Zambian Popular Music, 1986-2000

In this chapter, I analyze shifts in musical labor and musical production in semi-professional studios from 1986 to 2000. The technology in semi-professional studios enabled one person to record and manipulate multiple tracks. However, musicians could still record live performances if they wished. Technology in semi-professional studios facilitated both digital and analog recordings, a scenario that impacted musical labor in the production of Zambian popular music.

The period between 1986 and 2000 was crucial in shaping the production of Zambian popular music and musical labor. Before 1986, music was recorded live in corporate-funded professional studios. The role of the producer (called “band manager” at the time) included funding productions, choosing the material to be recorded, choosing musicians to record, and booking studio time.

In 1986, Central Studio was founded. Mushima, the first-known home studio, was established in 1989. Inspired by the modes of musical production in Central and Mushima studios, musicians and music programmers (who also eventually became known as “producers”) began to assemble music quickly using sampled sounds sourced from keyboard synthesizers and music software on computers in their garages and homes (spaces that eventually came to be known as home studios). More home studios were established between 1990 and 2000 after the liberalization of Zambia’s economy. The producer in these studios became the most important actor in the production process of the music. He performed, tracked, and manipulated all or most of the accompaniment track of a song. This mode of producing music dominates the production of *Zed*

*Beats* in home studios to date. The switch to producing music in home studios necessitates a different understanding of musical production and musical labor.

Popular music between the mid-1980s and the 2000s was recorded either in (a) professional studios where ensembles were recorded live; (b) semi-professional studios where both digital and analog recordings could be made or (c) home studios where only digital productions were possible, particularly between 1986 and the early 1990s before use of digital audio workstations in home studios. In a case where a home studio did not have software to enable analog recordings, music productions were completed in collaboration with either a semi-professional or a professional studio where analog recordings were made to complete a production. Home studios exclusively used digital technology. On the other hand, semi-professional studios used both analog and digital technology whereas professional studios used reel-to-reel analog technology. The result of these changes in labor and technology was a new sound that laid a foundation for *Zed Beats* in the decade that followed.

## **2.1 Social and Economic Conditions That Led to the Emergence of the New Sound in Semi Professional and Home Studios**

The emergence of the new sound, including *Zed Beats*, was necessitated by specific social and economic milieux, particularly the decline of Zambia's economy in the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of disk jockeys (DJs) with their mobile discos, the dominance of foreign music on Zambian radio and television (TV), the demise of many musicians in the 1990s due to HIV/AIDS and the 1990s economic liberalization of Zambia's economy (Koloko, 2012).

Kenneth Kaunda's fallout with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in 1987 led to a decline in Zambia's economy. By the close of the 1980s, Kaunda's UNIP government

believed that international financial institutions (IFI) had a neocolonial agenda in Zambia. Based on this assumption, the UNIP government broke ties with the IMF on May 1, 1987, disrupting the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that were underway. The SAPs intended to link Zambia's economy to the world (Hanson and Hentz, 1999:483). Kaunda's New Economic Recovery Plan (NERP) replaced the SAPs proposed by the IMF (ibid., 486). The consequences of the move saw most donor and diplomatic ties suffer. Bilateral aid slowed-down leading to non-payment of civil servants, debt crisis, and falling standards in health and education because Zambia's budget mostly depended on aid. Shortages for necessities became apparent while inflation remained high (ibid., 491). Inflation and a declining economy made it difficult to sustain Zambian popular music because general populace could not afford to spend on recreational activities such as music. The 1970s-80s collapse of copper export earnings made the situation even worse (Rakner, 2003).

The emergence of mobile discos in night clubs in the 1980s relegated musicians to playing in hotels as cabaret acts (Allapat 2017:37). In keeping with the trends, some musical acts attempted to play disco in an effort to bring patrons back to their shows (Koloko, 2022:79). However, musicians' attempt at disco music did not impress fans who felt a lack of authenticity in the music. As music columnist Charles Kachikoti advised after watching Patrick Chisembele's performance of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" in 1985:

What should be realized is that many foreign artists have facilities to maintain clear voices, in addition to special diets, and have specially designed microphones and recording gadgets that purify and synchronize voices. Originality is essential if music is to be meaningful. Consider the Lusaka Beatles who imitated the actual Beatles in

the UK. They collapsed when the Beatles became too sophisticated to cope with  
(*Zambia Daily Mail*, March 16, 1985).

In Kachikoti's view, the performance lacked originality. Furthermore, Chisembele lacked the technology to execute his performance to the standard of disco musicians in the US such as Michael Jackson, so patrons preferred to listen to DJs in clubs spin disco, soukous, and mbaqanga records rather than listen to bands perform sub-standard covers.

Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation which housed the only radio and TV station in the country at the time, also preferred to play American disco, rumba of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and some South African music (Koloko, 2012). As a teenager in junior high school in the 1980s, I remember watching a lot of South African, Congolese, American, and Cameroonian music on TV but not so much local Zambian music. Furthermore, Zambian youth were more interested in the new trends of American hip-hop and viewed *kalindula* and Zamrock as music of the older generation.

Moreover, "between 1982 and 1989 Zambia was robbed of skillful and inspiring expert guitarists as most of them died of AIDS" (Koloko, 2012). Unlike in America and Europe, where HIV/AIDS was more prominent in cities with large gay populations, HIV/AIDS became a significant problem in Africa during the 1980s. In Zambia, HIV transmissions were rampant among sex workers, truck drivers and musicians. The stigma attached to the loss of musicians to AIDS further discouraged aspiring musicians from pursuing music as a career, a situation that created a shortage of musicians in Zambian music scene. As musician and promoter Brian Chengala told me, "The lack of skilled musicians confined music-making to home studios where one did not need to be an adept musician to be able to produce music" (interview, July 22, 2022).

In the absence of skilled and experienced musicians, and consistent patronage, ensemble performances both in concert and studio recording settings dwindled.

At the center of the socio-economic conditions that led to the emergence of the new sound were the neo liberalization policies adopted by Frederic Chiluba's MMD government after he was sworn into office in 1991. Neo liberalization encourages economic reform policies that are concerned with the deregulation of the economy, the liberalization of trade and industry, and the privatization of state-owned industries. Furthermore, neo liberalization is a governance model that embraces the idea of the self-regulating free markets (Ganti, 2014:91). In other words, neo liberalism involves "the process of opening up national economies to global actors including multinational corporations and global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank" (Larner, 2003:509). Unlike the older ideology of liberalism which tolerated laissez-faire governance, neo liberalism propagates some form of control over market relations with private actors to serve strategic economic goals (Davies, 2019:3).

Following the neo liberalization model, Zambia's state-controlled businesses were privatized, trade was liberalized and the economy deregulated. The SAPs reform package proposed to Kaunda's UNIP government by the World Bank in 1990 was implemented (Rakner, 2003). One of the conditions of the agreement was to reform the civil service and state-owned businesses in order to improve efficiency and performance. The restructuring of the public sector witnessed a severe loss of jobs. "The number of jobs decreased by an average of 2.2% per year, such that, while 26% of the labor force was in wage employment in 1975, this had declined to 18.6% in 1983. And it further declined to 10% in 1991. Between 1991 and 1995 a total of 60,000 workers had been removed from the civil service" (Simutanyi, 1996:836). In the Copperbelt where most mining activity took place; several mines were closed and many workers laid off. Furthermore, the MMD



government got rid of subsidies on corn meal, the sole ingredient for making Zambia's staple food *nsima*.

In other parts of Africa, neo liberalization impacted music economies in similar ways. In the Malian music economy, "... with a newly elected administration wary of state intervention, a radical informalization of the Malian economy unfolded, a process rooted in the privatization and austerity measures of the 1980s. In the culture sector, this meant a shift from a statist (public) to a marketplace (private) patronage structure in which independent culture brokers [including artists, producers, distributors, and vendors] sought out new means of production..." (Skinner 2012:729). In Tanzania during the 1990s, the neo liberalization of the country's economy by the government of Ali Hassan Mwinyi significantly expanded the music economy, "particularly through the introduction of independent radio stations and recording studios" (Perullo 2012:95). In Zambia, the neo liberalization policy of free trade encouraged foreign corporations such as South Africa's Game Stores to open outlets. Game Stores sold a variety of merchandise including electronics. When I talked to music producer Linyama, he reminisced how he purchased a computer, a CD writer, CDs and other computer accessories for his studio at Game Stores in the 1990s (interview, 2017). Previously, he would have to purchase the same equipment in South Africa, Europe, or America and worry about having it shipped to Zambia. The computer technology did not only facilitate the setting up of home studios but also served as devices on which producers and musicians could access the internet. With access to the internet, music-makers could download music software and connect with the home studio community beyond their national borders.

Although it can be argued that the liberalization of most economies in Africa did not benefit the majority, it did create innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities in the music sector. For example, the 1990s neo liberalization of Tanzania's economy and a shift from a socialist to a more

capitalist economic model catapulted the popular music industry of Tanzania. Neo liberalism's emphasis on privatization and a free market economy among other ideals saw Tanzania moving from having one state-controlled radio station and two recording studios to fifty-two radio stations, twenty-seven television stations, and over a hundred recording studios between 1994 and 2009 (Perullo 2011:18). Similarly, Zambia's economic liberalization of the 1990s saw a huge increase in the number of privately owned radio stations, print media, and TV Stations<sup>21</sup> (Tembo 2019:29). Most of the stations played music all day and all night interspersed with commercials and some paid panel discussion programs. ZNBC Radio 2, Radio Ichengelo, and Radio Maria featured mostly local music. The democratization of the media provided the masses with more platforms on which to listen to Zambian music, a situation which encouraged musicians to produce more music.

These social and economic conditions made it extremely difficult for corporate-funded professional studios to stay open for business, particularly after record labels Teal and Zambia Music Palour closed in the early-1990s. Musicians had to find other modes of producing music. More semi-professional and home studios where new sounds were recorded were set up. As Ernest Yikona (a.k.a. Papa Zai) said to me, "since record labels had closed and the music industry was as good as dead, we [young musicians] had to find a way of recording the music" (personal communication, June 2021).

In the following section, I examine the emergence of semi-professional studios between 1986 when the first semi-professional studio was set up and 2000, right before the emergence of *Zed Beats*. It is in these spaces that the new sound that morphed into the genre of *Zed Beats* the following decade was shaped. Semi-professional studios are crucial in understanding shifts in

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<sup>21</sup> Radio Phoenix, QFM and Hot FM in Lusaka, Radio Ichengelo in Kitwe, and later, Radio Maria in Chipata were among the most prominent ones, including state owned Radio 4, which was an expansion of ZNBC's national radio.

musical labor in the production of Zambian popular music, particularly because professional studios were being phased out by this time.

## **2.2 The History of Semi-Professional Studios**

The first semi-professional studio was Central Studio founded in 1986 by German national Herman Striedl and American Dick Curtis in the Northmead neighborhood of Lusaka. Seeing potential in the resurgence of music activity in Zambian music scene, local businesses were keen to reinvest in Zambia's music economy. By the late-1990s, three record labels, Chisha Folotiya's Mondo Music, Steve Nyirenda's MUVI, and Roger Sombe's Digital Network International (DNI) were founded with a view to promote Zambian popular music, especially tailored for the local market (Angel Phiri, interview, 2022). Although Sombe's DNI did produce some music in their recording studio, the label was better known for producing master tapes purchased from musicians and reproduced for distribution under its own name (Jagarri Chanda, interview, 2021).

Steve Nyirenda and Rikki Ililonga founded Bongo Studio in 1996. After the two parted ways as business partners, Nyirenda changed the name of the studio to WEFA Studio and months later to MUVI. Nyirenda's vision was to create a superstar in Zambian music scene. Innocent Maboshe and Che Mutale (aka Che) were the two producers who worked at WEFA. Che said to me in an interview that most of the recordings were digitally programmed on their workstation using Cakewalk music software. However, to align the music to Nyirenda's vision, they had to incorporate live recordings, particularly guitars (Che, interview, October 28, 2021). Nyirenda realized that after the closure of record conglomerates Teal Records and Zambia Music Palour, recordings of Zambian popular music performed live in ensemble settings dwindled considerably.

His vision was to revive the culture of ensembles recording live in studios as a way of preserving the authenticity of the music.

Quality recordings were not guaranteed in semi-professional studios as sound engineers were not formally trained. They learned their craft on the job. At MUVI Studios, Che and Maboshe were self-taught (Angel Phiri, interview, 2021). Since the two were not adept instrumentalists, they recommended Nyirenda to hire guitarist Christopher Zulu (a.k.a. Mongri) and bassist Black Moze as session musicians on a permanent basis at the studio. The first album recorded at MUVI Studio, entitled *Dyonko* (Taste Test) [1999], was a compilation featuring Keith Mutale, Che, James Chamanyazi, St Michael (now Maiko Zulu), Shamaq, and Bulo. Mongri and Black Moze played all the live guitars on the album. The response from Zambian music fans was overwhelming. They had not heard a new album that incorporated live instrumentation by a Zambian artist produced in Zambia since the mid-1990s. The 5,000 cassettes that MUVI Studio reprinted after the initial 1,000 copies sold out, a great success at the time considering that the music industry before then was “as good as dead” (Angel Phiri, interview, June 20, 2021). *Dyonko* set the standards. Most of all, the project exposed the business potential there was for localized Zambian popular music.

In 1998 Chisha Folotiya founded Mondo Music (Hubbard 2007:60). Mondo had huge budgets dedicated to marketing their music and had the best national distribution network. Apart from distributing their music with Sounds Arcades, the biggest distributor of music at the time, Mondo contracted gas stations national wide to sell their music. Furthermore, they established good relations with media houses. Their releases were written about in all the major tabloids and were prominently featured on all major radio stations, leaving up to their mission statement ‘the nation’s music leaders.’ Radio played a crucial role then in ensuring the circulation of music in Zambian music scene. In some cases, Mondo involved itself in the act of payola to ensure their

music received airplay on radio and TV and music videos for their artists were of better quality than those produced by MUVI Studios (Angel Phiri, interview, June 20, 2021).

In its formative years, Mondo released compilation albums of *kalindula* and Zamrock packaged as *Sounds of Zambia*. The first compilation, *Sounds of Zambia Volume 1* was released in 2000 followed by *Sounds of Zambia Volume 2* (2001). Inspired by MUVI Studio's success on *Dyonko*, Mondo released its first compilation of Zambian pop entitled *Rhythm Nation Project* in 2000. The compilation, considered by many as the first *Zed Beats* album, featured sixteen tracks by young pop musicians including Chilumbe, Kumawa, Black Muntu, Crisis, Zion Dub and Shatel. *Rhythm Nation Project* defined *Zed Beats*. Whereas *Dyonko* recorded at MUVI Studio highlighted live instrumentation, *Rhythm Nation Project* emphasized a digital sound.

The compilation was followed up by solo albums of selected artists from the *Rhythm Nation Project* compilation as well as Danny Kaya and Jordan Katembula (JK), the label's biggest artists. Mondo's best-selling album, JK's self-titled debut "JK," sold 20,000 copies (Hubbard, 2007:60). This was a huge success considering how small and saturated the music market was at the time and compared to the 6000 copies of the album *Dyonko* sold by MUVI Studio a few years earlier. Mondo's foreign-influenced and programmed sound resonated with Zambian music fans, particularly youth who could relate to the hip-hop, ragga muffin, rap and R&B musical elements in the music. Singer Joe Chibangu (a.k.a. The Ambassador) became the resident producer at Mondo Studio, located in Makeni, south of downtown Lusaka (Hubbard 2007:64). Following MUVI Studio's model, Mondo contracted session musicians in their pursuit for authenticity and 'liveness.' Zambia's renowned guitarist Jones Kabanga became the label's main session musician. Whereas Mongri and Black Moze were on a salary at MUVI, Kabanga was paid per project. Semi-professional studios facilitated both digital and analog recordings. They bridged the gap between

home studios, where programming/digital recordings were at the center of the production process, and professional studios, where analog recording was dominant.

The political economy of the 1980s and 90s greatly impacted the livelihood of musicians in Zambia. For example, rampant inflation and an inconsistent flow of cash made it difficult for the middle class to financially support their families and therefore they could not afford the luxury of buying music cassettes or paying for concerts. Night curfews imposed by the UNIP government tremendously reduced patronage in clubs and bars where the music was performed. Most music venues sought the services of DJs because they were more affordable than bands. Moreover, record conglomerates Teal Records and Zambia Music Parlour<sup>22</sup> which had been successfully promoting the genres *kalindula* and *Zamrock*, were also struggling to keep their businesses running. Most musicians who envisioned a career in music left Zambia for more prosperous industries in other countries. Among them, Rikki Illilonga relocated to Denmark, Larry Maluma to Australia, Willie Mbewe to South Africa, as well as Spuki Mulemwa and Anna Mwale to Germany. Dance and singing contests *Discotheque*, aired weekly by national broadcasting Zambia Broadcasting Services (ZBS) radio and *The Golden Voice* hosted by Moon City Club at Lusaka's Findeco House inspired aspiring musicians of the time. Musicians and music fans I talked to about the topic claimed that disco was regarded by most youth as a symbol of modernity because it was new and imported from the US.

In the following section, I will analyze the production of Zambian popular music in semi-professional studios. I focus on Central Studio and MUVI Studios. I chose to focus on Central Studio because it was the earliest known semi-professional studio. The focus on MUVI is aimed at highlighting how different genres of music were produced in the studio.

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<sup>22</sup> Parlor is spelled Parlour in British English. Zambia was a British colony that adopted English as its constitutional language.

### 2.2.1 The Production of Zambian Popular Music in Central Studio

The physical configuration of the studio at Central Studio consisted of sound-proofed recording spaces and a vocal booth specifically built for recording vocals. The DAW in the studio comprised a Roland drum machine, a Yamaha DX7 keyboard synthesizer, which also served as a sound bank, a twelve-track recorder, a digital audio tape machine (DAT) and a Shure dynamic microphone, cutting edge equipment at the time. However, the studio did not have a formally trained sound engineer. Gideon Mulenga, who worked as session guitarist and sound engineer at the studio was a guitarist in the *Zamrock* group WITCH (Ballad Zulu, personal communication March 17, 2022).

Central Studio played a crucial role in the production of Zambian popular music, especially because it was the only one that could facilitate both digital and analog recordings. The DAT, drum machine, and keyboard synthesizer facilitated digital recordings, and the twelve-track recorder facilitated analog recordings. Since recording in Central Studio wasn't as costly as recording at dB or Malachite, the studio became an alternative space for low budget projects.

Ballad Mutale Zulu's "Cook On" (1987) fits into the aesthetics of Zambian popular music of the late-1980s. Zulu was one of the most prolific recording musicians of the era. Like most Zambian pop songs of the 1980s "Cook On" highlights influences from American music, particularly disco and R&B. In the following section, I will discuss the production of "Cook On" as a representative example of music production in semi-professional studios of the mid- to late-1980s.

### 2.2.2 “Cook On,” Sound

Zulu co-arranged, recorded and co-produced “Cook On” under the guidance of Gideon Mulenga and Yav Ditend (a.k.a. Robe), a Congolese national, who also played keyboards on the track. Zulu himself played the bass part of the song on the keyboard synthesizer. However, he composed the song before his studio session. Due to the influence of disco, drum machines were fashionable. When I asked why he used a drum machine instead of having someone track live drums, Zulu explained that the studio did not have the right microphones to ensure quality recordings of percussion instruments, and they lacked a professional sound engineer. Therefore, percussion was never recorded live at Central Studio. Instead, percussion parts were recorded on a Roland drum machine or the keyboard synthesizer using samples (Ballad Zulu, personal communication 2022).

Zulu’s recording in Central Studio demonstrates how *Zambian* popular music was produced in semi-professional studios. The production of “Cook On” involved Zulu performing multiple parts on the recording and Mulenga and Robe co-arranging and co-producing the song. Mulenga and Robe performed additional parts on guitar and keyboards.”<sup>23</sup>

“Cook On” was one of the earliest digital recordings in *Zambian* popular music. Programmed percussion on keyboard synthesizers and other instrumental parts using samples gave way to how music was to be produced in the *Zed Beats* era. The instrumentation of “Cook On” consists of bass, synthesized strings, a sweep sound, and programmed drum kit sounds. The snare, kick and hi-hat have a constant tempo and a metronome-like feel highlighting the aesthetics of a programmed sound. On the choruses, a sampled marimba phrase responds to Zulu’s singing

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<sup>23</sup> A practice that was not possible in dB and Malachite Studios where ensembles had to perform live during recordings.



phrases. The electric guitar is the only instrument that was tracked live during the recording of the song.

The process of recording “Cook On” began by Zulu programming the drum kit part on the drum machine. He performed a few measures of the part and then looped it into a whole song (4:40), after which he layered a bass part and a piano rhythmic phrase to the percussion part. Figure 7 shows the percussion part in “Cook On.”



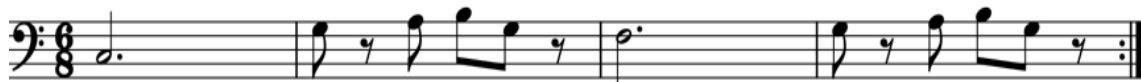
**Figure 7: “Cook On,” Percussion Part**

The notes at the bottom of the staff represent the kick drum of the percussion pattern in 6/8 time. The x’s in the top line of the staff indicate the rhythm of the hi-hat part of the pattern. The notes in the middle of the staff represent the snare drum. The intro to the song, which runs between 0:00 seconds and 0:20 seconds uses a skeletal bass (Bass Part 1) as shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: “Cook On,” Bass Part 1**

Only a few measures of the part were performed before the part was looped for the duration of twenty seconds. Between 0:20 and 4:40, Zulu employs a more detailed bassline, what I refer to as Bass Part 2 (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: “Cook On,” Bass Part 2**

A rhythmic chordal phrase in the I-V-IV-V progression is the main accompanying part and it plays throughout the song except in the intro. Zulu used a piano sound on the keyboard synthesizer for the part (Figure 10).



**Figure 10: “Cook On,” Syncopated Piano Part**

These four parts form the backdrop for “Cook On.” Vocals, guitar, a sampled marimba, and flute were then added. Both the marimba and flute were performed on the keyboard using samples of the actual instruments. The bass, drum, and piano parts were programmed. Gideon Mulenga and Robe served as session musicians and co-producers supporting Zulu’s efforts by performing parts that he could not perform. However, the guitar and the vocals on the song were recorded live.

This mode of producing music by using loops was a novelty in Zambian music because before 1986, ensembles performed live for recordings. Neither Malachite nor dB had the equipment to be able to produce music in this manner. Central Studio launched the digital mode of producing music. Recording music in this manner further exposed shifts in musical labor and introduced session musicians in the production of Zambian popular music.

### 2.2.3 “Cook On,” Text

“Cook On” is a praise song for Zambian women. Zulu is appreciating their hard work and their cooking. *Nsima*, a thick porridge made from corn meal, usually is eaten with vegetables and /or meat in broth referred to as *ndiyo* in the *Chisenga/Chichewa* languages or relish in English. *Ndiyo zanthwilo* and *ndiyo za nyemba* are the only phrases in *Chinsenga*. The rest of the song is in English. However, the song still maintains a call and answer style for the chorus, one of the common elements in Zambian indigenous music. The praise was about her hard work, her good company and her cooking. It was not about her sexual appeal. This kind of song writing was common in the 1980s when love songs focused on the qualities of a woman or a man and were not meant to sexualize or objectify her body.

The lyrics of “Cook On” were inspired by a painting by Zulu’s brother Brian Mwanza Zulu. As Zulu puts it in the first verse of his song, Mwanza’s painting depicts a village setting; Children playing and women going to fetch water from a well. They carry the water in clay pots on their heads. The backdrop of the painting was a beautiful sunset. The playing of the children on the painting inspires the song’s up tempo. The occasional sampled marimba sound in the song gives it a village feel.

Figure 11 shows the lyrics of “Cook On.” The lyrics sung only in English are aligned to the left of the page and are indented.

### Verse 1

The children dance and sing as the tropical sun sets  
The women flock to the well to get the water for a meal  
And we just sit and wait [be] cause we just come from the fields

**Call:** And there you come  
**Answer:** And there you come  
**Call:** With a pot on your head  
**Answer:** With a pot on your head

There is one thing you should know  
It’s good to have you by my side

### Chorus

<u>Chibemba</u>	<u>English Translation</u>
<i>Ndiyo za nthwilo</i> [Call]	Vegetables cooked in ground peanut
Cook on cook on [Answer]	
<i>Ndiyo za nyemba</i> [Call]	Beans as a side dish
Cook on cook on [Answer]	
<i>Ndiyo za nthwilo</i>	Vegetables cooked in ground peanut
Cook on cook on [Answer]	
Woman of truth	

### Verse 2

There is one thing you should know  
It’s great to have you by my side  
Yes, it is  
Yei, ye. Yes, it is

### Chorus (repeat)

Figure 11: “Cook On,” Text

“Cook On” lyrics were composed before the recording session. As Zulu notes, one had to have their compositions ready before booking a studio session because studio time was expensive (personal communication, 2022). Composing and arranging the music before recording sessions is a major feature of music made in professional and semi-professional studios, that is not employed in home studios. This is because booking studio time in home studios is more affordable, and scheduling is more flexible. Furthermore, producers in home studios charge for the production of whole songs and not per hour as they did in professional and semi-professional studios.

#### **2.2.4 The Production of Zambian Popular Music in MUVI Studio**

MUVI produced music, radio and TV commercials, and postproduction editing for movies (Angel Phiri, interview, June 20, 2021). Che Mutale joined the studio in 1997 as an intern doing voiceovers on radio commercials and as a music producer under the tutorship of rapper and producer Innocent Maboshe. The workstation in MUVI Studio in 1998 consisted of a drum machine, an AKG Sennheiser dynamic microphone<sup>24</sup>, a keyboard, Soundscape recorder and cakewalk music software (Che, interview, October 28, 2021).<sup>25</sup>

The drum machine and the keyboard were connected to a computer via MIDI. Cakewalk was used as a programming platform. After the programming was done, the tracks were transferred to Soundscape for tracking vocals and mixing. Soundscape worked as both hardware and software. It used pneumatic tapes. Recordings at MUVI required musicians and/or producers to perform short phrases or whole parts on a musical instrument that was usually programmed on drum

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<sup>24</sup> A dynamic microphone uses a diaphragm attached to a coil suspended near a magnet (Dan Hosken, 2011). Although dynamic microphones are good for miking guitar amps, drums and vocals, especially at recording live concerts, they were the most preferred to record vocals in home studios in the 1990s because of their sensitivity (Linyama, personal communication 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Che, Keith Mutale, James Ngoma, Maiko Zulu and MC Wabwino are some of the musicians who recorded at MUVI.

machines or keyboard synthesizers. In cases where the artist and the producer were not skillful enough to demonstrate their song ideas by performing them on a musical instrument, session musicians were hired to do so. Che would then program the performances of the session musicians into whole songs by looping the best sections. Vocals and other instrumental parts that were recorded live would be tracked after the programming was done (Che, interview, October 28, 2021).



**Figure 12: Che Mutale in MUVI Studio [Photo courtesy of Che Mutale]**

Che's "Kumuzi N'Kubotu" (The Village is Good) [1999] is a good example of how Zambian popular music was produced in MUVI Studio in the late-1990s. While Ballad Zulu and others were inspired by Euro-American music mostly sang in English in the 1980 and early 1990s, singers in the late-1990s went back to singing in local languages as the case was with *kalindula* in the 1980s.

“Kumuzi N’Kubotu,” from the MUVI Studio compilation album *Dyonko*, is sung in *Chitonga*, a language spoken by the Tonga ethnic group in southern Zambia. In the song, Che reminisces about the good old days when he lived in the village. The lyrics of “Kumuzi N’kubotu” are shown in Figure 13.

### Verse 1

<u>Chitonga</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Twali usobana kumuzi Wabakapa Twaliusobana chiyenga Iye, iye, iye</i>	We used to play in the village My grandmother’s We used to play the game of jacks
<i>Twali usobana chiyenga fwe bashonto</i>	We used to play the game of jacks, us the young
<i>Twali usobana bumulonga Uyeiyeyeya</i>	We used to play in the river
<i>Bachembele bakalima inyemu Ba Sir, kumuzi kubotu x2 Ndayeya botwali kusobana Kwa bakapa Ndayeya botwali kusobana Kwa bakapa Ndayeya butwali kulila Iyeiyeyee</i>	Grownups tilled the land to grow peanuts Sir, it’s good in the village x2 I miss how we used to play at my grandmother’s I miss how we used to play at my grandmother’s I miss how we used to cry
<i>Bachembele bakalima inyemu</i>	Grownups tilled the land to grow peanuts

### Chorus

<i>Ba Sir, kumuzi kubotu x2 Kumuzi kubotu x4 Yantwike imwe Kumuzi n’kuboto Yii yantwike imwe Kumuzi n’kuboto</i>	Sir, it’s good at the village x2 It’s good at the village x4 Let’s go It’s good in the village Let’s go friends It’s good in the village
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### Chant

*Wajata ng'ombe x6*  
*Ndiyanda ichongedwe, kumuzi*

You got the cow x6  
I want the best, in the village

**Figure 13: “Kumuzi Kobotu” (The Village is Good), Text**

The accompaniment track of the song involved the programming of the drum, bass, and some guitar parts on the drum machine and keyboard synthesizer by the producer Mutale. After the programming was complete, session musicians recorded short musical phrases that were looped into longer sections by Mutale, a tradition that has continued in home studios where session musicians are sometimes hired to perform short melodic phrases on guitar.

In “Kumuzi N’Kubotu,” Mutale makes use of pre-recorded animal sounds to situate the song in a village setting. In villages, people domesticate animals including cows, goats, and chickens. The animal sounds are interpolated by pre-recorded sounds of whistles and chants of young boys. These sounds were all samples from a sound bank. Animal sounds authenticate the piece as Zambian. Furthermore, the animal sounds in the intro to Che’s “Kumuzi N’Kubotu” are intended to transport nostalgic urban dwellers to their villages where they once lived.

Programmed parts and use of samples are the main feature of the song. The first section of the song highlights arpeggiated programmed guitars and a sampled flute sound that plays a complimentary melody to Che’s smooth R&B-like singing in a call and answer style. This section runs between 0:00 and 2:00. The first sixteen seconds consist of animal sounds including cows, goats, birds and a cowherd boy whistling, depicting a village setting, after which a sampled arpeggiated guitar begins. At 2:23, the tempo increases to 165 beats per minute (bpm), and an ostinato programmed bassline, programmed drum kit, and live performed finger picking guitar

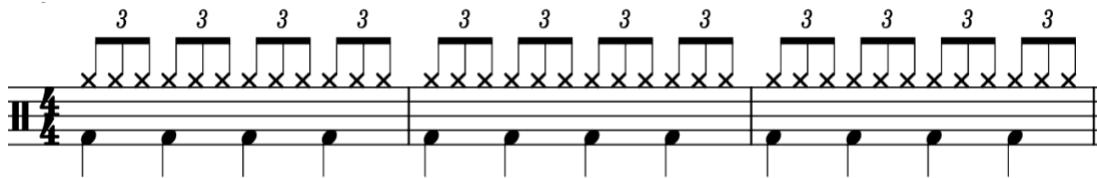


groove in a *sinjonjo* style in 4/4 time are added. Figure 14 shows the arpeggiated bass part that is most common in *sinjonjo*.



**Figure 14: “Kumuzi N’kubotu,” Bass Part**

The entire B section of the song contains the looped bass part. The *sinjonjo* section consists mainly of the kick drum and the tambourine. The tambourine sounds like a hi-hat performed in triplets. Figure 15 shows the tambourine part.



**Figure 15: “Kumuzi N’kubotu,” Tambourine Part**

*Sinjonjo* as a musical style employs foreign musical elements, particularly rock and roll drum patterns and South African township jive offbeat triplet guitar strumming (Kabanga, interview, May 2022). This section follows the I-IV-I-V chord progression. Figure 16 shows the strummed rhythm guitar part in “Kumuzi N’kubotu.”



**Figure 16: “Kumuzi N’kubotu,” Rhythm Guitar Strum**

The *sinjonjo* style was influenced by Zambians who had gone to work in the mines of South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s where they were exposed to Afro-jazz, penny whistle, and jive genres. *Sinjonjo* reminded listeners of the days they worked in the mines of Johannesburg, hundreds of miles away from their family and friends. According to Che, the *Sinjonjo* section was added to “Kumuzi N’kubotu” when Nyirenda, owner of MUVI TV, proposed that the song incorporate the style to make it more commercially appealing.<sup>26</sup>

In older popular music genres such as *kalindula*, change of tempo indicates the climax of the song. This section is characterized by repetitive rhythmic phrases accompanied by chants or rap vocal delivery. In “Kumunzi N’Kuboto,” Mulenga starts rapping and chanting at 03:15 and continues to the end. In the video of the song, most of the dancing happens from this point and continues to the end of the track.

“Kumunzi N’kubotu” in MUVI Studio was produced in a similar way “Cook On” was produced in Central Studio. Che programmed the drum kit part on the drum machine and performed a few measures of the arpeggiated guitar sound and electric piano on the keyboard synthesizer. Mongri, one of the two session musician, recorded some live guitars on the track. Using the recording technology in MUVI Studio, Che was able to record multiple tracks by himself and produce the track, unlike in professional studios where musicians in an ensemble recorded

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<sup>26</sup> It is common to hear nostalgic sentiments in *Zed Beats* produced after the 2000s. For example, in his song “Elion Elion,” released in 2003, JK reminisces about how nice life was in the past.

simultaneously and directed the production of the music, musical labor in semi-professional studios was shifting more toward the producer although session musicians were still involved as co-producers and players of musical instruments when needed. In the next section, I discuss the emergence of home studios and corresponding shifts in musical labor.

### **2.3 The Rise of Home Studios in Zambian Music Scene**

In 1989, Mushima, the first known home studio, was established at Dr. Katele Kalumba's home in the Munali neighborhood of Lusaka. The setup at Mushima included a keyboard synthesizer, a drum machine, a pair of monitor speakers, and a microphone<sup>27</sup> The most influential producer of the 1980s and 1990s was Michael Linyama. He and his business partner Francis Mwiinga were the first to use a computer to record music in a home studio in Zambia. They set up Zintwastic Studio at Linyama's farm in Lusaka West. As Linyama said in an interview (July 17, 2021):

For the first time I had something that functioned properly. Then all sorts of people started coming to the farm. Ballad Zulu...they were a number. Who was that? Sonile Zulu, Wako Jam with Ras Willie...We got so busy. But we had to teach musicians how to program...that it's not your normal style. You don't pick up your guitar and you come here and play. It doesn't work that way. You come with a keyboard

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<sup>27</sup> Prominent musicians of the time including Willie Mbewe (Ras Willie), Victor Nyirongo, Justin Nyirongo, Victor Kachaka, Wako Jam, Omart, and Sonile Zulu launched their careers at either Kalumba's or Michael Linyama and Francis Mwiinga's home studios.

player...and starts programing the drums...after you have done all the programming that's when you go over to dB Studios, and you can add extra guitars and vocals.

The setup at Zintwastic was modest, consisting of a computer, a keyboard synthesizer, a computer microphone and a pair of monitor speakers. Linyama was aware that others would acquire similar technology and set up their own studios in due course. By the late 1990s, every neighborhood hosted several home studios as alternative spaces where musicians could record music, particularly in the major cities of Zambia (Linyama, interview, 2017).<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 17: Michael Linyama, Producer [Picture by the author, July 17, 2017]**

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<sup>28</sup> Ragga Muffin artist Daddy Zemus, ballad singer Ballad Zulu, R&B performer Joe Chibangu, and the *Zam-reggae* outfit Burning Youths made waves in Zambian music scene after recording in these studios.

Linyama notes that when he founded Zintwastic in 1992, music software did not exist. Rather, musical sounds were sourced from drum machines, sound banks and keyboard synthesizers. Since the technology of the time could not facilitate audio recordings, those had to be recorded in a semi-professional studio such as Central Studio or a professional studio such as dB.

However, by the late-1990s, recordings via Soundscape interface and Cakewalk music software were possible (although recording longer performances was still a challenge). Also, at this time, music production shifted from programming on keyboards as was the case in the late-1980s and mid-1990s to sound banks, MIDI and music software on computers. Producers began to use keyboard synthesizers as a musical instrument besides being a part of the workstation in the studio. Sound banks also contained short sequences of pre-programmed *beats* that could be recorded onto the computer via MIDI. Analog recordings in home studios using music software such as Cakewalk had become possible. In cases where producers were novices in playing a musical instrument, an accomplished musician would sometimes be hired to play guitar or keyboards during a recording session in the studio.

The prospect of an emerging music scene dominated by music created by Zambians in local languages was exciting to music fans. In 1997, Daddy Zemus released his debut album *Salaula* (Pick from a Pile). The title track “Salaula” received overwhelming support when it was first showcased on Chanda Chimba’s *Music Box* (Koloko 2022:281). *Salaula* refers to secondhand clothing imported from North America and Europe for resale. The term means “to select from a pile in a manner of rummaging” (Hansen 1999:3430). Hansen cites the liberalization of Zambia’s economy and the affordability of the *salaula* trade as some of the factors that enhanced the market in Zambia. With the harsh economic situation in the 1990s in Zambia, *salaula* became a common

practice in marketplaces, particularly in urban regions. Thus, most people could relate to Daddy Zemus's "Salaula" when they watched the song on *Music Box*. Although *salaula* was the only word in *Chinyanja* the success of the song inspired other musical acts in Zambian pop music circles to experiment with lyrics in local languages in their compositions.<sup>29</sup>

Beginning in the late-1990s, the phrase *loko is laka* (local is cool) was often heard on the streets of Lusaka. *Loko* is borrowed from the English 'local' and *laka* from the Dutch-derived Afrikaans "lekker."<sup>30</sup> In the 1980s, Zambia hosted a good number of freedom fighters from South Africa leading to several Afrikaans words being adopted into the *Chinyanja* language (including *laka*). Media personalities, record labels, and some artists promoted the *loko is laka* idea to convince music fans that they needed to reconnect with their musical roots.

Musicians and producers were inspired by the *loko is laka* theme to incorporate more indigenous musical elements. For example, in addition to musicians' increasing use of local languages in song texts, producers in semi-professional and home studios began to incorporate more indigenous drum patterns including *du-nka*.

Music promoters, aspiring musicians and producers set up low budget studios in their homes to fill up the lacuna in Zambian music scene. According to producer and musician Izaizai Ikona (personal communication 2021), professional recording studios such as dB and Malachite did not have digital recording equipment for the new generation of musicians who were more familiar with the technology. The digital recording technology available in home studios

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<sup>29</sup> For example, the title track of the album "A Ticha" [Teacher] (1999) by M.C. Wabwino) was sung in the *Chisenga* language. Chisenga and Chinsenga are two different languages.

<sup>30</sup> Afrikaans are Dutch speakers who settled in South Africa in 1652 and later Namibia (Roberge, *ibid*). The Afrikaans language evolved from Dutch (Roberge, 2002). I studied Dutch in 2001 when I was on a musical tour in the Netherlands. *Lekker* in Dutch means delicious but can also be used in other contexts to mean beautiful or good.

engendered a new approach to producing music. As I explained in the previous section, one did not need to be a skilled instrumentalist to be able to produce a song.

Home studios became alternative spaces in which to record music. These studios were more affordable to purchase and to record in, and the technology enabled musicians with varying degrees of skill to produce their music. Musicians did not need to take a whole ensemble to the studio as producers were able to record and manipulate sounds using music software on their computers. This style of producing music became a model for the *Zed Beats* sound a decade later.

In the following section, I examine how music was produced at Mushima, the first home studio in Zambia (Linyama, interview, 2017). The production of music at Mushima is crucial for understanding musical production and musical labor in home studios in collaboration with semi-professional and professional studios.

## **2.4 Music Production in Mushima Studio**

Mushima Studio was set up in a bedroom at 90 Kalingalinga Road in the Munali neighborhood of Lusaka. Dr. Katele Kalumba, former minister of health and finance in the MMD government and a music aficionado and critic, owned the property. He acquired some recording equipment during his stay in Toronto, Canada where he had relocated for his studies. As Dr Kalumba describes it, “90 Kalingalinga Road was the place for the reformers who believed that they could change the world. The Akashambatwas, Nawakwis, Mmembes, Sichinga’s, Remmy Mushota’s, Sam Chipungus, Derrick Chitalas and many others. These unbridled political idealists made 90 Kalingalinga Road their political rendezvous for conspiring to introduce multi-party democracy” (Kalumba, September 25, 2005). The names that Dr Kalumba mentions were some of

the founders of the MMD that introduced multiparty politics in Zambia when it took over power from UNIP in 1991. Most importantly, he [Kalumba] explains that 90 Kalingalinga Road was not only a meeting place for politicians who envisioned a change in Zambia's political scape. The house was also a refuge for musicians who were determined to shape the future of Zambian popular music. Besides making music in the studio at 90 Kalingalinga Road, musicians<sup>31</sup> shared their dreams about making it in Zambia's music industry. Linyama was hired by Kalumba to produce hip-hop artist Robert Mapara (a.k.a. Omart) in Mushima Studio.<sup>32</sup>

A few years after Mushima was founded, the Ensoniq keyboard synthesizer that comprised the workstation in the studio became one of the most sought-after pieces of studio equipment in home studios in Zambia. The synthesizer cost the same as a Toyota Corolla Salon car (about K64,000,000 [US\$1,500] in the 1990s). However, the cost of acquiring this piece of equipment did not deter some ambitious music producers and promoters from owning one (Chali Mulalami, interview, 2022).<sup>33</sup> For example, the Ensoniq's VFX, a keyboard-based digital synthesizer, came with a built-in digital audio effects processor, sequencer, and 3.5 in-diskette drive. "The synthesizer section generated up to 21 dynamically allocated voices at once. Each with an oscillator, two filters, one low-frequency oscillator, three envelopes, and a modulation matrix with 15 selectable control sources" (Rothstein, 1990:90). The device also contained a sound bank and signal processing effects, among them several reverberation settings, chorusing, flanging, and delay. Since the Ensoniq synthesizer had a built-in sequencer for programming, it was convenient for arranging music.

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<sup>31</sup> Kalumba mentions Justin Nyirongo, Ballad Zulu, George Mlauzi, Ackim Simukonda, and Robert Mapara as some of those who frequented his home studio.

<sup>32</sup> After the release of Omart's first album "I am Just Talking," others, including reggae singer Wapolina Mkandawire and Zamrocker Justin Nyirongo recorded at the studio (Linyama, personal communication, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Music producers who have recorded on the Ensoniq include Elijah Tembo of Kula Music Studio (Feedback Studio at the time they used the Ensoniq), Jerry Fingerz of Jerry Fingaz Studio, and Sling Beats' Chali Mulalami.



A sequencer enabled sound engineers and musicians to program short melodic and rhythmic sequences of music that could be built into whole songs (Rothstein, *ibid.*, 91). Jones Kabanga remembers the recording process at Muchima Studio when he recorded there in 1990. “So, you program everything . . . drums, keyboards, and so forth. And then you just take that Ensoniq to dB Studios. The audio [analog] stuff was done at dB. The digital stuff we did were drums and also keyboards, strings, brass. Yeah, that’s how we worked. I think for me it was just like programming. We were just programming. It was like the beginning of the digital world” (interview, August 21, 2021).

Digital technology had significant effects on musical labor in home studios. For example, Mushima Studios launched Linyama’s music production career even though he did not know how to play a musical instrument. It was exciting for him to realize that he still could make music even without being a musician himself (Linyama, interview, 2017). By the early-1990s, it was common for non-musicians to direct the production of music in home studios as long as they were technologically adept to manipulate sounds on the keyboard synthesizer and the computer.

“Pepani Olila” (Condolences to the Mourners) [1989] is a tribute to Paul Nyirongo (a.k.a. Paul Ngozi), one of the progenitors of the Zamrock genre, who died of an AIDS related illness in 1989. The initial orchestration of the instrumental was done in Mushima Studio followed by vocal recordings and final production at dB (Linyama, interview, September 4, 2023). The percussion, bass, and synthesized sweep parts were recorded in similar ways that Ballad Zulu recorded “Cook On” at Central Studio. A few measures of these parts were programmed on the Ensoniq and then looped into the entire duration of the song. The Ensoniq also served as a hard drive to store recorded sections and parts.

The production of popular music in Mushima Studio in 1989 involved programming an instrumental at the studio. Programming involved orchestrating an instrumental part of the music on drum machines and workstations. The instrumental needed to be mixed before being taken to a semi-professional or professional studio for recording of the vocals, guitars and other parts that were recorded live via analog technology. There was still some specialization of musical labor in this era. Michael Linyama, programmer [now referred to as producer] in Mushima, orchestrated instrumentals by programming multiple tracks on the Ensoniq keyboard synthesizer. The musicians began to be replaced by the Ensoniq keyboard synthesizer in Mushima Studio, but the recordist and sound engineer in professional and semi-professional studios still had their jobs as vocals could only be recorded in the bigger studios.

The text in “Pepani Olila” lists the names of some of the musicians who died between the 1980s and 1990s; Chola, Smokey, and Chisenga. The song text also makes reference to recordings of hit songs by each of the musicians. Figure 18 shows the text of “Pepani Olila.”

### Verse 1

#### Chinyanja

*Tinali nabo basogolako a Paulo Ngozi  
[a] Nyirongo eh basiya Zambia ilila  
Aiye lelo aiye lelo*

*Nyimbo zanu zenzokondwelesa onvela  
anzanga Zambia yonse*

*Yaiyaya eyiye lelo*

*Tikamvela ku Radio Zambia nyimbo  
misozi ichoka yeka*

#### English translation

We had Paul Ngozi  
Nyirongo has left Zambia mourning  
Aiye today, aiye today

Your music amused the listeners the  
whole of Zambia

Yaiyaya eyiye today

We shed tears when we listen to your  
music on Radio Zambia

## Chorus

*Pepani olila eh tilila namwe*

Condolences to the mourners, as we  
mourn with you

*Aiyelelo aiye lelo aiye lelo aye*

Aiye today, aiye today, aiye today ai

*Pepani olila eh tilila namwe*

Condolences to the mourners, as we  
mourn with you

*Aiye lelo aiye lelo aiye lelo ai*

Aiye today, aiye today, aiye today ai

## Verse 2

*Lelo tilila Ngozi tenzoimba nawo*

We mourn Ngozi who we used to sing  
with

*Nshaupwa Bwino na Bauze Ngozi*

“Nshaupwa Bwino” and “Bauze  
Ngozi”<sup>34</sup>

*Lelo tilila Paulo tenzoimba nawo*

We mourn Ngozi who we used to sing  
with

*Nshaupwa Bwino na Bauze Ngozi*

“Nshaupwa Bwino” and “Bauze  
Ngozi”

## Chorus 2

*Pepani onvela nichisoni chathu tonse*

Our condolences to all the listeners,  
we are all bereaved

*Ninjila yathu tonse infa*

Death is our path

*Pepani onvela nichisoni chathu tonse*

Our condolences to all the listeners,  
we are all bereaved

*Ninjila yathu tonse infa*

Death is our path

---

<sup>34</sup> “Nshaupwa Bwino” [I am not Married Well] and “Bauze Ngozi” [Tell Them Ngozi] were some of Paul Ngozi’s most popular songs that dominated the air waves in the 1980s.

### Verse 3

*Maibabe, maibabe* [Call]

*Maibabe aye* [Answer]

*Maibabe, maibabe* [Call]

*Maibabe aye* [Answer]<sup>35</sup>

*Lelo tilila Chola tenzoyimba nawo*

Today we are mourning Chola who we sung with

“*Walilalila Mayo Maria Eh*”

“*Walilalila Mayo Maria Eh*”

*Lelo tilila Smokey tenzoimba nawo*

Today we are mourning Smokey who we sang with

“*Mandalena Waya Eh*”

“*Mandalena Waya Eh*”

*Lelo tilila Chisenga tenzoimba nawo*

Today we are mourning Chisenga who we sang with

“*Umutomboko wa Mwata Kazembe*”

“*Umutomboko wa Mwata Kazembe*”

### Chorus 3

*Pepani olila, chasalila ife*

*Aiye lelo, aiye lelo, aiye lelo aye*

Condolences to all the mourners, we are next  
Aiye lelo, aiye today, aiye today

*Pepani olila, chasalila ife*

*Aiye lelo, aiye lelo, aiye lelo, aye*

Condolences to all the mourners, we are next  
Aiye lelo, aiye today, aiye today

*Maibabe, maibabe* [Call]

*Maibabe aye* [Answer]

*Maibabe, maibabe* [Call]

*Maibabe aye* [Answer]

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<sup>35</sup> Maibabe is a nonsensical word in *Chinyanja* language used to express pain.

#### Verse 4

<i>Ife bena timafuna kushusa baibulo</i>	Some of us want to dispute what's written in the Bible
<i>Aiye lelo, aiye lelo, ah</i>	
<i>Bena bakuti buku lolemba inabwela na azungu</i>	Others say the Bible was brought by the Europeans
<i>Aiye lelo, aiye lelo, ah</i>	
<i>Mu umoyo wathu siku lizafika lofuna Bible</i>	Time will come when we need the Bible in our lives
<i>Aiye lelo, aiye lelo, ah</i>	
<i>Titembenuke kalongosi njila ni Yesu way</i>	Let's change our lives my sister Jesus is the way
<i>Ninjila yakumwamba kwa Tate</i>	It's the way to heaven where Father (God) reigns
<i>Titembenuke kalongosi njila ni Yesu</i>	Let's change our lives my sister Jesus is the way
<i>Ninjila yakumwamba kwa Tate</i>	It's the way to heaven where Father (God) reigns
<i>Titembenuke amai, njila ni Yesu</i>	Let's change our ways mother
<i>Ninjila yaku mwamba kwa Tate</i>	It's the way to heaven where Father (God) reigns
<i>Aleluya eh aitana Mulungu Chiyambi cha umoyo osatha x4</i>	Haleluja God is calling the beginning of a new life x4

**Figure 18: “Pepani Olila” (Condolences to the Mourners), Text**

The production of the track involved programming the drum kit part, bass, electric piano, and synthesized brass. The programmed drum kit made use of overly compressed kick and snare drum samples. The drum part is so badly mixed that the hi-hat is almost inaudible, a common

feature of drum mixes made in home studios during the 1980s. Figure 19 shows the programmed drum kit pattern. The bottom pitch represents the kick drum, and the top pitch represents the snare drum (Figure 19).



**Figure 19: “Pepani Olila,” Programmed Drum Part**

Figure 20 is the bass riff that is looped to cover the entire song.



**Figure 20 : “Pepani Olila,” Bass Riff**

The bass riff, an electric bass sample from an Ensoniq synthesizer keyboard, comprises six measures: a repeated two-measure phrase followed by a concluding two-measure phrase. The riff was looped into the full length of the six-minute track.

In the 1990s, programming, which was first done in Mushima Studio in 1989, became the main method for recording music in home studios. Skilled musicians including Jones Kabanga were sometimes hired as session musicians. In addition to recording sections of the previously recorded parts of the music, session musicians co-arranged and co-produced the music.

Instrumental recordings could be programmed on keyboard synthesizers without needing standalone mixing boards, multitrack recorders, and compressors. The equipment at dB, Malachite, and ZNBC studios needed bigger spaces in which to set up the equipment and accommodate ensembles to record live. Therefore, home studio recording equipment did not need as much space as professional and semi-professional studios. Control rooms were replaced by workspaces. However, workspaces in home studios also served as the control room, tracking room, and vocal booth.

Despite advancements in digital recording technology of the 1990s, musicians still played a significant role as drum machines and keyboard synthesizers could not completely replace human musicianship. However, it is important to note that in this era, producers began to take over the production of the music. With easy access to drum machines, samplers, and keyboard synthesizers, producers began to take the roles of the kit drummer, bass player, keyboardist, guitarist, recordist, and sound engineer. However, musicians were still hired to perform particular role as performers, co-arrangers, and co-producers or both. For example, when Linyama began producing music in the late-1980s, he encouraged singers who recorded with him to collaborate with an instrumentalist if they themselves were not skilled musicians. The musicians' roles were to perform musical phrases on their musical instruments and co-arrange, and sometimes co-produce the music (Michael Linyama, interview, 2017). In this era, music software was costly and not readily available. Even in cases where it was available, it was not sophisticated enough to replace human musicianship completely.

Producers in home studios encountered technical challenges in the beginning. The cause of these challenges ranged from producers not being conversant enough with the technology in use, lack of enough space on which to save data, and computer hard drives crashing. In 1999 when

I recorded my first album at Michel Billiouw's home studio in Chipata, I lost programmed accompaniment tracks. For Linyama, the challenges were more to do with lack of hard drive space on which to save the recordings as he explains in the following excerpt of an interview I had with him at dB (June 27, 2017):

ML... I bought my own computer, but these were not this type of computers [the models currently in use]. They were tiny little things. [Be]cause my computer was called what? ZX Spectra. A British computer...

MT: When was this?

ML: 89 that's when I bought my first computer.

MT: And where did you get it from?

ML: Locally. There...was some guy who came from the UK [United Kingdom], and he looked at this [computer] and ... it was just a toy to him ... He didn't have much to do with it. And I looked at it and I thought I can make use of this [laughs]. It was actually done by a genius called Sir Clive Sinclair. Now it had no programs...all it had was 64 kilobytes of memory. Now we are talking about gigabytes...

MT: Like a phone?

ML: No! 64 kilobytes. I mean, a CD is 700 mega...It wasn't even one megabyte. It was really tiny. But you see I had to start making programs for it because programs [music software] didn't exist that time.

Musicians often complained of losing their data at Linyama's studio. Linyama himself confessed to losing recordings that were almost done, never to be recovered again, because his computer crashed. It is understandable as his hard drive was limited to 64 kilobytes of memory.

Another challenge that was common in the production of music between the 1980s and the mid-1990s was lack of music software that could facilitate the recording of both analog and digital performances. As the previous quote shows, when Linyama began producing music on his ZX



Spectra computer, he had to create his own software. The software that he designed was used for multiple purposes including mixing wave files, particularly those recorded using a microphone on to the computer; multi-tracking when it was necessary to record more than one instrument at once; as an interface to record MIDI; and to provide plug-ins such as reverb since they did not have access to music software that could provide them with plug-ins on their computer at the time (Linyama, interview, 2017). Even years later when he worked with PRISM, a music software specifically designed to produce music by professional software designers, he had to have vocals recorded in a semi-professional or professional studio because the software could not support the recording of live performances.

In Chapter 2, I traced the emergence of semi-professional and home studios. I outlined the social, political, and economic conditions that necessitated the shift from recording music in professional studios to semi-professional and home studios. I examined the modes of producing Zambian popular music in them and how these modes consequently impacted musical labor. The addition of computers, music software and eventually digital workstations in semi-professional and home studios redefined the aesthetics of popular music in Zambia. In Chapter 3, I focus on the production of Zambian popular music the first decade of the 2000s when *Zed Beats* first emerged. I further investigate meanings of performance and improvisation in composing *Zed Beats* and how these practices impacted musical labor in home studios.

### **3.0 The Emergence of *Zed Beats*, 2000-2010**

The first decade of the 2000s was significant in reviving Zambia's music economy. Music Labels Mondo Music and MUVI were at the center of the revival of Zambian popular music, which was almost non-existent during the previous decade. Furthermore, it is in this period that the new genre of *Zed Beats* and its mode of production began to dominate Zambian music scene. In this chapter, I analyze the production of *Zed Beats* between the emergence of *Zed Beats* in the early 2000s to 2010.

In the early 2000s, production shifted to home studios. Several changes took place in this shift. For example, spaces where these studios were set up were smaller in size and more intimate as compared to semi-professional and professional studios. The shift to home studios also saw the producer multi-tracking instrumental parts of accompaniment tracks by themselves, a task that could only be successfully undertaken by ensembles of several musicians in professional studios. Furthermore, home studios were more affordable for musicians. The factors mentioned here provided opportunities for aspiring musicians who could not afford to pay for studio time in professional studios. One significant effect was an increase in recordings by women musicians, who had been intimidated by the dominance of male musicians in professional studios.

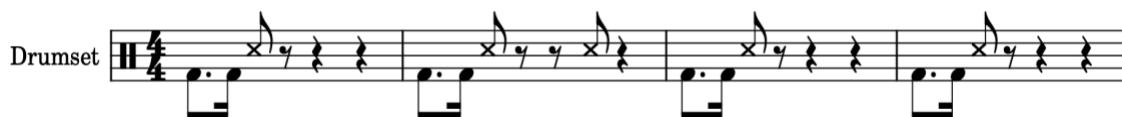
#### **3.1 The Dominance of *Zed Beats* in the Zambian Music Scene: JK's "Balekuzembeleka" (They Are Lying to You)**

JK's self-titled debut album *JK* (2001) epitomized the new sound of *Zed Beats*. The album made JK a celebrity in Zambia, as documented in the following quotation: "The four by four

rocked precariously side to side, pushed and pulled among the young people who lined the road to Lusaka International Airport. They chanted ‘JK, JK, JK’ and Joe, Joe, Joe while pounding vigorously on the Mondo Music van that contained Julie, Mondo Music marketing director, JK, and Joe, celebrity musicians...” (Hubbard, 2007: 146). In this quote, Hubbard is describing a scene where the Mondo Music vehicle in which JK and his producer The Ambassador were traveling was mobbed by fans while they chanted their names. After the release of *JK*, JK could not drive in the streets of Lusaka and other bigger cities without being recognized and mobbed by fans.

One of JK’s songs, “Balekuzembeleka” (They Are Lying to You) [2001] seemed ubiquitous after its release. The song was heard at parties, in clubs and in other spaces where celebratory events took place. The song became an anthem on most radio stations throughout the country.

The drum kit, bongos, and bass parts of the song were all samples from a keyboard synthesizer. Shorter rhythmic phrases were programmed and then looped into the duration of the song (4:30). The drum pattern as indicated in Figure 21 was not specific to a particular ethnicity as was the case was with earlier genres such as *kalindula* whose drum pattern was tied to the ethnic groups of the northern region of Zambia.



**Figure 21: “Balekuzembeleka,” Drum Pattern**

Figure 22 shows the lyrics in “Balekuzembeleka.”

### Chorus

#### Chibemba

*Aye, yeye hmmm  
Aye iye ye oh oh oh oh ho  
Aye, balekuzembeleka balefwaya ukanshye  
  
Aye, baleti guy obe nichintomfwa ukamshye ayee  
  
Bati pali bonse na diga iwe wekafye  
Leka nkutelize  
  
Nabanoko ukabebe ati wabakofye wekafye kuli ine  
  
Ati balekuzembeleka balefwaya ukanshye ine  
  
Baleti guy obe nichintomfwa ukamshye aye  
  
Bati pali bonse na diga iwe wekafye  
Leka nkutelize  
  
Nabanoko ukabebe ati wabakofye wekafye kuli ine*

#### English Translation

They are talking you into leaving me  
  
They say your guy is promiscuous  
you should leave him  
  
but it's you I love out of all of them  
Let me tell you  
  
Even tell your mother that you are  
the only one for me  
  
They are talking you into leaving me  
  
They say your guy is promiscuous  
you should leave him  
  
but it's you I love out of all of them  
Let me tell you  
  
Even tell your mother that you are  
the only one for me

### Verse 1

*Nangu bakutuke  
Nangu bakuseke  
  
Iwe ubebe iwe na ine nipenape  
  
Plan tukwete bena tabeshibe  
So, balabekofye bachabechabe  
Ifwe kuno tuleumfwa spaka jezi  
Bena baletumfwila jealous  
Ushe bane efyo chikalaba ifi kanshi*

Even if they insult you  
Even if they laugh at you  
  
Tell them you and I will be together  
forever  
  
They do not know our plan  
So, forget them they are nonentities  
Us here are having a good time  
They are jealous of us  
Friends, is this how it's going to be?

*Iwe chikashana wibomfwila ba bufi*

Lady do not listen to them as they are liars

*Ichitemwiko chesu ifwe ni proper  
Ndomfwa kenge ine niwebo na upa  
Ukusanga umutemwikwa chalishupa  
Ilelo ka ntashe Lesa nalishuka  
Lyonse ine iwe ndakutontonkanyapo  
Lyonse ichitemwiko chilakulilako  
Lyonse ndakuibukisha  
Nshikulabako  
Pali iwe umo akafwilapo*

Our love for each other is perfect  
I feel good it's you I married  
It's hard to find a lover  
Today let me praise God for my luck  
I think about you all the time  
Our love grows stronger everyday  
I remember you all the time  
I don't forget you  
One will die over you

### **Repeat Chorus**

#### **Verse 2**

*Lesa gelo ampela chachine niwe*

It's true that you are the girl that God gave me

*Na iwe guy akupela nine  
Iwe mune bikamo chimwela tubalange*

And I am the guy that God gave you  
Lively up and let's show them

*Abashaishiba ilelo beshibe*

Those who don't know should know today

*Iwe nimakali abashala nshikumbwa*

You are the best and the rest I do not admire

*Nangu basushe shani bokosi pakuyenda*

No matter how hard they might shake their ass

*Tapaba ukakutemwa nga efyo nakutemwa*

No one will ever love you like I do

*Ukumpoka iwe kwena bakafwilapo*

Whosoever tries to take you away from me will die

*Love yesu yafupa patali  
Elo Kabili tukaitwala patali*

Our love has come from far and we are taking our love far

*Lyonse ukalaakafye nga chibili*

Like burning fire all the time

*Gelo nomba tubazimye ba mbuli*

Girl, let's outshine these ignorant people

*Bengi bakumbwa eflyo twangala*

Many wish they could play like we do

*Balidabwa ifwe chalilila*

They cannot believe that we are having so much fun

*Bena yalifauka balifulwa*

They are upset because their love failed

*So bafwaya na ifwe ikaluke ifwe iyeiye*

They are so determined to see our love fail

### **Repeat Chorus**

### **Verse 3**

*Mwandi umfwila ine balabekofye iwe*

Listen to me and forget about those people

*Balaimwena abene balaimwena*

They will stop. They will stop

*Mwandi umfwila ine balabekofye iwe*

Forget those people and listen to me

*Balaimwena abene balaimwena*

They will stop, they will stop

*Eh ama loving, eh ama love*

This is love, this is love

*Eh ama loving, eh ama love*

This is love, this is love

*Eh ama loving, ah ah, eh ama love*

This is love, this is love

### **Repeat Chorus**

### **Figure 22: "Balekuzembeleka" (They Are Lying to You), Text**

In "Balekuzembeleka," JK is warning his girlfriend not to listen to everything that people say because most of what they say is aimed at tarnishing his name to separate him from her. He further urges his lover to listen to him, her God's given love.

One of the reasons *Zed Beats* appealed to youth in Zambia was the incorporation of street lingua or colloquial language. The incorporation of street lingua *Chinyanja* and *Chibemba*, particularly in the country's urban regions, made *Zed Beats* resonate with urban youth whose everyday conversations were carried out in these languages. For example, in "Balekuzembeleka," JK incorporates the terms *leka nkutelize* ("let me tell you"), *tuleumfwa spaka jezi* ("we are feeling great"), *ifwe chalilila* ("we are having fun") and *yalifauka* ("it failed") to convey his message.

By the 2000s, female musicians' levels of participation as singers and songwriters in Zambian music economy was considerable. The 1990s democratization of Zambia's national politics provided spaces for women to contest the patriarchal hegemony and advance a feminist agenda. This democratization of national politics saw the launch of feminist organizations campaigning for women's rights and empowerment. In the next section, I examine the history of the increased participation of women in the production of *Zed Beats* in home studios.

### **3.2 History of Women's Participation in the Production of Zambian Popular Music**

Although women are at the center of music and dance performances in Zambian traditional settings, they historically have been marginalized as songwriters, performers, lead singers, and producers in home studios. However, shifts in recording technology in home studios democratized the production of *Zed Beats*.

Some of the most memorable moments I shared with my father as a young boy were going to see concerts. Memories of one I saw with my father at Masiye Motel in the Lilanda neighborhood of Lusaka in 1983 when I was only nine are still vivid. Masiye Band was the resident band at the motel at the time. Their genre of music was *kalindula*. Live performances of the

ensemble consisted of both women and men. However, I noticed that men played musical instruments and sang while women provided choreographed dance accompaniment to the music. Sometimes women sang background vocals but rarely led the singing. Most musical performances I saw in the 1990s were similar to the performance I saw of the Masiye Band in 1983. There were a few women lead vocalists notably Violet Kafula and Joyce Nyirongo. However, by the 2000s, inspired by democratic politics, secularization and the new modes of producing music in home studios, women began featuring prominently as songwriters, recording artists and lead singers. Mampi, self-crowned Queen Diva, Lily T, Cynthia Kayula Bwalya (Kay Figo), and Shatel emerged as some of the biggest musical artists in the *Zed Beats* scene of the 2000s. In this chapter, I examine the factors that led to this shift. I further analyze how women use *Zed Beats* to highlight new perspectives on women and gender that were not exposed in previous forms of Zambian popular music.

Producers attributed women's increased participation in the production of *Zed Beats* to the more relaxed atmosphere in home studios as compared to the formal nature of professional studios. Music making in home studios was more playful, collaborative, and participatory. Singer-songwriter Teresa Ng'ambi, who recorded both in home studios and professional studios, explained that home studios were more flexible on scheduling studio time because they were less formal. Further, she was given studio time for free. She notes too that home studios provided friendlier workspaces as compared to professional studios (interview, September 2020). When needed, producers co-wrote and arranged songs with the singers. Also, *Zed Beats* became a platform for women to challenge patriarchy. Ng'ambi explained that being a female musician playing guitar in the male dominated music profession was empowering (interview, September



2020). Maurice Malowa (a.k.a. Raydo), producer at Digital X Studio had a similar view regarding how women use *Zed Beats* as a platform to express themselves (interview, June 19, 2018):

Home studio[s] have given women a voice. They have given them an opportunity to speak per se. You know, they have given them a platform to vent, you know, and just come out and speak about what's bothering them or what's on their mind...and women, you know, are very emotional and they are certain type of people that would like to release their emotion in some type of way so I believe home studios have created a platform for them to actually...come and do those kind of things, you know, and make that kind of music ...put that in their music...there's a certain type of way they want men to treat them, you know, they have a better opportunity with home studios to actually ah get their product out you know, and to get their voice out, like you know, to get people to hear them on the other side...to get people to, you know...know exactly what's going on in their life, you know, without them having to go through too many rehearsals or those kinda hiccups... [be]cause women are not... I mean they are not that privileged like men so they might have hardships here and there, but I think home studios have actually bridged the gap...

Power means to have “control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology” (Batliwala 1993). Secularization – the decline or end of religious authority (Chaves 1994) – facilitated women's increased participation in the production of *Zed Beats*. Singer Mau Mwale (interview, August 2017) observed that it was indecent for Christians, particularly women, to spend time in spaces where secular music was performed as it was believed that such places encouraged sin. In the early 2000s, due to a decline of traditional authority in Zambia, there was less stigma attached

to women pursuing a career in music. Traditionalists were more open to new perspectives on life. Also, the notion that music was becoming a lucrative career inspired women to pursue careers in music. Women are not only confined to providing intimate labor anymore. They too could pursue careers outside the confines of the home and take up the responsibility of providing for their families, a role that previously, as dictated by tradition and religion, was allotted to men. Singer Alice Chali of one of Zambia's leading bands Amayenge Cultural Ensemble, who has been singing for over three decades, notes that there were very few women when she began singing in the 1980s. Her music career was marred with stigma and was also unprofitable (interview, August 2017). However, Chali observed a change when the public realized that a music career is more profitable and is a job like any other job. In the next section, I will highlight music by artists Shatel, Lily T, and Mampi to trace the increased participation of women and their role in the production of *Zed Beats* in the early 2000s.

### **3.2.1 The Production of Shatel's "Chikondi Chamum'dima" (Love in the Dark) [2002] in Mondo Music Studio**

One of the most famous female duos in the history of *Zed Beats* is Shatel, an act that comprised Saboi Imboela and Barbara Njovu. Their first album *Chikondi* (2001) was followed by *Unbreakable* (2002). Both albums were produced by the Ambassador on the Mondo Music label. "Chikondi Chamum'dima" ("Love in the Dark") on the *Unbreakable* album was well received by both the media and music fans. Shatel's *Unbreakable* went on to be nominated for a prestigious Kora Award, an annual music award, hosted in South Africa at the time, for the entire sub-Saharan region. The lyrics of "Chikondi Chamum'dima" were written by The Sakala Brothers [a duo that

consisted of Moses Sakala and Levy Sakala]<sup>36</sup>, creators of a style they referred to as *makewane*. The Sakala Brothers usually recorded live with an ensemble in semi-professional studios. In their earlier studio recordings, drums were programmed. Shatel’s “Chikondi Chamum’dima” was produced to sound like the Sakala Brothers’ *makewane*. The *makewane* style is mostly sung in *Chinyanja*, *Chingoni*, and *Chichewa*. The *Chingoni* and *Chichewa* languages are spoken in the Eastern region of Zambia. The style is further characterized by call and answer and syncopation. In “Chikondi Chamum’dima,” the call and answer features on the chorus of the song. The duo’s lead singing notated on the treble staff in Figure 23 calls and the orchestrated accompaniment on the bass staff answers each phrase of the lead singing. In measure four, the last beat is accented and the second is accented in the fifth measure highlighting syncopation on the chorus.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Chikondi Chamum'dima". It consists of two systems of music. The first system has four measures. The lyrics are: "Chi ko ndi cha mum' di ma chandi vu ta ine". The second system starts at measure 5 and has three measures. The lyrics are: "ii si ndi fu na i ne ah na le phe la i ne". In both systems, the bass staff accompaniment is boxed to highlight syncopated rhythms.

**Figure 23: “Chikondi Chamum’dima,” Syncopation**

<sup>36</sup> Although the duo used the same last name, they were not related by blood. The group disbanded in 2014.

Usually, producers of *Zed Beats* do not employ syncopation in the orchestration of a song accompaniment. Their goal is to make a danceable steady groove from the beginning of the song to the end. However, the drum pattern of “Chikondi Chamum’dima” has the first and third beats accented (Figure 24).



**Figure 24: “Chikondi Chamum’dima,” Drum Pattern**

The rhythmic syncopation around the chorus and Euro-American drum pattern blends Zambian indigenous musical elements and western influences. Sung in *Chinyanja* and *Chichewa*, the song proved to be controversial at the time. Figure 25 show the lyrics of the song.

### Verse 1 (Sung by Barbara Njovu)

<u>Chichewa/Chinyanja</u>	<u>English Translation</u>
<i>Zalelo zapita</i>	Today is gone
<i>Kaya zamailo zizakhala bwanji</i>	We don’t know what tomorrow brings
<i>Kodi munamvelako</i>	Have you ever had a feeling [of]
<i>Panthawi imozi ufuna kulila ndi kuseka</i>	Wanting to cry and laugh all at once
<i>Zikomo ndifunseko</i>	Let me ask a question
<i>Ndimaloza otani mufuna kundionesa ine</i>	What unbelievable things do you wish to show me

## Verse 2 (Sung by Njovu)

*Amdala mulibe chifundo*

You are an unmerciful old man

*Ndinu okwatila muli ndi akazi kunyumba*

You are a married man

*Nanga apa pamukuti its okay ungakhale  
girlfriend wanga ah?*

Why would you think it's okay to have me as  
your girlfriend?

*Izo za u girlfriend yai*

I do not want to be your girlfriend

*Ine ndifuna nyumba yangayanga yaulemu*

I want a respectful home of my own

## Chorus (Sung by both)

*Chikondi chamum'dima*

A love affair in the dark

*Chandivuta ine*

Has troubled me [I cannot make that happen]

*Ihii sindifuna ine*

I do not want

*Aah ndalephera ine*

I have failed [to make it work]

*Chikondi cha pa cellphone*

A love affair based on a cellphone

*Chandivuta ine*

Has troubled me [I cannot make that happen]

*Ihii sindifuna ine*

I do not want

*Aah ndalephera ine*

I have failed [to make it work]

*Chikondi chobisamabisama*

A secret love affair

*Chandivuta ine*

Has troubled me [I cannot make that happen]

*Ihii sindifuna ine*

I do not want

*Aah ndalephera ine*

I have failed [to make it work]

## Refrain

*Njovu calls:*

*Sininaziwe eyae kuti amdala muli choncho* I did not know that you have such a bad  
personality old man

*Response (by both):*

*Sininaziwe eyae kuti amdala muli choncho* I did not know that you have such a bad personality old man

Njovu *calls*:

*Sindinaziwe eyae kuti am'dala ndimwe a sweet talker* I didn't know you are such a sweet talker

*Response* (sung by both):

*Sindinaziwe eyae kuti a mdala ndimwe a sweet talker* I didn't know you are such a sweet talker

*Ninchito eyae kukula nako ninchito* Growing up ios a lot of work

**Repeat Chorus:**

**Repeat Refrain:**

**Chant (Performed by Imboela)**

Ei, ah ah x5

*Eh eh ba mdala imwe*

Hey old man

*Tundalama twanu uto*

Your small money

*Kagulileni bana ma uniform kunyumba*

Spend it on your children's school uniform

*Tundalama twanu uto*

Your small money

*Kagulileni bakazi dress*

Spend it on purchasing a dress for your wife

*Bakazi banu kunyuma*

Your wife at home

*Ndipo tundalama twanu uto*

Your little money

*Kagulileni che unga kunyumba*

Spend it on purchasing cornmeal at your home

*Sinifuna, ntailileni x6*

I don't want [you], leave me alone x6

**Figure 25: "Chikondi Chamum'dima" (Love in the Dark), Text**

In “Chikondi Chamum’dima,” Njovu explains to the man who claims to be in love with her that she cannot be in a relationship with him because he is married. She further explains that she wants a family of her own and that she is aware that a married man like him will not be able to afford her a stable home. In the chant toward the end of the song, Imboela advises the man that he should spend the little money he earns on school uniforms for his children, his wife’s clothes and food for his family instead of spending it on trying to impress her.

In the song, the duo is singing against promiscuous men, particularly older married men who take advantage of young girls, giving them money and buying them gifts with the hope of luring them into sexual relationships. The scenario highlighted in this song is a common trend in Zambia where men cheat on their wives with younger women.

### **3.2.2 The Production of Lily T’s “Umoyo Sogula” (Life is Not for Sale) in Zambia Rhythm Studio**

Inspired by the success of Shatel’s *Unbreakable*, more young women were inspired to pursue music as a career. Lily Tembo (a.k.a. Lily T) [1981-2009] was one of the most accomplished songwriters in *Zed Beats* scene of the early-2000s. Raised in a church-going musical family in Kabwe, a hundred and forty kilometers north of the capital Lusaka, Lily T studied journalism at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, simultaneously pursuing music during after-class hours. She rose to fame after the release of her self-titled album *Lily T* (2004). Three years later, she won two awards at the 2007 Ngoma Awards in Zambia: Best Female Recording Artist and Best Music Video. Lily T died in 2009.

Her album *Lily T* produced by Chipso on the Zambia Rhythm Promotions label, was the only album by a female artist nominated for two Zambia Ngoma and a Kora Awards in the same

year (Koloko, 2012). The album also featured prominently on local radio charts and on *Sounds Top 20*, a weekly TV music show sponsored by Sounds Investments, the only music store that had a national distribution network in Zambia at the time.

*Lily T* was conceptualized and written collaboratively by Lily T and Chipo (Chipo, personal communication 2021).<sup>37</sup> The workstation at the studio consisted of a computer, a Shure SM 58 microphone, a home theater speaker system as sound monitors, and a Sound Blaster interface. Chipo orchestrated all the music on the computer by plotting notes using music software. The biggest hit from the album was “Umoyo Sogula” “(Life is Not for Sale) [2004].” Lily T wrote the lyrics to the song and Chipo orchestrated the accompaniment and produced the song. In the song, a mother warns the child to take good care of herself as the world has become an unfriendly place to live.

“Umoyo Sogula” employs sampled percussion, piano, synthesized strings, and bass and Lily T’s R&B style of singing. The song follows the I-IV-vi-V chord progression. Figure 26 shows the text of the song which mixes the *Chinsenga* and *Chinyanja* languages.

### Verse 1

<u>Chinsenga/Chinyanja</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Sembe umoyo ogula</i>	If life could be bought
<i>Sembe kuliye kuti tinali nao</i>	There was going to be nothing like they lived with us
<i>Etisiya mwana wanga</i>	They left [They are dead]
<i>Ziko lavuta</i>	The world is trouble
<i>Anthu nawo alimba mtima</i>	People have become so hard hearted

---

<sup>37</sup> Lily T worked with several music producers including Elijah Tembo and James Mulenga of Kula Music Studio, Raydo at Digital X Studio and Michael Muzyamba aka Chipo the Magic Mind of Zambia Rhythm Promotions Studio.



*Matenda nayo siyosila mwana wanga  
Ziko lavuta  
Anthu nao alimba mtima  
Matenda nayo siyosila nzakuuza bwanji  
Kuti umve, kuti umvele  
Mwana n'zakuuza bwanji  
Kuti umve, kuti umvele  
Mwana mwa ah ah na*

and diseases never end my child  
The world is trouble  
People have become so hard hearted  
and diseases never end. How do I tell you?  
So you can listen, so you can hear/listen  
Child, how do I tell you?  
So you can listen, so you can hear/listen child  
Child

### **Chorus**

*Mvela, mvela, mvela, mwana  
Maweee mwana  
Mvela, mvela, mvela, mwana  
Maweeeee*

Listen, listen, listen child  
Maweee child  
Listen. Listen, listen child  
Oh my

*Uzisungile weka umoyo wako  
Uyu moyo sogula*

You take care of your own life  
This life cannot be bought

*Ukatayika sungautole*

When you lose it [life], you won't be able to  
get it back

*Uzisungile weka umoyo wako  
Uyu moyo sogula*

You take care of your own life  
This life cannot be bought

*Ukataika sungautole*

When you lose it [life], you won't be able to  
get it back

### **Verse 2**

*Uyu umoyo sogula  
Ukautaya kuliye kuti  
Niutole soti mwana wanga  
Uzinimvelela  
Nichifukwa chabe nikukonda*

This life is not for sale  
When its lost you cannot say  
I will find it again my child  
You have to be listening to me  
It's because I love you

*Kulibe winanso azakuuza mwana wanga*

Nobody else [but me] who will tell you my  
child

*Uzinimvelela  
Nichifukwa chabe nikukonda*

You have to be listening to me  
It's because I love you

*Kulibe winanso azakuuza n'zachita bwanji*

Nobody else [but me] who will tell you,  
what am I to do

*Kuti umve, kuti umvele  
Mwana, nizachita bwanji?  
Kuti umve. Kuti umvele  
Mwana, eh he eh eh*

So you can listen, so you can listen  
Child, what do I do?  
So you can listen, so you can listen  
Child, eh he eh eh

### Chorus (repeat)

**Figure 26: “Umoyo Sogula” (Life is Not for Sale), Text**

Lily T was praised for her skillful storytelling skills. Although she does not make use of rhymes, a common trend in *Zed Beats*. Lily T tells her story in such a way that it is easy to follow. For example, in “Umoyo Sogula,” Lily T begins by giving a piece of advice to her child: *Sembe umoyo ogula, sembe kuliye kuti tinali nawo etisiya mwana wanga* (“If life was for sale, there wouldn’t be regrets about losing our close friends and family”) The chorus highlights Lily T’s skills as a singer. Chipu did not use autotune or any pitch correction plug-in on Lily’s vocals (as is the case with most *Zed Beats* productions) because she could sing in key. The chorus performed in call and answer style is the most noteworthy section of the song because of the manner in which the vocal harmonies were arranged (Figure 27).

The image displays two staves of musical notation for the chorus of "Umoyo Sogula". The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, 4/4 time, with lyrics: "Mve la mve la mve la mwa na mawe mwa na". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, 4/4 time, with lyrics: "le su we ka moyo wa ko uyu moyo gu la u ka ta ka su nga to le". The piano part features a complex harmonic structure with many chords and some triplets.

**Figure 27: “Umoyo Sogula” (Life is Not for Sale), Harmonies**

Lily T's skill as a singer is highlighted in "Umoyo Sogula" as she performed all the harmonies on the chorus (Figure 27). She calls *mvela mvela mvela mwana* ("listen to me child") and answers the call with *mayeee mwana* (child), followed by *uzisungile weka moyo wako. Uyu moyo siogula, ukatayika siungautole* ("Take care of your life because you cannot purchase it once it's lost"). The answer phrase is in three-part harmony in intervals of a third and a fourth.

### **3.2.3 The Production of Mampi's "Why" in Digital X Studio**

A year after Lily T's debut album was released, singer and song writer Mirriam Mukupe (a.k.a. Mampi) released her debut album *Maloza* (2005). Mampi, born on June 4, 1986, had a difficult childhood. Her mother succumbed to cancer when she was fourteen. Only a few years later, her father and brother were mysteriously murdered. Mampi was an orphan at the age of sixteen. In the beginning of her music career, she walked for miles between Lusaka neighborhoods of Kabwata, where she lived, and Chelstone where she had access to a studio (Lusaka Times, April 4, 2016). In collaboration with Raydo of Digital X Studio, Mampi released the hit song "Why" in 2010. Figure 28 shows the original idea of the song; a short melodic phrase that ended up being the chorus.

The image displays musical notation for the chorus melody of the song "Why". It consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled "Soprano" and is written in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The melody begins with a whole note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note B4. The second measure contains a series of eighth notes: C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, and C6. The third measure continues with eighth notes: D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, and C6. The fourth measure contains eighth notes: D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, and C6. The bottom two staves are labeled "Synth Pad" and are written in treble and bass clefs, respectively, with a 4/4 time signature. The accompaniment consists of a simple harmonic pattern of quarter notes: G4, B3, D4, and F4.

**Figure 28: “Why,” Chorus Melody**

Raydo and singer JK composed the chorus to “Why,” after which they shared the idea with Mampi who co-wrote the verses with the duo. Raydo’s and JK’s idea consisted of a few short catchy melodic phrases sung or rapped to a rhythmic pattern. Although the two are both male, the chorus they composed inspired Mampi to write verses that challenged male patriarchy. Raydo then composed and orchestrated the accompaniment around the song idea as explained in the following quote:

The women just come and sing, you know...rehearse it and start singing. Some other ones, ah some people have to be...like Mampi...for example, Mampi is a bit hands on on some of her music. Ya, like she likes being in the production process...with the writing process she wants to be a part of it. She wants to add on where she can... (Raydo, interview, 19 June 2018).

Mampi’s “Why” highlights the struggles that women go through in relationships where men cheat on their wives. She declares that women do not need men to provide for them. In “Why,” sung in *Chinyanja*, *Chinsenga*, *Chibemba*, and English, Mampi takes a look at her relationship with her lover and explains that she is tired of being lied to and cheated on. She further asks to be treated

as an equal and assures him that she can take care of herself and does not need him to provide for her. Figure 29 shows the song text.

### Chorus

#### Chibemba/Chinyanja/Chinsenga

#### English

*Why, why, why chikala [aba] so?*

Why, why, why is it always going to be this way?

*Nga walinjebele nga nalishiba ati eflyo chikala efi*

If you had told me, I would have known that this is what it was going to be.

*Why, why, why chikala [aba] so?*

Why, why, why is it always going to be this way?

*Nga walinjebele nga nalishiba ati eflyo chikala efi*

If you had told me, I would have known that this is what it was going to be

*Nalema nazo zoninama boza*

I am tired of being lied to

*Nalema nazo zoninyenga wenye*

I am tired of being lied to

### Verse 1

*Nalema nazo babe zoninyenga wenye*

I am tired of being lied to

*Kungonisiya na chilaka everyday*

You do not satisfy me (at any day)

*Chikondi sufikisapo pe chifunika*

You don't love me enough

You got to tell me if you've found someone

*Babe listen, sinifuna kuninyaulanyaula*

Babe listen, I do not want to be scratched

*Nifuna kunilava*

I want to be loved

You should know

*Nifuna chikondi cha zoona osati kuninama*

I want true love not to be lied to

*Nalema nazo beibe zoninyenga wenye*

Babe I am tired of being lied to

*Kunichita monga sunifuna iwe babe*

You act like you don't need me

*Nalema nazo beibe zoninama wenye  
Mutima ubaba*

I am tired of being lied to  
My heart breaks

### **Chorus (Repeat)**

#### **Verse 2**

*...Beibe nenzokukonda chikondi chonse nenzokupasa*

Babe, I loved you and I gave you all  
the love

*So beibe listen ungayende suzakapeza wina monga neo*

So babe listen you can leave, you  
will never find anyone like me

*Apa manje ninzankhala one bo*

Now I am going to be alone

*Napeza kuti mwamuna anganidelele*

I see, a man thinks I am not worthy of  
anything

*Nizankhala chabe solo*

I am going to be alone

*Nizapita nikauze namakolo*

I will even go and tell my parents

*Nalema nazo beibe zoninyenga wenye*

I am tired of being lied to

*Kunichita monga sunifuna iwe beibe*

You act like you don't need me babe

*Nalema nazo beibe zoninama wenye*

I am tired of being lied to

*Mutima ubaba*

My heart is aching

### **Chorus (Repeat)**

#### **Figure 29: “Why” Verses 1 and 2, Text**

In Verse 1, Mampi is asking her boyfriend to love her and not cheat on her. In Verse 2, the lines *apa manje ninzankhala one bo* (“now I will be alone [single]”) and *napeza kuti mwamuna anganidelele* (“I have come to learn that a man will look down upon me”) present Mampi as an independent woman who does not need a man to provide for her. In Zambian traditional settings, an ideal man is the main provider in male-female relationships. It is not unusual for a woman to ask her partner for money for groceries or to pay the bills including house rent. In “Why,” Mampi vows to be alone and even go public about her decision to leave her man by letting her parents

know, *nizapita nikauze namakolo* (“I will even let my parents know”). In Zambia, telling one’s parents about the status of their relationship with their significant other is a way of making their dating status official.

### Verse 3

<u>Chibemba/Chinyanja/Chinsenga</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Oh, oh shit vamene wachita siningakulekelele no</i> [I won’t forgive you] no <i>Nga uvipanga ndiwe... ndine J-Lo</i>	...What you have done I won’t let you  If you think you are...I am J-Lo (Jennifer Lopez)
<i>Olo ulinaija boza ya Pinocchio</i>	Even if you lie like Pinocchio  Nobody is gonna treat me like an animal
<i>Mwenionekela mushe muma video</i> <i>Ndiye mwe nimvekela mushe napa radio</i> <i>Ndine we baitana ati number one</i>	How beautiful I look in the videos, Is how beautiful I sound on the radio. They call me number one  From today, you better treat me like a lady

### Chorus (Repeat)

#### Figure 30: “Why,” Verse 3

In Verse 3, Mampi is standing up for herself. She declares that what her lover has done is unforgivable. “Women are always regarded as inferior to men in Zambia” (Taylor, 2006: 92). When Mampi sings “nobody is gonna treat me like an animal,” she is demanding that her man treats her as an equal.

### 3.3 Analyzing Mampi's "Why" Video

The lyrics to "Why" are not the only component of the song that advance feministic ideals. The visuals of the song in the video make it clear that Mampi is challenging male domination in heterosexual relationships in Zambia. The video begins with a scene in a grocery store where Mampi runs into her man holding a baby shopping with another woman, probably his girlfriend and the mother of the baby he is holding. Mampi almost hits her cheating man before leaving the store in frustration. As she starts singing the verse, fifty-four seconds into the track, Mampi plays the role of an auto mechanic working on a broken car, as shown in Figure 31.



**Figure 31: Image of Mampi as a Mechanic**

In *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations*, it is noted that women's employment in most African countries including Zambia is concentrated in professions such as nursing, teaching,



and secretarial work (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 1998: 8). The military, engineering, medicine, and auto repair are male-dominated careers. By playing an auto mechanic in the video, Mampi is making a statement that she can be whatever she wants to be, including a car mechanic.

At 1:30, Mampi is wearing a police uniform carrying a baton in her hands. Her cheating man is spotted sitting handcuffed in a chair while she stands facing him and poking him with the stick as she sings “you should know, *nifuna kunilava* (“I want to be loved”), *osati kuninama* (“not being lied to”).” At 2:35, the image of Mampi in a police uniform reappears (Figure 32), and this time she is almost hitting her man with the stick as she sings.



**Figure 32: Image of Mampi Poking Her Man with a Button Stick in the Video**

Mampi’s performance of masculinity in the video resonates with Rhacel Salazar Parreñas’ idea of mimicking behavior as empowerment. Parreñas’ mimicking behavior borrows from Homi

Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry. Bhabha's colonial mimicry refers to the process by which colonized subjects appropriate characteristics and ideals of the colonizer (Parreñas, 2011:280). Parreñas further posits that "mimicking involves subversion, what Bhabha refers to as "mockery," that disavows dominant cultural practices (Parreñas, 2011:280)." In the video, Mampi mimics the behavior of a man by working on cars and threatening her partner with violence.

Dominant cultural practices in Zambia entail that a man dominate heterosexual relationships. For instance, among the Nsenga speaking people, traditionally a man sits on a chair and a woman sits on a mat on the floor. By playing the role of an auto mechanic and police officer in the video, Mampi is performing masculinity. A woman who in traditional settings should be sitting on a mat on the floor beside her man has instead handcuffed him and is standing right in front of him in a police uniform, a symbol of power, poking him with a baton stick. Although some women have successfully pursued careers as auto mechanics and police, those careers are still associated with males in Zambia. Having Mampi be the subject in Bhabha's equation of colonial mimicry, Mampi, a supposedly colonized female body is appropriating the characteristics and ideals of the supposedly male colonizer by performing male roles in the video, reversing gender roles in a society where a woman's place is traditionally subservient. Mampi's success in the male dominated music industry exemplifies shifts in heterosexual power dynamics and more so in musical labor as exemplified by her song writing skills and singing prowess in "Why."

In Chapter 3, I examined the dominance of *Zed Beats* in Zambian popular music scene starting in the early-2000s. During this era, the modes of production in semi-professional and home studios took over the production of popular music. The intimate spaces of home studios and the readily available musical labor in them inspired increased participation by women singers, rappers and songwriters in the production of popular music in Zambia. I also analyzed how *Zed Beats*

became a space in which women challenged patriarchal notions in *Zambian society*. In Chapter 4, I analyze selected songs to highlight shifts in musical labor and musical production of popular music in *Zambia*. I will also establish who benefits the most among the different actors involved in the production of *Zed Beats* in home studios.

#### **4.0 *Zed Beats* in Home Studios, 2017-2024**

In this chapter, I compare musical labor in different home studios where subgenres of *Zed Beats* are produced. Although the modes of production are similar, there are variations in the production process of the music. Most producers in home studios, particularly those who own them, have also assumed the roles of booking agent and record label. I argue that the music producer's involvement in the music business beyond the confines of the studio has further shifted musical labor in their favor.

##### **4.1 *Ukufumya Ulwimbo, Kurekoda: The Production Process of Zed Beats* in Home Studios**

Two terms for producing a song in the *Chibemba* language are *ukufumya ulwimbo* (“to release a song”) and *ukupanga ulwimbo* (“to make a song”). Mizinga Muleya, music teacher and musician, explained that *ukufumya ulwimbo* does not necessarily mean to release or publish a song as the English translation suggests. The assumption is that a song will be released once it is produced (interview, December 21, 2023). Kitwe based music producer Samuel Sawelo observes that artists also use the *Chibemba* term *ukurekoda* (adapted from the English word “record”) to refer to having a song produced. *Ukurekoda* is not limited in meaning to “recording” (capturing acoustic signals using a microphone) but also includes mixing and mastering (interview, December 22, 2023). *Ukurekoda ulwimbo* and *ukufumya ulwimbo* both refer to bringing a song idea into a sonic reality, whether the song ends up being published or not. Sawelo further argues that “as long as the song has been produced and is delivered to the artist as an MP3 file on their phone or even

a flash drive in whatever format, then *ulwimbo nalufuma* [the song has been released] (interview, December 22, 2023).<sup>38</sup> In this dissertation, I use the terms *ukufumya ulwimbo* and *ukurekoda* (*kurekoda* in *Chinyanja*) to refer to the entire production process of composing a *beat* (beat making), composing lyrics and melody, as well as recording, editing, mixing, and mastering of a song, particularly in home studios in the Copperbelt.

In home studios, although some artists bring in an already composed song, an idea of a song or a *hook* is enough to initiate the composition of a whole song. A *hook* involves a catchy melodic vocal phrase or phrases that is often harmonized and repeated several times in a song. Moir and Medbøe (2015) note that music composition in popular music circles is tied to music production and the creation of a sonic product. Music technology involves engaging in music composition, production, engineering, and performance. Similarly, during my fieldwork, I observed that composing *Zed Beats* in home studios happens throughout the production process—from *beat-making* to mastering. It is a continuous process that lasts for the entire duration of the production (as indicated by the terms *ukufumya ulwimbo* or *kurekoda*). The producer, inspired by the artist's lyrical and melodic concept, composes the *beat*, manipulates the sounds to desired aesthetics, performs rhythmic and melodic phrases, arranges and rearranges them, and orchestrates the accompaniment track to a song. Also, the artist, inspired by the producer's rhythmic and melodic presentation, improvises and adds more musical ideas to an existing idea. A music composition is a complete arrangement of recorded performances inspired by the artist and the producer and other visiting artists in the studio. *Ukufumya ulwimbo*, *ukurekoda*, or *kurekoda* represent a new way of producing music.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> In Lusaka where *Chinyanja* is widely spoken, the concept of *Ukurekoda* is referred to as *Kurekoda*.

<sup>39</sup> I observed sessions at Chalila, Collabo, Cozy, Gene B, Chinx, and Rocky Nations studios in Kitwe. I further observed sessions at Freak Beat and Happy People studios in Kabwe and Jerry Fingaz, Silentt Eraser, and M Beats Production studios in Lusaka.

In the section that follows, I discuss the process of *ukufumya ulwimbo* in home studios as pertaining to *Kopala Dancehall* because during my fieldwork, the subgenre was the most frequently produced in Chalila, Collabo, Cozy, and Gene B studios and it was the most ubiquitous in night clubs, music events, and radio stations in the Copperbelt. For a deeper understanding of *Kopala Dancehall*, I first discuss the context in which the aesthetics of the subgenre were shaped in home studios after which I examine its production.

#### **4.2 Contextualizing *Kopala Dancehall***

The first time I learned about *Kopala dancehall* was when I went to observe a recording session in Chalila Studio in the Kwacha neighborhood of Kitwe. The studio is owned by two siblings James Phiri (a.k.a. Jay Swagg [Jay]) and Moses Phiri (a.k.a. DJ Momo). Both are producers at the studio. Chalila Studio's digital audio workstation comprised a Dell Computer, x2 BX5 M-Audio studio monitors, Icon Upod Pro interface (2 input/output), Behringer 12- Channel mixer, Takstar condenser microphone, Behringer UMX610 USB/MIDI controller keyboard and a pair of Behringer HPM 1000 headsets. The studio consisted of the work room and a small vocal booth of about 1m x 1.5 meters demarcated by clear glass. The booth was soundproofed with foam on the walls. Chalila Studio is located behind a house next to a tailoring store. The house, the tailoring store and the studio share the same yard. The parents of the two siblings own the property.

When the duo consisting of Jonas Chipanuka (a.k.a. Dope Nigga) and Pethias Mwaba (a.k.a. Young Kid), begun to record their song at Chalila Studio, they told Jay that they were going for a Dancehall *beat*. When Jay got to work, I wondered what he was doing because the song accompaniment he was orchestrating did not sound like the Jamaican-influenced dancehall (*Zed*

dancehall) that I was familiar with. A quartet that had recorded before Dope Nigga and Young Kid also asked Jay to compose a dancehall beat. When I asked the leader of the group what he meant by dancehall, he explained in *Chibemba* that *umuntu kuntu ashana...teyakulala utulo awe* (“somebody has to dance [when they hear dancehall] ...It’s not a lullaby that will sooth one to sleep”) [interview, July 1, 2021]. I realized then that *Kopala dancehall* in *Zed Beats* was different from Jamaican dancehall.

On Sunday August 28, 2022, I visited Ian Silwamba (a.k.a. Gene B) at his studio Gene B Zone located in the Mindolo neighborhood southwest of Kitwe downtown. When I got to the studio just after 3 pm, I found Gene B recording an artist named Uncle Seven (or simply “Seven”). It was in the middle of a session and Seven was busy tracking his first verse. I took off my shoes, as is tradition in Gene B Zone Studio, and sat on the couch. On the other couch next to Gene B across from where I sat lay his producer friend Valivali.

When Gene B took a break from recording to talk to a client who had come to see him outside the studio, I seized the opportunity to strike up a conversation with Seven and Valivali. I asked how *Kopala dancehall* is produced. Valivali explained that the biggest market for *Kopala dancehall* is the club scene. He further explained that producing the subgenre is easier than producing a well-thought-out beautifully orchestrated song because there were already established conventions for the sound.

Gene B explained, “for us [in the Copperbelt], Dancehall is a sound that makes someone dance. It’s a sound that can make someone vibe” (interview, July 5, 2021). *Kopala dancehall*, often sung in *Kopala Bemba* and *Chibemba* is a fusion of *Zed dancehall*, R and B, hip-hop, *Afrobeats*, and local indigenous musical influences. the goal is to make people dance.

The quartet 408 Empire, which comprised China Wau, Y-Celeb, Ray Dee and Sub-Sabala, popularized the genre with songs such as “Chilepule Babe” (Tear It Up Babe) [2018], “Sekesho Mpashi” (Make the Spirit Happy) [2018] and “Ileenda Ilepya” (It Cooks as It Moves) [2018]. The duo Dope Boys dominated the Copperbelt music scene with “Oya Mpu” (“Mpu”) [2019]. Mpu is the sound one hears when one object hits another) [interview, July 5, 2021].

Edward Chanda (a.k.a. Chanda) and Kelvin Simfukwe (a.k.a. Kay), better known as Chanda na Kay [Chanda and Kay] has been one of the most prominent *Kopala dancehall* acts since 2020. Their hit “Njebele Eh!” (“Said Eh!”) [2021] is an up-tempo song, dominated by percussion and bass, that uses the *du-nka* drum pattern. In *Zed Beats*, *du-nka* has become a generic drum pattern for dance music. As if the *du-nka beat* was not enough to make “Njebele Eh” danceable, thirty-seconds into the song Chanda highlights dance in his lyrics. The three lines are: *Ka dance ka banyoli keshileko so* (“The dance of the *Nyoli* community has come”), *kakushana ne matako luko so* (“one dances with their backsides like this”), and *mind your own dance ala chibe so* (mind your own dance and let it be so). The performance was more of spoken word than it was rap.

Chanda here praises their dance. According to Patrick Chama (a.k.a. PC), proprietor of Collabo Studio, Chanda na Kay crowned themselves *abanyoli*, *Kopala Bemba* for pact. The duo worked with PC in the beginning of their music careers. *Abanyoli* also refers to the community of their fans (interview, August 31, 2022). The chorus chant responds to the spoken word in the intro, *Njebele aka, ako, kabanyoli aka* [“We say this small thing here, that small thing there belongs to the *Nyoli* community”]. The chant that responds to Chanda’s rap is claiming ownership to the dance. *Ka banyoli aka*, this small thing belongs to the *Nyoli* community. What characterizes *Kopala dancehall* is the rapping, usually a collaboration between a tenor and bass, sometimes in hoarse vocal timbres. The music is digitally produced and is dominated by percussion and a bass-



heavy sound. Often, the chorus in *Kopala dancehall* consists of rap phrases interlaced with chants instead of a sung chorus. The subgenre is the only one in *Zed Beats* that is accompanied by a specific dance, *chimwemwe dance*. The dance was created when the Kitwe-based quartet 408 Empire dominated the *Kopala dancehall* scene in 2016. The following is an excerpt of an interview I had with Gene B in which he explains the birth of the dance (interview, July 5, 2021):

Mathew Tembo (MT): And then that dance. What is it called?

Gene B: The *chimwemwe dance*...Oh yeah that dance [laughs].

MT: ...How did that become associated with dancehall [Kopala]?

Gene B: Very nice. Okay. So, initially when the 408 came on scene, 2016, there was this guy called Tolo (Tolo is *Kopala Bemba* for the English word “tall”). He is the guy who invented the *chimwemwe dance*...He is very tall. About...two meters tall [laughs]. He is every tall. And that guy can dance. So, when they were having shows [concerts], they used to go with the same guy...Michael Tolo... He is Michael but because he is tall, they added tolo to Michael... So, people started following those guys you know, imitating them. That’s how that dance now came up...When they are on stage [408 Empire], they were using that ka same dance. Everyone was vibing [dancing] to that ka dance. That is how it became *chimwemwe dance*.

MT: So, why *chimwemwe*?

Gene B: Initially, those guys were from Chimwemwe [lived in the Chimwemwe neighborhood] ...all of them

Chimwemwe, located West of Kitwe downtown along the Kitwe-Chingola highway, is a renowned neighborhood of Kitwe that hosts one the largest food markets in the Copperbelt region. Furthermore, the neighborhood is home to some of Zambia’s most famous *Kopala dancehall* acts including Y-Celeb, Ray Dee, Chanda and Kay of the Duo Chanda na Kay, and producer Valivali.

*Chimwemwe dance* involves side and center skips, kicks, vigorous pelvic thrusts, inward and outward leg movements and waist wriggling. PC told me that *Kopala dancehall* has to be

danceable because people need to release their stress after a hard day's work. They need to momentarily forget life's challenges. "Copperbelt is not like Lusaka where most people have office jobs. Most people on the Copperbelt are hustlers and they work hard for their money" (interview, August 28, 2022). So, when they earn some, they go out to drink and dance their troubles away to escape the realities of life.

The normative ways of perceiving the world can make people intractable and indifferent to an individual's needs and desires. "Facing reality, then, implies accepting one's essential powerlessness, yielding or adjusting to circumambient forces, taking solace in some local pattern or order that one has created to which one has become habituated" (Yi-Fu Tuan 1998:6). However, *Kopala dancehall* is a space in which music fans escape undesirable real-life experiences.<sup>40</sup>

#### **4.2.1 *Ukufumya Ulwimbo*: The Production of *Kopala Dancehall* in Chalila Studio**

In cases where the *beat* is not already available, the process of *ukufumya lwimbo* begins with beat making. On July 1, 2021, I observed a beat making session by the duo Dope Nigga and Young Kid in Chalila Studio. As I parked my car on the street on which Chalila Studio was located, I found two young men rehearsing under a bush that also served as a fence to the property that hosted the studio. I greeted them and walked to the studio.

I was sitting in the studio when the duo I saw rehearsing under the bush (Dope Nigga and Young Kid) walked in with pieces of paper in their hands. I assumed that they had a complete song structure written down before their recording session. However, I later realized that what the duo had written down was a skeletal structure of the lyrics, what they referred to as the concept of the

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<sup>40</sup> Similarly, according to South African kwaito musician Kabelo Mabalane, "musical experience suspends normative ways of perceiving the world" (Steingo 2016:9).

song. They sat next to Jay and asked him to make a *Kopala dancehall* beat. Jay asked them to sing the chorus so he could get started making the beat. Dope Nigga sang in *Chibemba: Kushimamashi, ngabafika apa kushima* (“Shut up! When they get here you shut up”). Jay began by programming percussion. The snare was first, followed by congas, kick, bass and then brass. One of the rappers who was in line to record stood up from where he was sitting to dance when Jay played back the beat. Beat making serves as an opportunity for artists to practice their vocal performance and refine their composition before recording. In Figure 33, Jay makes a *beat* while the artist looks on.



**Figure 33: *Beat Making in Chalila Studio***

Dope Nigga and Young Kid rehearsed to the beat as it was being played back creating more lyrical content on the spot. After a few rehearsal runs, it was time for them to record their vocals. The duo took turns to record their lead parts followed by backing vocals, after which Young Kid demanded

that he records adlibs (improvised lyrical sections). Jay played the beat again. Young Kid kept making mistakes after his first two lines: Order, order *ibako lyonse twaponena nichintobentobe* (“The order that we have been enjoying every day has today failed”). He had to rehearse the part several times before finally recording the whole verse. The last few lines were recorded in parts and were more improvised. Then the duo took turns yelling their shoutouts in the intro. They were still composing more lyrical content in the booth while they were recording their vocals. I conducted an interview with Dope Nigga and Young Kid in *Chibemba* (July 2021):

Mathew Tembo (MT): Then *amalwimbo mulemba shani...?* (How do you write your songs?)

Young Kid: *Amalwimbo eflyo tulemba? Amalwimbo ma bars ayakonkana...* (How we write songs? Songs, we follow bars)

MT: So, *mulembela chalimo ku ng'anda?* (So, do you write the songs beforehand at home [before you go to a studio to record]?)

Dope Nigga: Chorus *ilaba ati limbi twapangila limo but ama verse nikuno kwine...eyabako na easy* (Sometimes we write the chorus beforehand but we write the verses here [at the studio]).

Young Kid: *Eyabako na easy ka nga walembela limo kulya, wabelesha ukuilembele ku ng'anda...elo baisakuita ati tulekufwaya, kuntu waisapunda ati lekeni nkalembe mailo elo nkese? Awe...inshita nindalama mwalishibafye...* (It is easier that way because it is hard to collaborate with others when you are called upon for a collaboration at the studio and you have the lyrics written beforehand).

In this excerpt, Dope Nigga and Young Kid argue that besides the chorus it is better that the verses of the song are incomplete. That way, visiting artists and other collaborators in the studio have more leeway to also contribute to the composition process. Improvising on the spot is an

important skill that every *Zed Beats* musician should possess. Shoutouts are also important compositional materials in *Kopala Dancehall*. (I explain this in detail later in this section.)

I waited for the session to be done so I could have another interview with Dope Nigga and Young Kid. I did not realize that Jay was mixing the track as he went on with the recording. By the time the session was done, it had gotten dark outside. I offered the duo a ride to their homes. In the car, I asked if they had scheduled a mixing session as I had plans to observe that session. They both stared at me for a few seconds, and I wondered why. Then, Dope Nigga told me that the song, “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto” (It’s Crazy Here in the Ghetto), was done. Phiri mixed and mastered it as he was recording. They had the finished song on their phone ready to be shared on social media-*ulwimbo lwalifuma*. The song was released.

The following day, I returned to the studio to interview Jay about mixing the song. He confirmed that he mixed the song as he went along with the recording (interview, July 2, 2021). Mixing involved him manipulating sounds, adding plug ins to the vocals and arranging elements of the track so it would make musical sense. As producer Chibwe (Silentt Murderer) of Collabo Studio reported, “choosing and manipulating sounds to work with is a part of arranging (interview, June 4, 2021). Arranging a song further involves cutting out badly performed parts, adding more parts, if need be, and most importantly moving parts or sections of a piece of music around the vocal parts. Vocal performances are central in the production of *Zed Beats*. Emmanuel Zulu (a.k.a. Silentt Erazer) told me that sometimes arranging a song is synonymous with editing, in which case it involves deleting unwanted parts and moving parts around to better structure a piece of music around vocal sections (interview, July 2, 2021). Figure 34 shows the text of “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto.”

## Chorus

### Chibemba

*Kushimama shi, nga bafika apa kushima  
So badimba fya ma zeko*

*Kuba nga wapatwa inshima*

*Uko kushupa ninshi ma*

*Nsenda bwino ninshima*

*Ufwile kuishiba ati yalipena kuno ghetto*

*Eh eh yalipena kuno ghetto*

*Nokututeka nga kettle ehe*

*Yalipena kuno ghetto*

### English

One doesn't talk when they get here  
They respect those who don't talk

Like your throat has been blocked by  
a lump of nshima

Why are you being troublesome  
woman

Treat me good, I am quiet

You need to know it's mad here in  
the ghetto

Eh eh it's mad in the ghetto

They treat us like a teapot  
(always on fire)

It's mad here in the ghetto

## Verse 1

*Ala pabapena mwana KTK alisangwa*

*Beaten abana balapokelela ukubalakangwa  
Fyakuba high efyobatemwa uku balapangwa*

*Nga milolo loka ku makobo balashangwa*

*Tax muli ba Mwiswa nga baisesa kusunabela*

*Balansungafye laka echo nshipontela*

Among the mad, a Kitwe child is  
among them

Everybody receives a beating there  
They love being high there

They roll marijuana, messing up  
their brain

Those foreign to the neighborhood  
must pay when they visit

I don't talk because they take good  
care of me

*Efyo bantemwa mintampenda nga tukato*

That's why they love me countlessly  
like girls

*Nga uli mubwapwa mind you, fyalipena  
kuno ghetto eh eh eh*

If you still live in the past, be  
reminded that it's mad in the ghetto

*Tiye tiye tiye, twalipena kuno ghetto*

Let's go, we are mad here in the  
ghetto

*Mwana ghetto*

Child from the ghetto

*Twalipena kwesu ghetto*

We are mad where I am from in the  
ghetto

## Verse 2

*Order, order ibako lyonse twaponena*

There is order when we are around in  
the ghetto

*Nichintobentobe ibako palya twasonena*

They talk when we show up looking  
nice

*Incase nauluba kuno fyalipena oh no*

In case you have forgotten, here it's  
mad, oh no

*Ninfikana ukuleka ukufitamba kwati  
Tonda na Paul*

I refuse to not watch the happenings  
in the ghetto like Tonda na Paul

*Musalu wali panshi ndi pe?*

The vegetables that were cooking  
down (the pot), where am I?

*Nga Lungu sontapo*

Like Lungu [President] show me  
where?

*Kwesu takwaba Bally will pay nga afwa zonkapo*

There is nothing like Bally will pay  
for the funeral when someone dies  
where I am from everyone  
contributes

*Chalo chakutalala na shango shangapo*

The world is cold, roll up the  
marijuana

*Kalitoshi ba babe na imwe namiposhapo*

Kalitoshi and you babe I greet you

*Taubala nga pali fan pabe chimwela*

Do understand that it's exciting when there is a fan around

*Efyo chilila ifilamba mulamba ukulele*

This performance is so good it got everyone talking

*Pa menu nga nshima ni no see bonse kuchitando*

When there is *nshima* on the menu, everybody must find something to eat [regardless of gender or age]

*Nokulwalisha ukuchila abachaya taekondo*

We are so bad [good], even better than those who take taekondo classes

*Naubepa ati ukanguma palya nkolwa belegede*

You have lied that you are gonna beat me up when I am drunk

*Wayumfwa ukufina lobe nkakuma, ube ready*

You are too much of yourself, I am gonna beat you up, you better be ready

*Nga mwambwenako mwemenso yandi mumulete*

My eyes, please bring him to me *uku* when you see him

*Nga alinganya amapuli mumuleke tumukwate*

If he compares testicles, let us have him

### **Chorus (repeat)**

### **Verse 3**

*Ala pabapena mwana KTK alisangwa*

Among the mad, a Kitwe child is among them

*Beaten abana balapokelela uku balakangwa  
Fyakuba high efyobatemwa uku balapangwa*

Everybody receives a beating there  
They love being high there

*Nga milolo loka ku makobo balashangwa*

They roll marijuana, messing up their brain



*Tax muli ba Mwisa nga baisesa kusunabela*

Those foreign to the neighborhood  
must pay when they visit

*Balansungafye laka echo nshipontela*

I don't talk because they take good  
care of me

*Efyo bantemwa mintampenda nga tukato*

That's why they love me countless  
like girls

*Nga uli mubwapwa mind you, fyalipena kuno ghetto*

If you still live in the past, be *eh eh*  
*eh* reminded it's mad in the ghetto *eh*  
*eh*

*Tiye tiye tiye, twalipena kuno ghetto ghetto*  
*Kwakubawilafye from far away*

We are mad here in the ghetto  
We observe from far away

*Balabila pakupita kwesu pompa nawe*

You must look fit when you come  
to our ghetto

*Ine ntila uko lwalilile nolukokalabe*  
don't

I will keep telling them, so they  
forget stuff that happens [in the  
ghetto]

*Balibashinkile road nokuyopala way*

They blocked the road, but we still  
paved the way

*My neighbor ukumukanga ichikabilila*  
*alila ni character*

My neighbor does not like my  
personality

*Abaula nipenta kale nga alepita*

He thinks I am high every time he  
sees me

*Pampiya eukubakafya bamo ndapepita*

Those who owe me must pay back  
no matter what

*Abalyamo balitaka pena tone nga alepita*

I support a lot of people in the  
ghetto, they won't let you mess with  
me

*Nshimwamoneni Chisha alameka*

See, Chisha is in trouble

*Fingi m'pinga nokuchita niichi alameka*

There is a lot I wish to do for her, but  
her arrogance puts me off

*Niichi mwana uko pa mwela ninshi ababepa*

It's the childishness and all the lies  
she hears online [on the internet]

*Ine ntila n'kaba ninina palya nishi aba yeka*

My plan is to be her mother when  
she is all alone

*Ati balambutusha ine nembilo ishibwela backwards*

They say they make me run  
backwards

*Yaba nga tekububwa GP nishi landa pakubaza*

If you don't talk about progressing  
then talk about work

*Yalibako Adma balakopa pakupasa*

Things are tough like Additional  
Mathematics. You must copy those  
who have succeeded

*Wimwenamo ushamila balakopa pakukasa*

There is no shame in checking out  
your surroundings before you light up  
a blunt

### **Chorus (repeat)**

#### **Figure 34: “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto” (It’s Crazy Here in the Ghetto), Text**

In “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto,” Dope Nigga and Young Kid highlight the struggles of living in the ghetto. In the first chorus, Dope Nigga raps that people need to be observant and cautious in the ghetto to gain respect. In Verse 1, Young Kid raps on issues of drug abuse, *fyakuba* high *efyobatemwa uku balapangwa* (“they love being high”) and gang fights, *beaten balapokelela uku balakangwa* (“many receive a beating in the ghetto”). He further declares in his rap that visitors in the ghetto can pay their way out. By paying the denizens of the neighborhood, one gets protection from gangs but also gets to be introduced to powerful people. However, Young Kid notes that there is a strong sense of community in the ghetto. He goes on to rap, *kwesu nakwaba bally will pay nga afwa zonkapo* (“where I come from [in the ghetto] there is nothing like father will pay,

everybody contributes when one dies). A bereavement in the ghetto is not the responsibility of the father of the deceased alone but the whole community. Everyone in the community contributes when a family is bereaved. In “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto,” the duo employs use of *Kopala Bemba*. Table 1 shows some of the *Kopala Bemba* terms used in the song. The *Chibemba* proper and English translations are also provided.

<b><i>Kopala Bemba</i></b>	<b><i>Chibemba Proper</i></b>	<b>English Translation</b>
<i>Tukato</i>	<i>Tukashana</i>	Girls
<i>KTK</i>	<i>Kitwe</i>	The city of Kitwe
<i>Laka</i>	<i>Bwino</i>	Good/Fine
<i>Twaponena</i>	<i>Twafika</i>	We have arrived
<i>Twasonena</i>	<i>Twamonekela</i>	To show up looking nice
<i>Abaula</i>	<i>Aishiba/Amona</i>	He/she has it figured out
<i>Kubaza</i>	<i>Kubomba</i>	To work
<i>Nimpenta</i> (Amenso)	<i>Nimbaela</i>	I am high (on weed)
<i>Kushimama</i>	<i>Kulolela</i>	To take it easy

**Table 1: “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto,” *Kopala Bemba* Terms**

“Yalipena Kuno Ghetto” is dominated by percussive sounds. The sounds include drum kit samples and other electronically manipulated drum samples. The percussion part is the second loudest after the vocals in the mix of the track. However, one of the most prominent figures is the staccato monotonous melody in D major performed using an orchestral string sound sample. The melody begins on the first beat of the measure and stretches for three measures. The phrase alternates with Dope Nigga’s and Young Kid’s rap lines giving the track a call and answer feel on the chorus sections of the track. The melodic phrase also indicates when the rap bars should start, that is, on the beat of the first measure or right after it. Figure 35 is the melodic phrase performed on an orchestral string sample.



**Figure 35: “Yalipena Kuno Ghetto,” Melodic Phrase**

In the Copperbelt, Chalila was the only studio that signed female artists. The most notable female artist signed to the studio was Deborah Kapela (a.k.a. Deborah). In the past three years, Deborah has been one of the most popular artists among female artists in *Zed Beats*. Her music career began in 2019 under the mentorship of music producer Lover in the Bulangililo neighborhood of Kitwe. Lover produced Deborah’s first song “Paka Fikachitike” (“Until Things Work Out”) [2020]. The song features rapper James Kawele (a.k.a. Jemax). However, it was the controversial “Yalibapenya Inputi” (“Ass Confused Them”) [2021] produced by DJ Momo that established Deborah in Zambian popular music scene. The song was dominated by percussive sounds, is in the *Kopala dancehall* style. I asked Deborah what inspired her to write the song. The following is an excerpt of my interview with her (2021):

Mathew Tembo (MT): ...People have a lot of questions about the song “Yalibapenya Inputi” (“Ass Confused Them”). The content for example. What can you say about it. Why did you write that song? What made you write the song? Or first, what do you talk about in the song?

Deborah: I can say *aah abantu* they have the wrong impression about the song because *benabachitafye focus pali, kuti Nalanda shani, pali imputi ilya ine naishilebomfya but tabafwaya ukuingila sana ukulumfwikisha lulya lwimbo. Lulwa lwimbo lwakufunda lulwa lwimbo. Efyo ningalandafye...*It just talks about what I was going through. Yeah.

(I can say that people have a wrong interpretation about the song because they want to focus on the *inputi* (ass) word I use. They do not want to carefully listen to the song. That song is a lesson. It talks about what I went through growing up as a big girl)

MT: When?

Deborah: No like [she laughs]. Okay. Yeah, I can say it's a real story. Yeah, it's a real story. Aah ... it just talks about what I was going through yeah.

MT: So, what were you going through?

Deborah: You know in that case *yakweba ati ponse opo wapiti ba guy shanishani. Bakutambapo shanishani. Kulikonsefye eko waya shanishani paka bakuloleshe kunuma shanishani. Bambi bapasing'apo fima comments: Aah ichi nichu mu guys. Ichi chi mu girls chalikwata bokonama filya fine shanishani. Yeah, hmmm.*

(You know it's a case of people looking at my ass wherever I walk/go. Some even pass inappropriate comments).

MT: So would you say that's what inspired you to write the song. Like, your experience growing up?

Deborah: Exactly. Exactly.

MT: Can you talk more about that?

Deborah: [Laughs]. Aaah growing up *yakwebafye ati waliinafye filya fine. Kabili umuntu yabafye ati umuntu filya fine efyo waba efyo waba ...* So growing up I have always been a big girl growing up yeah. *Aaah so niyakweba ati ah bantu filyafine babulapasing'apo tu ma comments shanishani. Wapita filya fine shani.* Yeah. I don't know if I have answered your question [laughs].

(I have been this [big] from when I was young. People would comment inappropriately wherever I went...)

As Deborah reported to me in this interview, the song was inspired by her upbringing. Due to her large stature, men bullied and sometimes harassed her. *Zed Beats* gave her a platform to express how she feels about her body. Deborah had the concept of what she wanted to talk about in the song when she went to see DJ Momo at Chalila Studio. The following is an excerpt of the interview I had with DJ Momo (2021):

DJ Momo: Okay *Deborah aishileshilafye na* concept. She came with a concept...

Mathew Tembo (MT): *Kuno ku studio?* (Here at the studio?)

DJ Momo: *Eeh ku studio kuno kwine. Ndefwaya kuimba lwimbo ulwa so. Nayamba nokuseka oh okay lwaumfwika bwino. Twayambanokupanga beat. After ukupanga beat then aisaya nayena beat olo aisabwela after nangu ati three days. Olo aisabwela. After aisa twambe ukupange ulwimbo. But pakuyamboukwimba day ya recording, yena akwetefye na ma words yakweba ati, [sings], “mayo nani yalindetelela,” chapwa. Olo ine nayamboukupanga nomba ifyashелеko...yonse ama words yayambilo ukuisa ninebo nayambile ukuyapanga, “kanofye balengelepo,” eh. Shani, shani, shani, shani, shani, yonse aya ama words aya, yena akwetefye aya first na concept ya lwimbo. After nayapanga then olo nomba kuyakonkamo olo nomba ayamboukuimba.*

(Yes, right here at the studio. Deborah said she wanted to have a song produced. I laughed when she sang the song. It sounds good (the song). I began making the *beat*. After we were done, she took the *beat* with her and returned to the studio after three days. Then we began arranging the song. But when she came to sing on the day we recorded the song, she only had these words: *mayo nani nalindetelela* (mother, this [ass] has brought me trouble). Then I started writing more lyrics. All the words started coming. *Kanofye balengelepo eh shani shani shani* (they just have to look [at the ass]). All these words. She only had a few words and the concept of the song. After I added a few words then she sang the song).

DJ Momo further reported that Deborah wrote more lyrics after he composed the beat. The hook *yalibapenya inputi* (“ass confused them”) became the chorus to the song: *Yalibapenya Inputi* repeated four times. The melody to the chorus exposes a narrow vocal range, a common feature in the *Kopala dancehall* subgenre. Figure 36 is the chorus melody in “Yalibapenya Inputi” (Ass Confused Them).



**Figure 36: “Yalibapenya Inputi” (Ass Confused Them), Chorus Melody**

The chorus, whose range does not exceed two notes, is more chanted than sung. The text to the phrase *yalibapenya inputi* is provocative and catchy. One usually hears the word “ass” from men on the street. By singing *inputi* when referring to herself, Deborah is mimicking the men on the

street. Her behavior resonates with mimicking behavior. Similarly, Deborah uses a body part that the public uses to body-shame her. “Yalibapenya Inputi,” begins with a shoutout; “Iyeah. African real baddest girl, Deborah. Evander over there.” In the shoutout, Deborah claims that she is the best rapper in Africa. Evander and Wise 21 are her friends who have encouraged her to pursue music as a career. Figure 37 shows the lyrics of the song.

### Verse 1

#### Chibemba

#### English Translation

Yeah. African real baddest girl Deborah

*Ama hip yalindetelela  
Mayo tako naindetelela*

Hips brought me trouble  
My ass has brought me trouble

*Ichikanga bali nabakashi babo nganapita*

Even those who have their wives  
[married] peek on me

*bonse kanofye bandengelepo*

*Takwaba ni pasta [pastor] nangu abe na tugelo  
kanofye bandengelepo*

Pastors and including those with their  
girlfriends peek on me

### Chorus

*Yalibapenya 'nputi  
Yalibapenya 'nputi  
Yalibapenya inputi  
Ya, ya, ya, yalibapenya 'nputi*

Ass has confused them  
Ass has confused them  
Ass has confused them  
Ass has confused them

### Verse 2

*Nga ninsele nshakwata mwebantu ne  
chamba nshipepa but ndifye nakantu*

Insults I do not have people, I don't even  
smoke weed but I have trouble

*Konse mpitila nshi bapena abantu  
bafulungana nenuma awe tafiba fintu*

People get crazy wherever I go because  
of the ass

<i>Ukukula kwandi nshaba nefyongo but konse mpitila nshiyafye pali fyongo</i>	My upbringing has been peaceful, but I am trouble
<i>Inuma nayo tayaba nefyanso but ngawatontako ninkondo awe chansoni</i>	[My] ass doesn't start a fight but it's war if you peek, it's so shameful
<i>Nshakwata poison but I am dangerous Inuma yeka yena tayaba na generous</i>	I don't have poison, but I am dangerous [My] ass alone is not generous
<i>So big yalikutika na parachute</i>	It's so big that even the parachute has heard about it
<i>Elo nga napita kwati nabalasa na gunshot</i>	And it's like I have shot at them with a gun when I pass
<i>Ama hip yalindetelela Mayo tako naindetelela</i>	Hips brought me trouble [My] ass has brought me trouble
<i>Ichikanga bali nabakashi babo nganapita bonse kanofye bandengelepo</i>	Men, in presence of their significant other peek on me
<i>Takwaba ni pasta nangu abe na tugelo nabo kanofye bandengelepo</i>	Pastors in presence of their girlfriends peek

### Chorus (repeat)

### Verse 3

<i>Apa ndi wanted ni sentenced to death</i>	Now I am wanted, and I am sentenced to death
<i>Crime ninuma nga baikata nidigi</i>	My crime is having a big ass and when they catch up with me then I am in trouble
<i>Ati nimpenya umunshi I am the target</i>	They say I have gotten the whole village go crazy
<i>So nga baises balenchita get Yalizanda bakalume no mutende Mumyoyo shabo tabakwata nomutende Ba guy bonse balefwayafye ndemunyende</i>	So when they come, they are taking me It is trouble, men have no peace They have no peace in their lives All the guys want me to walk



*Nga nifyupo napwisha awe fingi tetimpende*  
*Nshakwata poison but I am dangerous*  
*Inuma yeka yena tayaba na generous*

Many are the marriages that I have ended  
I don't have poison, but I am dangerous  
[My] back alone is not generous

*So big yalikutika na parachute*

It's so big that even the parachute has heard  
about of it

*Elo nga napita kwati nabalasa na gunshot*

And it's like I have shot at them when I pass  
it

*Ama hip yalindetetelela*  
*Mayo tako naindetetelela*

Hips brought me trouble  
[My] ass has brought me trouble

*Ichikanga bali nabakashi babo nganapita*  
*bonse kanofye bandengelepo*

Even those who are married peek on me

*Takwaba ni pasta (pastor) nangu abe na*  
*tugelo nabo kanofye bandengelepo*

Pastors and including those with their  
girlfriends peek on me

### **Chorus (repeat)**

#### **Figure 37 : “Yalibapenya Inputi” (Ass Confused Them), Text**

The concluding line in the song, *takwaba ni pasta [pastor] nangu abe na tugelo nabo kanofye bandengelepo* is another thought-provoking sentiment. Deborah points out that the church minister who should be preaching the gospel cannot help but stare. As a woman, she is supposed to be submissive in Zambian traditional setting. She should not address the minister in such a provocative manner. However, she challenges the man of God. Deborah's skill as a song writer is further highlighted in the third verse. In Verse 3, she uses lines, *nga nifyupo napwisha awe fingi tetimpende* (“I have ended many marriages I have even lost count”) and *nshakwata poison but I am dangerous* (“I do not have poison, but I am dangerous) to warn that her body is dangerous and has ended many marriages. Men have left their wives because of Deborah's physical attributes.

Thus, she is not ashamed of herself anymore and realizes that her body has given her power to challenge patriarchy in Zambian society. In this same verse, Deborah employs rhymes as a song writing technique. In Figure 38, the words in bold highlight the rhyming technique.

*Ati nimpunya umunshi I am the **target**  
So nga baises balenchita **get**  
Yalizanda bakalume **no mutende**  
Mumyoyo shabo tabakwata **nomutende**  
Ba guy bonse balefwayafye **ndemunyende**  
Nga nifyupo napwisha awe fingi **tetimpende***

**Figure 38: “Yalibapenya Inputi,” Rhymes**

Although most people claim that Deborah’s looks attract more attention than her musicianship, her ability to rhyme proves that she can write songs, sing, rap and compete favorably with her male counterparts in the Zambian music scene.

I have also observed other women musicians’ recording sessions in home studios including Teresa Ng’ambi, Mutinta Mwanza, and Leah Taputapu. Their roles in the production of *Zed Beats* suggest further shifts in musical labor. Women, who before the rise of *Zed Beats* took the role of background vocalists and dancers, have assumed roles of songwriter and lead singer in the production of *Zed Beats*. The male producers who co-compose, co-arrange, record, mix and master the music have taken a guiding role and let the women lead in expressing their views through music. Today, women singers have a viable presence in the production of *Zed Beats*. The shift has further economically empowered the women creatives. For example, Deborah quit her secondhand clothing business to focus on her music career and claims that the latter is more profitable than selling secondhand clothes at Chisokone<sup>41</sup> market.

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<sup>41</sup> Chisokone is the biggest open market in Kitwe. Vegetables, fruit, clothing and electronics are some of the merchandises sold at the market.

In the next section, I discuss the process of producing *Kopala dancehall* in Collabo Studio with Silent Murder in the Buchi neighborhood of Kitwe. I highlight how producers are innovative and make use of their meager resources to produce music. At the time of my fieldwork, Collabo Studio only had one working studio monitor speaker. However, this situation did not deter Silent Murder from producing music in the studio.

#### **4.2.2 *Ukufumya Ulwimbo*: The Production of *Kopala Dancehall* in Collabo Studio**

On July 4, 2021, I visited Collabo Studio, a small room by the corner of a street next to Peace General Dealers Hardware Store. The two businesses are attached to his house where he lives with his family (Figure 43). Besides being an aspiring artist, PC also repairs and sells refrigerators and other assorted electrical appliances in his hardware store. The hardware store is his side hustle that funds his music activities. The door on the right is the entrance to the studio and the door on the left leads to the refrigeration and hardware store. Also in the shot is the producer who at the time I took the picture he was taking a break from a mixing session (Figure 39).



**Figure 39: Collabo Records and Peace General Dealers in Buchi, Kitwe [Photograph by the author, January 2024]**

The studio space has two rooms: a soundproofed vocal booth of about 1.5m x1.5 m in size and the workspace of 1.75m x 3m where the studio is set up. His workstation consists of an M-Audio BX8a Studio Monitor, M Box 2 Mini Studio Interface, a Lenovo Laptop and a 3-Terabyte hard drive, a condenser microphone and a pair of 3M Peltor headsets. Out of all the studios I visited, Collabo Studio had the most basic setup. The standard in home studios is that the producer needs two active monitor speakers to be able to effectively produce music. Having two speakers makes it easier to pan different layers of instrumentation among other techniques. When I asked Silent Murder how he works with only one active speaker, he explained that he mixes a song twice. First, he mixes with the speaker on the right side and then switches the speaker to the left and

mixes the song again. Other times, he uses the headsets to mix. Therefore, mixing in Collabo studio takes twice as long. Figure 40 is the studio setup in Collabo Studio.



**Figure 40: Setup in Collabo Studio (Note that the setup includes only one active speaker)  
[Photograph by author, January 2024]**

On this day, I invited photographer and film maker Angel Phiri to visit Collabo Studio with me so he could take pictures of my interlocutors while I was conducting the interviews. I was scheduled to conduct an interview with PC in the afternoon. There was an electricity outage when we got to the studio at about 4 pm. While waiting for electricity to be restored, a group of young aspiring artists were hanging out outside the studio enjoying some *Kopala dancehall* from their boom box. In the studio, Silent Murder was playing back a song he had recorded earlier. He and two other musicians who sat next to me on a bench in the studio shared a big marijuana cigarette.

One of the musicians offered me the cigarette after his turn. I declined but seized the opportunity to interview Silent Murder. Since he is not fluent in English, I conducted the interview in *Chibemba*. In the following excerpt of the interview, he explained the process of producing *Kopala dancehall* in Collabo Studio (July 4, 2021):

Silent Murder: First *ngaalefwayafye* full production, instrument *ufwile walisha*. *Nga yapwa* instrument, *ya number 2 watwala ku Cubase mwayamba ama vocals*.

(If somebody needs a full production [from *beat making* to mastering], one [producer] needs to make the *beat*, after which you record vocals in Cubase).

MT: So, instrument *ulishila kwisa*?

(So, where do you make the *beat*?)

Silent Murder: FL. Instrument *nga nalisha na FL*, Cubase *ama vocals*. *Nga yafumu ku Cubase, kuitwala ku FL kuichita master...Nga yafuma ku FL, kuitwala nangu ...Adobe...software...Elo nombu ku Adope ku last mastering...*

(FL [Fruity Loops]. After I orchestrate the instrumental in FL [After I make the *beat* in FL], I record vocals in Cubase. After the vocals have been recorded, then I take the recording back to FL for mastering and then Adobe for final mix).

In the interview, Silent Murder explains that there are three elements involved in the production process of *Kopala dancehall*. Beat making is first (in cases where the artist does not present a *beat* made from a different studio), followed by recording, mixing and mastering. Silent Murder insisted that mixing begins right at the beat making stage and is done throughout the production of a piece of music. He categorizes mixing and mastering as one element. As was the case in Chalila Studio, mixing in Collabo Studio happens simultaneously throughout the production process as he reports in the same interview:

Silent Murder: Eh. Mixing *iyambafye na beat kulya kwine ku first...*

(Yes. Mixing begins right at the beat making stage)

MT: So, you mix as you go along?

Silent Murder: *Awe, ninshi inchito yalakula. Nishilya inyimbo shakale ati oh ulwimbo mwaliimba pakuti lukafume mu studio one month, three-month, limbi data yaluba, yakrasha computer.*

(It's too much work to dedicate time just for mixing. That's the old school kind of working. Then, a song would take a month for it to be done. Maybe three months. [That long] Data goes missing or the computer crushes).

Silent Murder: *Ileyamba, uleya ulemixa.*

(The *beat making* starts, you mix as you go along)

MT: By the time *wapwisha ukurekoda ninshi naiwe wapwisha ukumixa?*

(So, you are done mixing by the time the recording session is done?)

Silent Murder: *Alepwishafye ukuimba...nga apwisha lufwile lwafuma*

(The song has to be ready for release by the time the production is done)

As I have outlined in the two studio sessions, the mixing process in *ukurekoda Kopala dancehall* overlaps with beat making, recording and mastering. Throughout the production process of a song, producers signal process, edit the recorded tracks, choose the right sound samples for the beat, balance volumes, and pan. Silent Murder told me that he employs distortion plug-ins on the vocals when he is mixing a *Kopala dancehall* song, an unusual plug-in to use on the vocals. Reverb plug-ins are the most preferred to apply on vocals in the production of other subgenres, particularly those outside the Copperbelt.

Distorting a guitar involves compressing the signal, a process that engenders a noisier and rougher timbre and more present in perception (Berger & Fales, 2005: 184). The distortion effect tends to have a similar effect when applied on a vocal performance. Silent Murder reported that

aggression is the standard aesthetics of *Kopala dancehall*. He notes that the practitioners of the style do not appreciate a clean mix. The mix needs to be raw, rough and aggressive (interview, 2021). PC observes that raw, rough, and aggression represents life in the Copperbelt where most people are hustlers (interview, 2021).

#### **4.2.3 *Ukufumya Ulwimbo: The Production of Kopala Dancehall in Cozy Studio***

The digital workstation at Cozy Studio consisted of an HP Duo Core Computer, a Behringer C-1 condenser microphone, a 4-Channel PMX-402 mixer, x2 Behringer Studio Monitors, a Behringer UCA 222 sound interface, and a pair of Behringer HPX 2000 headsets. Studio space comprised two rooms: One of about 2.5m x2.5m where the workstation was setup and a smaller sound proofed room of 1.5m x 1m that was used as a vocal booth.

On June 28, 2021, I went to observe Suicide Nation's recording session with producer Gerald Mulenga (a.k.a. Kellz) at Cozy Studio in the Ndeke Village neighborhood of Kitwe. When I got to the studio at a few minutes after 2 pm, Kellz was making a *beat* for the group. In the studio was leader of the group David Kaunda (a.k.a. DK), and Musonda (a.k.a. Muzo), two out of three members of Suicide Nation, and their friend who accompanied them to the studio. The trio comprises DK, Walking Gallison and Muzo. The two members of Suicide Mission and their friend took turns singing and rapping as Kellz orchestrated the *beat*, in between the trio taking turns drinking a Black Label beer from the same bottle. Artist names in the Copperbelt tell stories. For example, DK told me that the name Suicide Mission is meant to send a message to other artists that they are so musically skilled that attempting to compete with them is like going on a suicide mission.



DK and Muzo were hyped about the beat. “The beat is fire! I can’t wait to enter the vocal booth,” DK would say to Kellz as he was manipulating the sampled snare drum and kick drum sounds. He wanted the song to be able to appeal to club goers. The snare and the kick needed to be hard. After working on the kick and drum, he spent a considerable amount of time to manipulate and rearrange a melodic phrase that was later looped to cover the length of the whole song. The whole time that Kellz was making the beat, DK and Muzo would leave the studio for minutes and then return to dance to the beat and rehearse their lines. Other times, Kellz would ask DK and Muzo to sing the chorus so he could orchestrate the chord progression.

After the *beat* was orchestrated, DK went into the booth to record his vocals. He performed his verse and the chorus. Improvised lines were added to more structured sections of the singing and rapping. Muzo recorded a few lines, doubling DK’s singing on the chorus, after which the third member of the group Gallison went into the booth to record his verse. Garison’s verse too, was composed by improvising lines around some rehearsed phrases. It was about 6 pm when Gallison was done with his verse. It was unanimously decided that Muzo would return to the studio the following day to record his part as he needed to practice more.

After recording the verses, Suicide Nation added their shoutouts on the outro of their song “Bengi Bengachula” (Many Would Suffer) as they chanted: “Yo! Kellz music, you are the real music, *kuwete, kuwetete.*” In this shoutout, Suicide Nation are praising their producer for his creativity. Kellz has produced several songs for them. Figure 41 shows the text of the song that Suicide Mission eventually titled “Bengi Bengachula.” The song is sung in *Chibemba* interpolated with *Kopala Bemba*.

## Verse 1

### Chibemba

*Ye imwe abo moneni imwe  
Bafusha amachinchi moneni imwe*

*What more ngabafika ala kukaba ubwafya  
Tukatukwana*

*Baba nefibalandisha  
Tabalanda bwino kuti wapapa*

*Nganabakwatako akanono nabanwamo  
junta nishi amano no more*

*Tapali ifintu twingalanda balabwatabwata  
baba nechibobo sana*

*Echo bambi kaleza tabapalilwa  
Aliyaza Lesa kuti twalila*

*Nga bakupangakofye akantu tunyerere  
kutula amatwi*

*Chilya bafwele ninebo nabapanga  
Nomushi imwe kupya yonse impanga  
Amawala mu pocket amasese  
Boasting fulu bafusha amachinchi*

*Nomba what more nga bafika ala abantu  
uku batukwa ndelenda imwe*

### English Translation

Ye, look at those. Look here  
They are full of themselves, look at them

It's going to be trouble when they get here

There is stuff that makes them talk  
They talk so bad it's shocking

They don't think straight when they have  
some money and they get drunk on some  
illicit brew

They talk too much they don't give us an  
opportunity to say anything

That's the reason some are never blessed  
God knows we would cry [suffer]

When they do something for you, even  
ants will hear about you

I gave them what they are wearing  
The forest around the village will burn  
They boast but they are broke  
They are full of themselves

People get insulted when they get here I  
tell you

## Chorus 1

*Ala bengi bengachula, aaaah, ah, ah, ah  
Ala bengi bengachula, iye, iwe, iye, iye  
Ala bengi bengachula*

*Amawala mu pocket amasese*

*Boasting fulu bafusha amachinchi*

A lot of people would suffer ah, ah, ah  
A lot of people would suffer, iye, you, iye  
A lot of people would suffer

They are full of themselves, but they are  
broke

They are full of themselves

*Nomba what more nga bafika ala abantu  
uku batukwa ndelanda imwe*

People get insulted when they get here, I tell  
you

*Ala bengi bengachula*

A lot of people would suffer

*Ukuchula, ukuchula, ukuchula,  
thatukuchila pali chula*

The suffering would be worse than  
of a frog

*Ala bengi bengachula  
Ala bengi bengachula*

A lot of people would suffer  
A lot of people would suffer

## Verse 2

*Nga nababeula ni saiti ya misango*

They are so delinquent when they have  
money

*Ala chilaafya baimona nga Rambo  
Kubamwena kumachinchi na boasting*

They think they are Rambo  
One can tell from all their boasting

*Nga nabakolwa kubomfwila kuli Lauzini*

One hears them from a distance when they  
are drunk

*Kuba bwafya nga nabakwata mura*

They are troublesome when they have money

*Namano kuchinja baluka balula*

Even their personality changes for the worse

*Nabanabo bonse ala kuchula  
Bapita mu masele pamulu nakubashoba  
Worse nga baba kum'kaka huh  
Ala bengi bengachula*

Even their friends suffer  
They are insulted  
Even worse when they are doing fine  
A lot would suffer

*Worse more nga bakwata na ration abo*

We can tell you, even worse when that old  
man has some money

*Bamdala tulemyeba*

*Bengi bengachula, aaah, ah, ah, ah*

A lot of people would suffer, aaah, ah

*Ala bengi bengachula, iye, iwe, iye*

A lot of people would suffer, iye, you, iye

## Repeat Chorus

### Verse 3

<i>Nga bakwatako akanono kubamonafye kumiyendele</i>	One can tell when they have money from the way they walk
<i>Balapama summer sault kumo ne mibele</i>	They switch their lives
<i>What more nga bali abene bachalo nga tatupekala</i>	Imagine they owned the world, they wouldn't let us live in it
<i>Nobutala nga tatulya mu boasting nokumwenabo sana abanabo</i>	We wouldn't have been eating and they would be belittling us
<i>Balaba ne bantu balya basangwa nabo What if nga bali mwana na Dangote</i>	They even forget their friends If they were Dangote's kid
<i>Ala kutukwa chipanda chonse kumo nabakote</i>	The whole neighborhood would be disrespected, including the old
<i>Okay ifi muntu wandi tefyo yaba pachalo</i>	Okay, you cannot live this way in this world
<i>Tuikakilafye fwe bene amapalo</i>	We bring a curse upon ourselves
<i>Instead yakumwafwa umunobe iwe ulemuseka</i>	You laugh at your friend instead of helping them
<i>Muchinje aya amano opo Lesa talafika</i>	Change your ways before God gets here
<i>Nga waliumfwapo ifyumfwa abachula afwilisha elo akakupala Katula</i>	If you have lived the poor's life, then help the poor so God can bless you
<i>Nga waliumfwapo ifyumfwa abachula afwilisha elo akakupala Katula</i>	If you have lived the poor's life, then help the poor so God can bless you

### Chorus (repeat)

#### Figure 41: "Bengi Bengachula" (Many Would Suffer), Text

In "Bengi Bengachula," Suicide Nation raps about the imbalance that exists between the haves and have nots. They note that wealthy people often disrespect the poor. When the wealthy help the

needy, they will tell the whole neighborhood. They are full of themselves even in times when they are broke. A lot of people will suffer if such people were permitted to lead.

In “Bengi Bengachula” Suicide Nation employ *Kopala Bemba* terms. The *Chibemba* proper and English translations are also provided for each of the terms in Table 2.

<b><i>Kopala Bemba</i></b>	<b><i>Chibemba</i></b>	<b>English Translation</b>
<i>Amasese</i>	<i>Tumpiya ununono</i>	Small change
<i>Kanono</i>	<i>Impiya</i>	Money
<i>Nabapanga</i>	<i>Nabafwa</i>	I helped them out
<i>Kubeula</i>	<i>Kukwata impiya</i>	To have money/To hit a jackpot
<i>Nga bali kum'kaka</i>	<i>Nga bali Kusuma</i>	When they are enjoying

**Table 2: “Bengi Bangechula,” *Kopala Bemba* Terms**

The song follows a I, vii, V progression in the key of F major. The progression is maintained throughout the song. A trombone and tenor saxophone synth sounds in the middle and lower registers accent the first beat of every other measure. The sampled drum kit is performed in a variation of the *du-nka* drum pattern. The electric piano plays an offbeat staccato on the first beat of each measure. The accent on the first beat further accents the endings of the rap phrases. Figure 42 shows the accented trombone synth, the offbeat electric piano and *du-nka* drum pattern employed in “Bengi Bengachula.”

The image shows a musical score for a two-measure excerpt in 4/4 time. The score is arranged in six staves from top to bottom: Tenor Sax, Trombone, Guitar, Piano, Bass, and Drums. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb). The Tenor Sax and Trombone parts play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes: F#4, Bb4, D5, F#4. The Guitar part is silent, indicated by a whole rest. The Piano part plays a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes: F#4, Bb4, D5, F#4. The Bass part plays a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes: F#4, Bb4, D5, F#4. The Drums part plays a complex rhythmic pattern consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Figure 42: “Bengi Bengachula,” *Beat Excerpt*

This excerpt provides a picture of the sounds that Kellz worked with to produce “Bengi Bengachula.” The bass, drum kit, and electric piano parts were looped into the whole song. On some sections of the rap parts, the electric piano was deleted or rhythmically permuted to provide some variation to the track.

As exemplified by the studio sessions I observed on the process of *ukufumya nyimbo*, *Kopala Dancehall* employs colloquialism in the lyrics. Songs are orchestrated using two to three chords out of the I, IV, V, ii, vi, and vii of a particular key. Performed shorter rhythmic phrases on workstations are looped into whole songs. Sounds are manipulated and rearranged to provide some

variation in the song. In *Kopala dancehall* artists often build songs around a concept or idea in the studio. In all the home studios I have observed the production of *Kopala dancehall*, recording in parts is a characteristic feature and artists are supported by the producer and other creative actors during recording. The support involves morale bolstering but it is also common for the producer and other creative actors in the studio to contribute rhythmic, melodic or even lyrical content to a production.

In the following section, I examine the use of shoutouts as compositional material in the production of *Kopala dancehall* in Chalila Studio. Shoutouts are a common feature in *Zed Beats* in general. I further explore the meanings attached to these shoutouts in *Zed Beats* songs.

### **aShoutouts as Compositional Material in the Production of *Kopala Dancehall***

Dope Nigga and Young Kid concluded their recording session on July 1, 2021 in Chalila Studio by taking turns to chant shoutouts on “Bengi Bengachula” (“Many Would Suffer”): *Pa mbafu pa ba Trevor* (“On Trevor’s ribs”) *Chi Manuel cha malwele* (“The diseased Emmanuel”), *Celeb Mulolo* [Celeb Mulolo is a Kopala Dancehall artist], *Ba Slim*, *Mr 2 Pin*, *aba last*, *abazhyondo*, *bambi nibanani* (who else?), *tatwakalabe* (“we will never forget [you]”). The shoutouts are either chanted, rapped or sung. They add to the song structure. The following is an excerpt of an interview I had with them as they explain what shoutouts meant in their song (July 2021):

Mathew Tembo (MT): Then *ama shoutouts yalya, yamining’enshi...?* (What do shoutouts [in a song] mean?)

Dope Nigga: *Kuumfwishakofye bwino ama Gs twasangwa nabena ififine abasapota music yesu. Abaitemwa abaichitako promo...Kubapundamo baumfwako bwino...*

(They are meant to make our friends and others that support our music feel good. Those that love our music and promote it, we shoutout to them to make them feel good)

MT: Then *kwati ulu lwimbo*...who paid for the song?

(Who paid for the production of this song? [Referring to the one I found them recording])

Young Kid: *Aah, nibonsefye nichapamofye niggaz.*

(It's all the niggas [friends])

In this interview, Dope Nigga and Young Kid explain that they employ shoutouts in their songs to show their appreciation to their friends who support and promote their music, financially or otherwise.

Jay told me that shoutouts have several meanings in compositions of *Kopala dancehall*. Some artists use them as a marketing gimmick. Others use them to seek recognition in the community by associating themselves with influential figures (interview, 2021). Artists employ shoutouts in their songs as a way of tapping into the fans of influential people in their community. Some artists hope that mentioning some of the renowned gangsters (*jerabos*) in their songs will give them protection from being harassed or looked down upon by other artists, gangs and media personalities or members of their own communities.

*Ba jerabo* (plural for jail boys) are known to be generous when it comes to funding the production of *Kopala dancehall*. In *Kopala Bemba*, *jerabo*, adapted from the English term Jail boy is used to refer to gang members who are often in and out of police cells and jail for the illicit trade of copper and/or drugs. *Ba jerabo* have been among the main funders of the production of *Zed Beats* in the Copperbelt. They boast of a network of wealthy individuals and other influential figures, including politicians. This network has given them power. Youth in the Copperbelt look up to *ba jerabo* and their association with them is presumed a gateway to success. What's in it for *ba Jerabo*? Visibility. They love to be noticed. They want the public to see or hear their wealth.



They like to be seen to be philanthropic in their communities. One of the most prominent *jerabo* during the time that I was doing this research was Junior Lwala (or Lwala for short).

One Saturday evening in August 2022, I went to Keg to see Bruce Simbwalanga (a.k.a. B1) perform. Keg is a chain of restaurants in Zambia. The Keg at Mukuba Mall in Kitwe hosts *Zed Beats* acts every other weekend to boost their food and alcohol sales. B1 is one of the most celebrated *Zed Beats* acts. In the middle of the concert, Lwala walked to the front of the stage to shower the artist with thousands of Kwacha [K] (hundreds of dollars) in K100 notes. The patrons in the venue moved to the front of the stage to witness the incident. My friend Mathew Katai who accompanied me to the event whispered to me: “That’s Lwala.” I had heard Lwala’s name in several shoutouts in *Zed Beats*. Others such as King Deza and Doctor Mukuluse have also figured prominently in shoutouts. The following is a shoutout in “Ka Boom!” (“Boom!”) one of the duo’s 4 na 5 hit song in the *Kopala dancehall* style. The duo is led by Lawrence Chafye (a.k.a. 4). The intro in “Ka Boom” goes (see figure 43).

*“Tusangwa na Doctor Mukulunse, King Deza ni mfumu tekuti tuluse. Boss 1, Ba Edward, Zock Sock, Team UV Fashion...Ni 4 na 5, Label na Level ”*

[We hang out with Doctor Mukuluse, and King Deza so we cannot lose. Boss 1, Edward, Zock Sock, Team UV Fashion... It’s 4 and 5. Label with Level]

### **Figure 43: “Ka Boom!” Shoutouts**

In this shoutout, 4 na 5 claim that they are on the winning side if they associate themselves with *ba jerabo* Mukuluse and King Deza. Team UV Fashion provided the clothes that the duo wore

during the video shoot. The song was recorded at Collabo Studio. The production of the song (and the video) was funded by Doctor Mukuluse, King Deza's associate.

### **4.3 *Ileenda Ilepya* (It Cooks as It Moves)**

Colloquially, producers and artists of *Kopala Dancehall* use the *Chibemba* word *ukuipika* (“to cook”) to refer to the process of producing *Zed Beats* in home studios. It is common to hear musicians say “*tuleipika mu studio*,” or “we are in the studio cooking.” Sometimes, to cook is used metaphorically to mean to produce music. *Ileenda ilepya* in home studios in the Copperbelt refers to the process of producing music very fast. The term is borrowed from vendors who sell roasted meat in marketplaces and on the street.

On April 20, 2022, my film maker friend Angel Phiri and I visited Chisokone Market, located in the heart of Kitwe. The market is the largest in the Copperbelt. Kitwe is the second largest and the second most populated city after the capital Lusaka. Merchandise including food, clothing, electronics, and music are sold at the market. One kind of food that is sold there and at other marketplaces in Copperbelt, is *Ileenda Ilepya*. *Ileenda Ilepya* is grilled meat or meat products such as sausage sold by street vendors on portable grills or carts. According to Bernard, a vendor, the snack was named *ileenda ilepya* because they (vendors) grill meat and sausage on their grills as they move around in an effort to quickly sell their delicacies. They do not wait for their meat to be all the way grilled before going out to find buyers. Figure 44 is the cart with the grill installed to it (*Ileenda Ilepya*). The vendor pushes the cart to wherever there might be potential clients.



**Figure 44:** *Ileenda Ilepya*

Gene B, Silent Murder, DJ Momo and Jay told me that *Kopala dancehall* is produced in similar ways that *Ileenda Ilepya* is prepared; fast for consumption by the fans (interviews, 2021). Artists sometimes refer to producers as chefs and the *beats* they make cooked or grilled meat. It is common for an artist to ask the producer to *sosikila* a mix. *Sosikila* in *Kopala Bemba* means to add spices to a dish to improve its taste. Similarly, to *sosikila* a track mix means to add all the plug-ins that will make the track even more enjoyable (or tasty).

In the following section, I focus on the production of *Zed hip-hop* in Rocky Nations, M Beats, and *Zed dancehall* at Silentt Frazer Studio in Kitwe and Lusaka respectively. I analyze selected songs produced in these studios to further highlight shifts in musical labor and musical production in Zambian popular music scene.

In the home studios I observed the production of *Zed hip-hop*, the process was different from that I witnessed at Chalila, Collabo, and Cozy studios. This is because the aesthetics of *Zed hip-hop* are more refined than *Kopala dancehall* which is considered to be focused on local consumption. The producers of *Kopala dancehall* pay more attention to mixing and mastering with the goal of getting the best quality possible.

#### **4.3.1 Kurekoda: The Production of *Zed Hip-hop* in Mzenga Beats Studio**

On July 20, 2021, I interviewed Mzenga Mwale (a.k.a. DJ Mzengaman or Mzengaman for short), a renowned *Zed hip-hop* producer whose studio is located in the middle-class neighborhood of Kamwala about eleven kilometers south of downtown Lusaka. Relatively speaking, the neighborhood is one of the more quiet parts of the city, which makes it a conducive environment to set up a home studio. There were only a few children playing on the streets, a regular sight when I visit more crowded neighborhoods like Kuomboka where Silentt Eraser Studio is located.<sup>42</sup>

Mzengaman owns Mzenga Beats Generation Music (M Beats Generation Music), one of the most renowned home studios in Lusaka, particularly for the production of *Zed hip-hop*. His involvement in music began when he was in high school playing keyboards in church. After graduating high school, Mzengaman went on to study Business Administration at Copperbelt University in Kitwe. He launched his music production career right after he graduated university in 2008 at the age of twenty-four, briefly as a singer and rapper before settling for music producer. In 2009, he got a job at Standard Chartered Bank but continued producing music during off-work

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<sup>42</sup> When I observed a recording session at Silentt Eraser studio in Kuomboka, a more crowded neighborhood than Kamwala South, Zulu the producer and proprietor of the studio had to stop recording several times as he waited for his neighbor who was pounding peanuts in a mortar to take a break.

hours. In 2011, Mzengaman resigned from his banking job to focus on producing music in his studio. He has produced some of the biggest acts in *Zed Beats* including Danny, Slap D, Macky 2 and Elton Mulenga (a.k.a. Yo Maps).

I got to M Beats Generation Studio at 8:45 am for an 8 am scheduled appointment. He waited for me at the gate of his house. Upon my arrival, as a precautionary measure against the Covid-19 pandemic, which was still prevalent at the time, Mzengaman sprayed disinfectant on my whole body after which he spread hand sanitizer on my palms before welcoming me to his studio.

The studio is set up in one of the bedrooms in his house. He had the house built using money he earned from music royalties and production labor, quite impressive for a music producer in Zambia where most producers can barely get by (interview, 2021). The unused wardrobe space in the bedroom where the studio is set up serves as the vocal booth. The 4m x 3.5m bedroom is soundproofed by foam on the walls and the floor is carpeted. His digital audio workstation consists of a Dell Co-13 computer, Tascam US 122L sound interface, Rode NT1 condenser microphone, Alesis Q88 keyboard controller, Berringer HPX 2000 headsets, and RCF 8-inch studio monitors. Fruity Loops serves as his music software. Mzengaman lists *beat making*, recording, mixing, and mastering as the four elements involved in the production of *Zed hip-hop*.<sup>43</sup>

Mzengaman usually begins the *beat-making* process by performing a drum pattern and a bassline before layering other musical instruments although I have observed sessions in which sampled piano or guitar sounds were performed first before the percussion part (for example, at Rocky Nations and Gene B Zone Studios). His focus is to ensure that the bass and the kick drum align in terms of frequency and amplitude. He told me in an interview that these two instruments

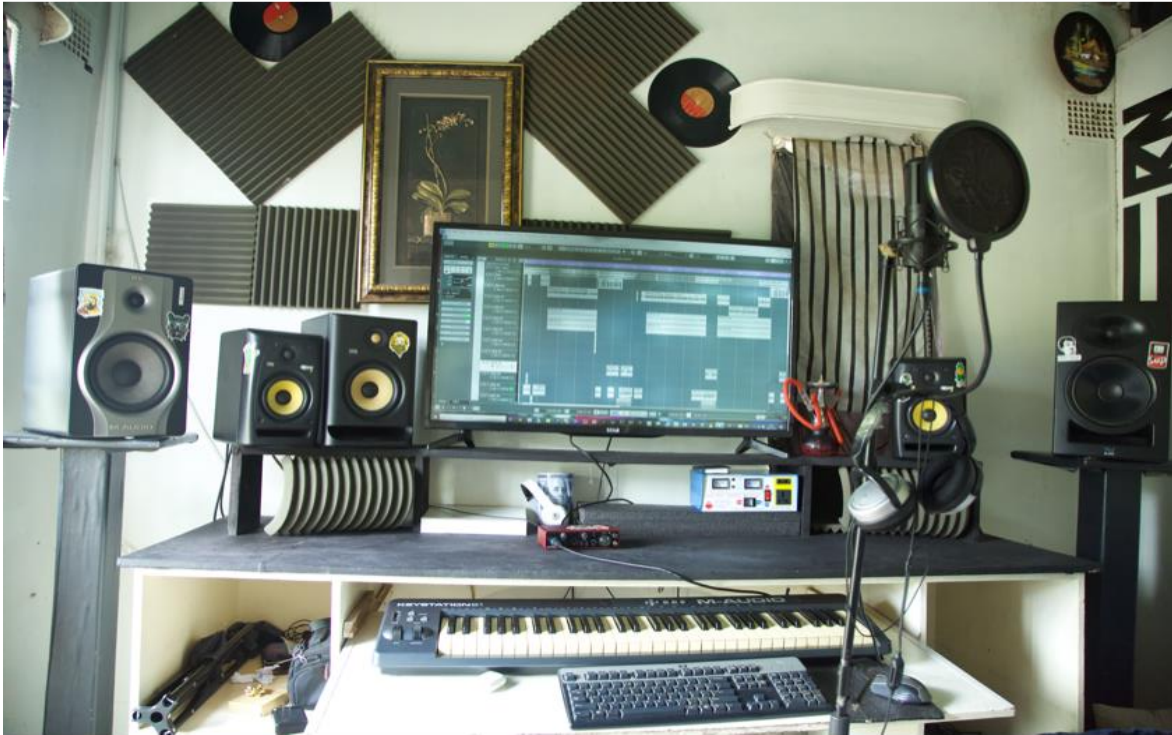
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<sup>43</sup> Other producers who employ the four elements in the production process out of those I interviewed include Silentt Eraser, DJ Mzengaman, Elijah Tembo, Chali Mulalami (Chali Bravo) of Lusaka; Siyanga Munalula (Beat Freak) and Julius Paul TapTap of Kabwe; and Chinx, Felix Phiri (Rocky) and Victorious of Kitwe.

hold a hip-hop song together. Recently, the 808 has been his most preferred bass sample for *Zed hip-hop*. The 808 is a low frequency distorted bass sound.

#### **4.3.2 The Production of *Zed Hip-hop* in Rocky Nation Studio**

Felix Phiri (a.k.a. Rocky) is another producer who specializes in producing *Zed hip-hop*. His studio, Rocky Nation, is located in the Riverside neighborhood of Kitwe. His digital audio workstation consists of x2-Yamaha monitors, Digi Design M-Box Mini sound interface, a Professional 4-Channel mixer, Key Station 61 M-Audio keyboard controller, Tonor BM-700 condenser microphone, Behringer HPS 3000 studio headsets, ToVaste Mic Shield, a computer and a 28-inch TV that he used as a screen monitor. The dining room of his family house was converted into the studio. The space is about 3.5m X 3m in size. Foam is spotted on the walls of the room as a sound treatment measure. Rocky does not have a separate vocal booth but uses a mic shield to control bleed from the singing when he is recording vocals. Figure 45 is the setup in Rocky Nation Studio.



**Figure 45: Setup in Rocky Nation Studio**

On July 10, 2021, I went to observe a recording session in Rocky Nation Studio. On this day, Rocky was making a *beat* for a hip-hop song. He went on to perform short rhythmic and harmonic phrases using sound samples he selected via a keyboard controller to accompany the melody of the chorus of the song he was producing. The artist was asked to repeatedly sing the chorus until Rocky had a rhythmic and harmonic structure to work with. The harmonic structure was then looped into a complete song. Other times, he drew musical notes and manipulated them in the Fruity Loops music software on his computer.

On July 11, 2021, I went back to Rocky Nation Studio to observe a mixing session. I found Rocky mixing a *Zed-hip-hop* track that he had just recorded earlier in the day. The track features

Rocky himself and two other rappers that he introduced to me as Ras B and Jai B. Figure 46 shows the text of “Fyapena” (Things Have Gone Crazy).

### Chorus

#### Kopala Bemba

#### English Translation

*Chite chite ala mama chite chite*

Oh mother what now

*Ne Chibemba chalilanda ati bwilila  
uwikwite*

The *Chibemba* language said it gets dark to one who has had enough to eat

*Apa yafika mube ready  
Natupona kale kale  
Mufwilefye musalapuke ndaba*

Where we are at you got to be ready  
We are here already  
You have to be alert

*Apa fifikile ala boi mwandi eh fyapena*

The level at which we have gotten my friend is mad

### Refrain

*Apa fifikile mwishibe ati, fyapena*

The level at which we are, you have to know it's mad

*Abana nabaponena nabafika  
bana ba mfumu, fyapena*

The king's children are here, it's mad

*Waikata, wabaula boi, iyeiyele fyapena*

Do you get it. Do you see my friend it's mad

*Uwo uwo uwo  
Iyeiyele*

### Verse 1

I move with the crew I am dangerous  
We come with the crew it's a video  
That's one of the boys  
With you we party in a minute though  
I am packing my bags silly



Hand me my truck  
This is too easy I can do it again  
If that's what it takes to put you in your place  
Me and my niggas we making new moves we could be playing chase  
I am on my own lady don't compare me to the place

**Chorus (repeat)**

**Refrain (repeat)**

**Verse 2**

I am here with my gang niggas

*Osathaba* why are you calling your father?  
your father?

*Osathaba* why are you calling your father?

*Mwavundula kapondo mweo ba brother*

*Mwavundula kapondo mweo ba brother*  
*Sichu nainana mwebo yabako rather*

*Nalifye tondolo ati bashimya kandulo*

*Sela apa wedewede*  
*Ponse ni ready*

Do not run. Why are you calling

Do not run. Why are you calling  
your father

You upset the bad boy brother

Brother you got a bad boy agitated  
The situation has rather deteriorated

I was quiet when I heard they put out  
the candle

Move away from here  
I am always ready

**Chorus (repeat)**

**Refrain (repeat)**

**Figure 46: "Fyapena" (Things Have Gone Crazy), Text**

Rocky told me in an interview that lyrically, there are three elements that define *Zed hip-hop*: metaphors (referred to as *amapinda* in *Chibemba*), punchlines, and rhymes. In the chorus of “Fyapena,” Lass B raps an *ipinda* (singular for *amapinda*), *nechibemba chalilanda ati bwilila uwikwite*, which means darkness will never deter a hungry person from going out to find some food. In the context of the song, the *ipinda* here is employed to deliver a strong message to *Zed hip-hop* artists that there is a new group coming and it will stop at nothing to displace some already established acts in *Zed hip-hop* because they are hungry for fame. In the refrain part, Lass B sings another *ipinda*, ‘*abana nabaponena nabafika bana ba mfumu*’ (“The King’s children are here”). Nobody among them is royalty. What Lass B means in the *ipinda* is that they have to be respected in the Zambian music scene just as people respect royalty.

Rocky’s line, ‘me and my niggas we making new moves we could be playing chase,’ is a good example of a punchline in *Zed hip-hop*. A punchline is a phrase that has double meaning. In the example above, Rocky and his group could be playing a game of chase (tag) but the same phrase could also mean that they as a group are making calculated moves in the music scene (interview, December 27, 2023). Figure 47 shows the rhymes performed by Jai B in the second verse.

*Osathaba* why are you calling your father

*Mwavundula kapondo mweo ba brother*

*Sichu nainana mwebo yabako rather*

**Figure 47: “Fyapena,” Rhymes**

In these phrases, *father*, *brother*, and *rather* rhyme, at least based on how these words are pronounced in English spoken with a Zambian dialect.

At Rocky Nation, the 808 bass sample is also the preferred bass sample when he produces *Zed Hip-hop*. Figure 48 is a graphic representation of the 808 sample. The sample is a low frequency and distorted bass that produces a boomy sound. As the figure indicates, the low end is more highlighted than the mid and high ranges, and it takes a total of not less than 5 seconds to decay.



**Figure 48: 808 Bass Sample Showing Gradual Decay**

The left part of the screenshot shows how Rocky aligned the kick and the 808 bass sample in Fruity Loops. On the left, the equalizer shows the 808 note decaying after the attack. The envelope of the sound consists of a strong attack and a gradual decay as indicated on the equalizer.

Because of how boomy the 808 sounds, Rocky aligns the sample with the kick drum. Bass parts in hip-hop produced using the 808 sample are not that intricate. Because of the boomy nature of the sample, it is best to use long held notes. Rocky aligns the kick and the 808 sample to create

a low frequency almost distorted sound as that is the preferred aesthetic in *Zed hip-hop*. It has to sound big, or fat, as Rocky prefers to call it. Compression and equalization are preferred plug ins when mixing the bass part and the kick drum in *Zed hip-hop*.

In the section that follows, I analyze the production of *Zed dancehall* at Silentt Erazer Studio. Silentt Erazer is owner and producer at the studio. His workmanship in the studio was the most casual among the producers I observed. As he put it; time does not concern him. However, after a few years of conducting research, I realized that being casual is a part of the work culture in home studios. I further highlight the aesthetics of the subgenre of *Zed dancehall* as presented by Silentt Erazer in his studio.

#### **4.4 Kurekoda: The Production of *Zed Dancehall/Du-nka* in Silentt Erazer Studio**

On May 24, 2021, I went to observe Silentt Erazer's recording session at his studio, then located in the Kuomboka neighborhood of Lusaka (The studio has moved a few times since). Erazer specializes in producing *Zed hip-hop*, *Zed dancehall*, *Zed-Afrobeats*, *du-nka* and reggae.

Initial recordings of the song Silentt Erazer was mixing were performed a month prior to the session I was observing on this day. White explains that although the making of a high-quality record begins with a good quality performance and recording, a poor mix can make “a brilliant musical performance sound like a cheap demo” (2009:1). Mixing is a critical process in the production of a high-quality record. The process consists of volume, pan automation, and effects processing (Hosken, 2011:99). It employs use of ambient effects such as reverb, delay, and echo as well as dynamic effects including compression. White notes that “...electronic instruments or ‘acoustic’ sounds recorded in an acoustically ‘dead’ studio usually rely on electronic effects to

make them sound real and interesting” (2009: 29). Considering that *Zed Beats* is produced in small spaces without proper acoustics treatment, mixing involves a good deal of signal processing depending on what genre it is being produced.

Silentt Erazer began the session by editing and mixing Caleb Chisha’s vocals on his *Zed dancehall* track “Time to Party.” Several times Silentt called on Chisha’s collaborator Tyce to re-record some vocals or add some harmonies to already existing vocals. In the middle of the session, Silentt Erazer stopped to talk on the phone or ask Chisha to get him some alcohol. Chisha, whose song was being mixed, left the studio to sit in the living room claiming he wanted Silentt Erazer to mix the track without being disturbed. While Chisha chatted with Tyce (his collaborator) in the living room, Silentt Erazer edited and mixed the vocals. He used two music software programs for the job; Fruity Loops (FL) which he used to program the *beat* and Cubase for recording vocals. After cleaning the vocals, he went on to use auto tune to correct the pitch correct Chisha’s vocal which was not consistently in key. Silentt Erazer used auto tune not only to correct pitch but also to enhance the performance.<sup>44</sup> Cleaning the vocals in Silentt Eraser Studio involves getting rid of hiss noises or other noises that were accidentally recorded during recording. After he was done tuning the vocals, Silentt Erazer applied reverb, equalizer and compressor to balance the vocals but also make them sound stronger.

On May 26, 2021, I went back to Silentt Erazer Studio to observe him complete mixing Chisha’s song that he had begun two days earlier. When I got to the studio, I found Silentt Erazer playing back the chorus to the song, *twafika muchende* again, time to party (“we are in the area again so it’s time to party”). After manipulating the vocals, Silentt Erazer went on to mix the *beat*.

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<sup>44</sup> Auto-Tune was initially designed as a corrective device. The plug in gained wide recognition in 1998 after producers Mark Taylor and Brian Rawling used it in the production of Cher’s “Believe.” The two producers realized that besides correcting pitch, the plug-in could also be used to generate a unique vocal effect (McGowan 2012: 24).

He muted all the other tracks except the kick. He was going for a hard kick since the song is intended to be played in clubs. To achieve that result, Silentt Erazer added a compressor to make the kick stronger. After he was done with the kick, he moved on to the snare.

In the middle of mixing, he recorded a short melodic phrase on the keyboard. I wondered why he was still recording at this point. He explained that performances and song arrangements happen until the very last minute of the mixing process. Silentt Eraser moved on to manipulating and adding effects to the strings, synths and brass and lastly bass. In several other home studios in Lusaka, I observed that the mixing process was similar to Silentt Erazer's. In cases where the music was mostly digitally recorded as was the case in Silentt Eraser Studio, it was common for mixing to be done in two different music software. In most of these studios, Fruity Loops was used for making *beats* because it is easier to organize and structure samples in the software, and Cubase was used to record vocals and other musical instruments recorded live because the software had better plug-ins for that.

Mixing the *beat* at Silentt Eraser Studio involved selecting musical sounds, manipulating sounds to desired aesthetics, panning, and balancing volumes of the different tracks. After the *beat* and the vocals were mixed [separately in two different music software], the mixes were exported to Cubase for a final mix to merge the two mixes. "Time to Party" was sung in four languages: *Chibemba*, *Chinyanja*, English and Jamaica's *Patois* (Figure 49). Sections that were sung only in English appear on the left and are indented.

### Chorus

#### Chibemba

*Twafika munchende again* [Call]

#### English Translation

We are back in the area again  
Time to party oh ho oh oh [Answer]

*Twafika munchende again* [Call]

We are back in the area again  
Time to party oh ho oh oh [Answer]  
Time to party oh ho oh oh  
We are back in the area again

*Twafika muchende again* [Call]

Time to party oh ho oh [Answer]  
Time to party oh ho oh oh  
Time to party  
Like, like, like, like<sup>45</sup>

### Verse 1

#### Chibemba/ Jamaican Patois

#### English Translation

*Tushita a ma round nga roller coaster*

We buy rounds [of alcohol] like a roller coaster

*Mwisusha road nga bus coaster*

Don't fill up the road like a bus coaster

Feeling so good now me killing it

*Me and mi friends we are sealing it  
Party everyday nga ni weekend  
Champion vibes on a daily  
Niifwe bene ba depo iyo  
Nimpinga mi already know*

Me and my friends are sealing it  
We party everyday like it's a weekend  
Champion vibe everyday  
We own this depot  
I swear I already know

*How we do we ting we nuh keep it low*

We don't keep quiet when we do what we do

*Mash up the place we are ready to go*

Lively up the place and we are ready to go

### Chorus (repeat)

### Verse 2

#### Chibemba/Jamaican Patois

#### English Translations

*We nuh worry  
Olipa girl wan company*

We do not worry  
A lot of girls want company

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<sup>45</sup> The four "like" words sung at the end of the hook are calls to a phrase performed on a synth sound in the Fruity loops software

*Dem say they wanna jump on me*  
*Looking so fly dem tamba me*  
*Ona na pona*  
*Elo napopoka*  
*But siuzapoka*  
*Nifwe ba commander*  
*Nifwe bene ba depo iyo, eehe*  
*Nimpinga mi already know, eehe*  
*How we do we ting we nuh keep it low*  
  
*Mash up the place we are ready to go*

They say they want to jump on me  
 I look so good they watch me  
 Look, I just got here  
 And I am looking nice  
 but you won't take [away from me]  
 We are the commander  
 We own that depot  
 I swear I already know  
 We don't do what we do quietly  
  
 Lively up the place and we are ready to go

**Chorus (repeat)**

**Verse 3**

<u>Chibemba</u>	<u>English Translation</u>
<i>Party up, turn it up</i>	Dance and party
<i>Wine and bubble and balance it up</i>	Wriggle your waist
<i>Party up, turn it up</i>	Party
<i>Wine and bubble and balance it up</i>	Wriggle your waist
<i>Eraser, wine and bubble and balance it up</i>	Eraser, wriggle your waist
<i>Eraser, wine and bubble and balance it up</i>	Eraser, wriggle your waist

**Chorus (repeat)**

**Figure 49: “Time to Party,” Text**

The Patois, Chibemba, and Chinyanja in which Tyce delivers his vocal performance throughout the song situates the song as *Zed-dancehall*. Most *Zed dancehall* makes use of Jamaican Patois and local languages. Similarly, “Time to Party” does not only highlight the Patois Jamaican elements but also Zambian local languages. The song in F major follows a I-IV-vi-V chord progression, a familiar progression in *Zed Beats*. As the lyrics suggest, it is a party song. Girls,



alcohol, and dressing up are common features at parties in Zambia. Figure 50 is the chord progression in the song.



**Figure 50: “Time to Party,” Chord Progression**

Silentt Erazer uses the *du-nka* drum style with a variation on the fourth beat of every second bar where double sixteenth notes are performed (Figure 51).



**Figure 51: “Time to Party,” Drum Pattern**

In Jerry Fingaz Studio, the production of *Zed Beats* was recorded in similar ways that it was in Silentt Erazer Studio. In the next section, I narrate my experience producing *Zed- Afrobeats* with Jerry Fingaz in his studio.

**4.6 Kurekoda: The Production of Zed-Afrobeats in Jerry Fingaz Studio**

Jerry Fingaz, the proprietor and producer at Jerry Fingaz Studio, began his music production career in 2000. He worked as music producer in several studios before setting up his

own in Kamwala in the capital Lusaka. Banda is one of the few music producers who witnessed the emergence of *Zed Beats*.

In July of 2017, I contacted one of Zambia’s top reggae singers Milimo Muyanga (a.k.a. Milz) for a possible studio collaboration. Milz, a prominent figure in *Zed dancehall* was excited to collaborate with me on a *Zed-Afrobeats* song. I booked a session with Jerry Fingaz and was scheduled for a session.

On the morning of August 1, 2017, Milz and I drove to Jerry Fingaz Studio in Kamwala. The studio setup consists of two M-Audio BX8a studio monitors, a Sterling Audio studio microphone, a six-track mixer, which he uses as a preamp, and an M-Audio Delta 1010 Interface, all in one square room of approximately 3m x 3m. The room is sound proofed by foam spotted on the walls (Tembo 2019).

Jerry Fingaz, with the help of guest producer William Bwalya, had our session set up and was ready to produce our track. I did not know what to record. I sang a few phrases of “Fale,” a song in *Chinsenga*. I had been working on a melodic idea the previous week. Figure 52 shows the lyrics of the chorus in “Fale.”

<u>Chinsenga</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>Maliko mwana wa mama</i>	Michael my mother’s son
<i>Lelo akonda Fale</i>	Today he loves Fale
<i>Fale opala amama</i>	Fale who resembles my mother
<i>Fale, Fale, Fale x3</i>	Fale, Fale, Fale x3
<i>Banja kukana banja</i>	He’s refused his family
<i>Bana kukana bana</i>	He’s refused his children
<i>Ati ofuna Fale</i>	He says he wants Fale
<i>Fale osweta</i>	The light skinned Fale

**Figure 52: “Fale,” Chorus Text**

Jerry Fingaz asked me to keep singing as he orchestrated the drums in Cubase, the music software program that he uses for recording but also serves as a sound bank. After programming the drums, he went on to program electric bass, synth strings, and piano. Minutes later, it was time to track vocals and so Jerry Fingaz again asked me to sing some more of “Fale.” I had sung a few phrases when he interrupted my singing. “I want to know where the *hook* is,” he demanded. I didn’t know where the *hook* was either; I was just improvising. He and Milz agreed that the first four lines I sang would make a great *hook*, and so I obliged. It was Milz’s turn to record vocals. Milz and I improvised most of the lyrics on the spot inspired by Jerry Fingaz’s hastily orchestrated accompaniment track which he promised to recreate after recording our vocals. While Jerry Fingaz was tracking Milz’s vocal parts, I drove to downtown Lusaka for a meeting. When I returned to the studio after about an hour, Jerry Fingaz was done recording Milz’s vocal parts, and our new track was blasting from the studio monitor speakers.

#### **4.7 Mastering of *Zed Beats***

Mastering is the final stage of music production. In bigger music economies, producers usually send their mixes to specialists to have their music mastered.<sup>46</sup> “The combination of digital delivery (from CDs to mp3s and beyond) and production of music on digital audio workstations has meant that just about anyone can create a master that is usable for CD manufacturing or online delivery” (Savage 2011:6).

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<sup>46</sup> The albums I have recorded in Europe and the US have had to be sent to a mastering engineer after the mixing was concluded. For example, *Konkha* (Follow), my ninth studio album released in 2019 was recorded and mixed by John Caldwell at Mount Royal Studio in Pittsburgh, Pa but it was mastered by Brad Blackwood at Euphonic Masters. Caldwell, producer and sound engineer at Mount Royal Studio once said to me: “Mastering engineers are better at mastering because they have special equipment for that, and they have been doing it for a long time.”

At Silentt Erazer Studio, the mastering of Chisha's "Time to Party" involved standardizing the volume of the music, cleaning the final mix so it does not distort or clip, equalizing the low and the high, and adding fade ins and fade outs. To perform these tasks, Silentt Erazer used two software programs: T-Rex for manipulating dynamics and compression and Adobe for cleaning, cutting and fades.

Mixing and mastering *Zed Beats* in Silentt Erazer Studio, Beat Freak Studio, Gene B, Collabo, Chalila, Jerry Fingaz, and Cozy studios, demand that the producer arranges the music too. Therefore, mixing is not only concerned with processing the recorded signals, so they sound interesting. Mixing the vocals and other instruments recorded live on the other hand, comprises cleaning the tracks by getting rid of unwanted noises and distortions, aligning different voices so they all begin and end on same spots, manipulating and processing the sounds of the vocals using the equalizer, compressor, reverb, and sometimes auto tune plug ins.

In *Zed Beats* subgenres such as *Zed-dancehall*, *Zed-Afrobeats*, and *du-nka*, the auto tune plug in has become ubiquitous and now defines the aesthetics of vocal recordings of *Zed Beats*. Gene B argues that auto tune is a must-use effect because it makes singers sound better. "The use of Auto-Tune has become highly valued within pop music because it represents the new vanguard of modern pop music (both sonically and aesthetically), and it upholds pop music's vocal aesthetics of precision and perfection" (Savage, 2011: 26).

Music critics have argued that auto tune makes most pop musicians sound better on a recording. "Auto-Tune enables a new approach to recording vocals, one that de-emphasizes the technique and skill of recording live off the floor, in favor of a post-production correction approach" (ibid., 25). This new approach, also prevalent in *Zed Beats*, has enabled amateurs, music

enthusiasts, and fans to participate in the music-making process of *Zed Beats* further shifting musical labor.

In cases where the producer is going for a live feel, mixing involves highlighting the instruments that were recorded live. Those instruments are carefully panned and effects carefully selected to create “liveness” for the listener. In mixing, “liveness” is recreated to cater to older fans who prefer the live aesthetics. In the absence of live instrumentation, producers strive to recreate “liveness” on their digital audio workstations in the studio. The reason that Mzengaman and other producers in most home studios in Lusaka prefer to employ the four elements of *beat making*, recording, mixing, and mastering in the process of producing their music is that they want to take more time to produce their work, so the quality is good enough to compete at the regional level (Silentt Erazer, interview, 2021). Mzengaman, Gene B, and Silentt Erazer argued that *Kopala dancehall* is for local consumption as the quality of the production is not good enough to compete at the regional or international level.

All the studios I collaborated with during my fieldwork had contractual obligations toward artists. The studios facilitated the production of the artists’ music without a charge but hoped to recoup money spent on the productions by getting a cut from artists’ performances at concerts, feature recordings, royalties, and branding engagements once the artists made it. In the next section, I examine how producers navigate the business side of their labor.

#### 4.8 *Zed Beats as a Business*

According to Cecile Ambert (2003:1), "...until the late 1990s, the recording industry operated primarily in two SADC<sup>47</sup> countries, South Africa and Zimbabwe." There were no record companies in Zambia by the late- 1990s (Hubbard, 2007:23). The closure of Teal Records and Zambia Music Palour saw individuals and small businesses taking over the Zambian music economy.

Producer Chali Mulalami (a.k.a. Chali Bravo) founder of Sling Beats Studio lamented about choosing music as a career: "Let me say I chose to be broke. I chose to be broke because I made lots of money in the real estate [business] and I just stopped [the real estate business]. I used my savings to set up [the studio]. For the first nine to ten months going to a year, I never made any money from music. But I used to pay rent for the studio. I used to feed people. I started promoting people. So, all my wealth from the real estate [business] went into this thing" [music] (interview, July 28, 2022).

Teresa Ng'ambi who recorded a single "Watembeledwa" (You Have Been Cursed) at Sling Beats Studio reminisced about recording the song for free with the view of sharing royalties with the studio after its release (interview, September 16, 2020). However, the song was never released. When Chali Bravo founded Sling Beats in 2003, most musicians did not have money to pay for studio time. Sling Beats funded the production of the music. Chali Bravo made money from CD and cassette sales. The deal at the time was a 70/30 split in favor of the studio for music sales and 30/70 split in favor of the musician for musical performances of the signed artists.

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<sup>47</sup> SADC stands for southern African development community. Member countries include Angola, Botswana, Union of Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Producing *Zed Beats* in the initial period was inexpensive. For example, Kula Music Studio charged K300 (US\$ 12.5) to produce a song in 2002 when James Mulenga and Elijah Tembo set up the studio. Tembo stated that Kula was the most expensive home studio in Lusaka as others charged as little as K60 (US\$ 2.5) for the service at the time. This was the case because most musicians could not afford to pay for studio time (interview, July 17, 2021). Some of their friends who could not afford studio time had their songs produced for free.

The snowballing of home studios after 2010 has ensured an even more inexpensive way of producing *Zambian* popular music. Producer Silent Murder of Collabo Studio declares that *Zed Beats* had to be produced fast and inexpensively to generate profit (interview, July 15, 2022). In the Copperbelt, at the time of my fieldwork (2021-2024), producing a song cost between K250 (\$13 US) and K500 (\$26 US). In Kabwe and the capital Lusaka, producing a song cost between K800 (\$42 US) and K2000 (\$105 US). These figures indicate that some producers are able to make a decent living from producing *Zed Beats* depending on their production output. For example, music producer Siyanga Munalula (a.k.a. Beat Freak) [interview, 3 September 2021] of Freak Music Studio in Kabwe disclosed that he charges K1000 (US\$ 55) to produce a song and that he produces fifteen songs in a month on average, which adds up to K15,000 in a month (US\$ 830). In Zambia, civil servants, including teachers' salaries are in the range of K5,000 and K7,000 per month (\$200-\$300). This calculation entails that Beat Freak earns two to three times more than an average civil servant. Figure 53 is a picture of the author in Freak Beat Studio in Kabwe.



**Figure 53: Author Interviewing Beat Freak**

To supplement their income from producing music in the studio, some producers have assumed the roles of booking agent and music label. Mzengaman reported to me his multiple sources of income from his musical labor:

So, I have got various streams of income ... I do albums, so I get royalties from different platforms where the music is sold. Then I also make *beats*. Then there is something interesting that I created, it's called *beats and hooks*. I can simply say I am one of the few if not the only one who's like lived off music completely for so many years and did great things like building houses and whatnot off music alone...I sell *beats and hooks*. It's like I am ordering items and then selling them you know. So, I discuss with these particular artists ... I will give you 10,000 [K10,000 (US\$384)], I want you to record me seven choruses. So, we'll spend like the whole day in the studio,



they record on my *beats*. I get to start selling each *beat* with a chorus at a particular amount of, you know, money. So, you find that after the whole process, maybe after two weeks, I have sold all those choruses we recorded and I have made like maybe 18,000 [K18,000] (\$692). So, you find that there is seven or eight thousand profit like that. You know? Then also I'll wait for clients who call me from social media, and everything cause the more your works are being shown a lot of people want to work with you. So, they'll call you then you give them schedules, you charge them and what note...Then also, the signed artists that we have, whenever they sell their music on online platforms, they have a gig, they have a feature and what note, there is a cut that we get [the studio]. You know? Like ...then we get 60% off that. So, we also make money off all the artists, all the arrangements that we have, the production that we do for other people (interview, July 20, 2021)

Mzengaman mentions three streams of income apart from producing music in the studio. In the first stream, he subcontracts artists to sing on his *beats*. He pays the singers for their labor and then releases the album in his name. Royalties accrue to Mzengaman alone. He refers to the second stream as *beats and hooks*, in which he pays famous artists to sing choruses on his *beats*. He then sells those *beats* to artists who wish to collaborate with the artists on his *beats and hooks* list. Thirdly, he gets a sixty percent cut from earnings made by artists signed to his studio. These earnings could be from artists' performances, collaborations with other artists, and brand endorsements.

Similarly, PC of Collabo Studio earns income from other sources besides music production in his studio. When I interviewed him, PC had ten artists signed to his studio. He gets a fifty percent

cut for every paid engagement from his artists (July 3, 2021). DJ Momo and Jay of Chalila Studio and Silentt Erazer of Silentt Erazer Studio also have signed artists who generate some income from performances, corporate endorsements, and royalties.

When home studios emerged in Zambia, musicians were at the periphery of the production process of the music. In this chapter, I demonstrated how singers provided song melodies to a producer. The singer and the producer also incorporated musical ideas from visiting artists. Although the music-making process was participatory (anyone present could participate in the process), the artist who paid for the session and the producer made the final decisions about what ended up on the record. There were times when I observed producers making *beats* in the absence of the singer. In those cases, the singer had little input on the orchestration of the *beat*.

To grow their fan base and in the pursuit of authenticity, producers and artists of *Zed Beats* began incorporating live instrumentation on recordings. Although JK's album *JK* (2001), Shatels *Unbreakable* (2002), and Danny's (2005) featured live guitars, the incorporation of live instrumentation in *Zed Beats* gained prominence after recordings by Afunika, Yo Maps, and Macky 2 in the last ten years. Electric guitar is the most common live musical instrument on *Zed Beats* recordings. In the next chapter, I analyze the politics of participatory music making and the pursuit of "liveness" in the production of the genre. I argue that this move has further shifted power dynamics among artists, composers, musicians, and producers, as well as redefining the aesthetics of the genre of *Zed Beats*.

## **5.0 Politics Of Participatory Music Making and Shifts in Musical Labor as Producers Pursue “Liveness” in Home Studios**

The producer is at the center of participatory music making and the musical labor engendered from the practice in the production of *Zed Beats*. In his pursuance of “liveness” in the production of the genre, more musical labor shifts are witnessed. I begin this chapter by exploring the roles of the producer in home studios.

### **5.1 The Producer in Home Studios**

The following story illustrates the work of a producer in a home studio in Zambia. After observing Paul Taptap record at his studio in High Ridge on September 3, 2021, I asked if he could suggest a different studio where I could observe another recording session. He and I drove from his studio to Beat Freak Studio in the Central Town owned by Siyanga Munalula (a.k.a. Beat Freak). The neighborhood is less than a mile north of Kabwe downtown. The studio was set up in a small apartment behind the main house and is fenced in by a wall.

When we got to the studio at 3:30 pm, local artist Rovic Chikonde was recording vocals to a *du-nka beat*. During the session, Beat Freak would stop recording to give Chikonde time to practice his parts and improvise more lyrics. In between those breaks, he added more piano parts to the *beat*. When I asked what his role was in the studio, he told me that his role as a producer was to understand a musical idea and make it into reality. “[Artists] just come with an idea and then they want me [him] to interpret it for them and put it there” (interview, September 3, 2021). Passman (2000:135) writes that the producer’s responsibility is to oversee and bring the creative

product into tangible form via a recording. Bringing a creative product into tangible form “...means (a) being responsible for maximizing the creative process (finding and selecting songs, deciding on arrangements, getting the right vocal sound, etc.), and (b) taking care of all the administration, such as booking studios, hiring musicians, staying within a budget, filing union reports, etc.” Most producers with whom I collaborated during my fieldwork told me that the producer’s roles in home studios involve composing, arranging, orchestrating an accompaniment track, recording vocals, guiding recording sessions, mixing and mastering, similar to Passman’s first part of his definition of the roles of a record producer. Paul Taptap sees his role as producer as involving “directing and organizing the music” in the studio (interview, September 3, 2021). “...whereas in the professional studio, music production has always been a collective project between recording artists, musicians, producers, and recording engineers, in small digital home studios, multiple roles are performed by a single person” (Watson 2014:36). The producer in home studios in Zambia is a composer, arranger, musician, music director as well as sound engineer.

Recording music on computers and digital audio workstations democratized music production. The role of producing music is no longer directed solely by the artist. Young technophiles, most of whom are not skilled musicians, have taken over the production of Zambian popular music. Since vocals and other musical instruments can now be recorded in home studios, there is no longer a need for producers in home studios to collaborate with professional or semi-professional studios to complete a recording. Better music software continues to provide producers in home studios with a variety of sounds to choose from. Although session musicians, mostly guitarists, are being re-incorporated in the production of *Zed Beats*, producers have assumed extra roles as booking agents and record labels giving them more control over the production and circulation of popular music in Zambia.

## 5.2 DAW as the Producer's Musical Instrument in Composing *Zed Beats*

Out of the twenty-two producers I collaborated with during my fieldwork, only four of them could play a musical instrument well.<sup>48</sup> However, most producers out of those I interviewed consider their DAW as a musical instrument.

On July 16, 2021, I went to see William Mkosha (a.k.a. Selassie) at his studio. The studio, housed in a small barber shop about 1m x 4m in size, was located at Freedom Market in Chilanga on the outskirts of Lusaka along the highway to the southern region of Zambia. Neighboring the studio on either side were hardware stores that stocked mostly building supplies. Being a marketplace, the location is busy with both pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Selassie's DAW consisted of an H-P Co-2 computer, and a pair of Miroko brand home theater speakers that served as active studio speakers and Fruity Loops software.

When I got to the studio, a few minutes before 2 pm, I found Selassie re-creating an instrumental adapted from Jamaican reggae singer Siccatore Alcock's (a.k.a. Jah Cure) "Call on Me." Being an aspiring *Zed dancehall* artist, Selassie is a fan of Jamaican reggae and Jamaican dancehall. In the far end, his colleague was cutting a client's hair. On one side of the wall hang electronic merchandise including cellphone covers, chargers, and chords. During the interview, clients came at regular intervals to inquire about the cost of his merchandise. Outside the studio sat two guys on a bench playing drafts. Minutes into the interview, Selassie's producer friend Depro entered the shop. After introducing his friend to me, Selassie told me in *Chinyanja*, "na uyu

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<sup>48</sup> Jerry Fingaz of Jerry Fingaz Studio played keyboards in the reggae band Davies and the Wings as well as playing bass guitar in singer Maureen Lilanda's Ashilile Band. Elijah Tembo of Kula Studio is an excellent keyboardist, and a decent guitarist and bassist. Chinx of Chinx Studio plays guitar in the Kitwe based reggae ensemble African Reggae Machine. And renowned hip-hop producer DJ Mzengaman began playing keyboards at the tutorship of his father at the age of nine (interview, 2021).

amaliza” (he also plays). I asked: “Amaliza gita?” (He plays guitar?), Selassie clarified: “Amaliza FL” (He plays FL[Fruit loops]) [interview, July 2021].

When one is able to compose music with software, then the software becomes a musical instrument (Eno 1979). Musical instruments are “...devices that performers use to make music. Typically, we think of instruments as discrete, self-subsisting material objects, intentionally crafted for the purpose of making music by performing musicians... Musicians take these objects and, by holding them, hitting them, or blowing through them, plucking and scaping them, pressing on keys, and so on, produce the sounds of music” Alperson (2008:38). But this definition is incomplete. For example, Bell notes that the studio became a musical instrument when music production entered into the conscious state of being played with the studio at the beginning of the rock and roll era (2018:37). Further, in the 1970s, DJs began manipulating sounds in real time on their turntables. Katz argues that turntablists are musicians and the turntable their instrument. They did not only spin songs, “but created wholly new music through their complex manipulation of recorded sound. In the process, these DJs developed a host of new techniques...” (Katz 2012:4).

In Zambia, Selassie uses software to compose and arrange music on his laptop, which he then takes to a different home studio to refine. His approach is similar to that employed by composers who use a guitar or keyboard synthesizer to compose and arrange their music before going to record it in the studio. The definition of a musical instrument involves several factors. A musical instrument involves real-time sound manipulation; a body of techniques developed specifically for it; and it has its own distinctive sound. Furthermore, the object used to make the instrument itself is either specifically designed or modified for making music and the sound it generates is considered to be music by a community of listeners (Katz 2012:81).

During my fieldwork, I observed several studio sessions in which producers used Fruity Loops as part of their digital audio workstations (namely Chinx at Chinx Studio, Jay and DJ Momo at Chalila, Kellz at Cozy, and Paul Taps at Happy studios). Chinx explains that Fruity Loops facilitates both MIDI and audio recordings. MIDI recordings make use of sound samples in the form of plug-ins on a digital audio workstation. Shorter recordings can be looped into longer ones (interview, August 15, 2022). Chinx further claimed that he can identify *beats* that were made using the Fruity Loops software.

Silentt Erazer described to me how he “humanized” the sound of digital music. Performances that are digitally recorded sound too mechanical. To make them sound humanly performed, he manually moves some parts of the performance from where they were originally quantized so that they are not too aligned to the grid (interview, May 26, 2021). Silentt Erazer confirms Chinx’s claim that Fruity Loops has a distinctive sound. He told me that he can identify recordings that make use of the software’s plug ins. He pointed out that most *amapiano* (a genre of South African pop music) are recorded using Fruity Loops (interview, August 2022). The software possesses a body of techniques specifically developed for it. The plugins that come with it give the music a distinctive sound.

As Alperson (2008: 42) argues, “composers have their musical instruments, too... Consider the main musical software programs available now, such as Finale, Sibelius and Band in a Box, that enable users to compose, record, and produce music. Now, imagine a relatively sophisticated composer who has enough mastery of the computer program so that her levels of musical productivity when using the program are on a par with what she was accustomed to doing at the piano keyboard instead of the computer keyboard.”

Bell notes that music produced on digital audio workstations is preprogrammed and therefore there is a lack of agency as compared to music performed on conventional musical instruments (2018: 35). Bell's observation is not true for *Zed Beats*. Most recordings involve producers and musicians making decisions about time signature, tempo, and arrangements, sometimes in real time. As Evens (2005: 80) notes, the interface effects passage back and forth from concrete gestures, images, and sounds to abstract forms coded, as *beats*. It mediates between user and computer and so is itself a hybrid retaining characteristics of both the abstract and the concrete in the same material. He further explains that not only does the interface convey the user's intentions to the realm of the digital, but it also requires that the user enter the digital realm: "To use digital technologies, *one must become digital*, aligning one's own articulations to the spatial, temporal, and logical articulations of the interface. Digital technology determines in advance which commands it will respond to, in what order they must be executed, how far it can go and in which directions. Desires that are not expressed in terms of these possibilities simply cannot be carried out" (italics mine; *ibid.*). A DAW as a musical instrument involves agency just as conventional music instruments do. Evans further theorizes, "instrument and player intermingle at their liquid surfaces, *each dissolves its own boundaries*, reorganizes itself, to effect more engrossing contact with the other and with the sonic result" (italics mine; *ibid.*) Evens notes: "These subtle surfaces may lie along physical boundaries where the two bodies actually touch, but not all of the surfaces of the instrument or player are on the outside" (*ibid.*, 82).

Similarly, when Selassie equates working in Fruity Loops with playing a musical instrument, he is referring to the reduction of the software to its instrumentality, which serves a particular end. Fruity Loops as an instrument does not only facilitate composing but also recording, arranging, editing, mixing, and mastering.



New ways of composing *Zed beats* on a DAW have impacted musical labor in home studios. For example, the DAW as a compositional tool has seen musicians, particularly accompanists, being pushed to the periphery of the process of composing music as producers take up the roles of co-composer, arranger, and musician. Also, advanced technology in music software coupled with the participatory nature of composing *Zed Beats* has democratized the compositional process. Amateur musicians, including music hobbyists can now record music on their digital workstations in their bedrooms taking over the role of professional musicians. This scenario has enabled amateur musicians or fans to provide musical labor as composers, sometimes replacing the more experienced players who are not knowledgeable enough to work on a DAW without the guidance of a producer.

### **5.3 The Politics of Participatory Music Making in Home Studios**

Compositional practices in professional studios and home studios are different. Khuzwayo Chisi, lead singer of the reggae band Bantu Roots and Mau Mwale of the trio Mwale Sisters told me how intimidating it was to record in dB studio. Only members of the ensemble who have booked for studio time are allowed access to the facility and recording in them demand specialized resources (Tembo, 2019). On the other hand, home studios in which *Zed Beats* is produced are smaller but less intimidating spaces where everyone around at the time the music is produced is welcome to be a part of the music making process. The compact recording equipment in them is more affordable and the musical labor needed is not as specialized as the case was in professional studios.

In home studios, opportunities abound because of the participatory interactions that take place during recordings. For aspiring musicians and producers, participatory music-making in home studios provides opportunities for them to learn and gain much-needed experience. When the musician who sat in the corner in Chalila Studio as he waited for his turn to record stood up to dance when Dope Nigga and Young Kid were composing and recording, he was giving support to the duo. Similarly, the friend to DK and Muzo of Suicide Mission who danced with them when Kellz was orchestrating the accompaniment to the song they were recording participated in the compositional process by encouraging the group to carry on. Him dancing was approving the *beat*.

The story of Yo Maps' "Aweah" describes the politics that come with the participatory nature of music making in the production of *Zed Beats*. On November 18, 2022, Yo Maps released "Aweah" on YouTube and other social media platforms. Controversy accompanied the release of the song. "Aweah" hit one million views on YouTube in just four days after its release, an indication of massive success for a Zambian artist.

On a Pittsburgh cold morning of November 18, 2022, I got out of bed at about 9 am. Zambia is seven hours ahead of the East coast city in the winter, meaning I was late on the news. I scrolled up and down Facebook on my phone. The following post caught my eye (Figure 54):



**Figure 54: William Wapi’s Facebook Post**

William Wapi (a.k.a. Lord Wapi) is one of Zambian renowned cartoonists and satirists. Damini Ogulu (a.k.a. Burna Boy) is a globally acclaimed *Afrobeats* artist. Yo Maps is arguably Zambian most famous pop artist but not as well-known as Burna Boy on the global stage. In his Facebook post, Wapi asked Burna Boy how he stole a song from the most famous artist in Zambia. After I read the comments under the post, I realized Wapi was being satirical. What he really meant was that Yo Maps appropriated musical elements of Burna Boy’s “Plenty Plenty.”

However, the bigger controversy about “Aweah” was that an upcoming artist Lucky Phiri (Blake Zambia) co-wrote the song with Yo Maps but was not credited for writing the song. In an interview with radio and Q TV presenter Jackson Phiri (a.k.a. DJ Showstar), Blake Zambia explains, “I wrote the first part of the song...Actually he [Yo Maps] said...for me to follow it better just record it then ...I will start re-recording it. So that’s what we did...[wrote] the pre-

chorus of the song, yeah” (DJ Showstar, 2022) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgKNaiDln>  
(accessed April 20, 2023).

“Aweah,” was produced by Yo Maps and Prince Luvila (a.k.a. Prince Luv) at his home studio. The song, in *Chinyanja* and English, features synthesized strings, electric piano, percussive samples similar to those prominent in the *amapiano* genre, and guitar. Figure 55 shows the lyrics of “Aweah.”

### Verse 1

Why you wanna close my door  
Why you wanna close my door  
Them always wanna see the boy under

*Bamafuna nikalasiwe na thunder*  
*Bamamvela mushe ngati nigona panja eh*

They wish I could be struck by thunder  
They love it when I have no place to sleep

They want me down, they want me suffer  
They want me gone but I am a big man’s brother  
They wanna see me cry, don’t know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie

God does not sleep and that’s no lie

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone, but I am a big man brother  
They wanna see me cry, don’t know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie

God does not sleep and that’s no lie

### Chorus

*Aweah osanibweza ku ma mavuto*  
*Sinifunoyenda mbuyo*  
*Osanipaila chiloto*  
*Aweah osanibweza ku mavuto*  
*Sinifunoyenda mbuyo*  
*Osanipaila chiloto*

Don’t take me back to the life of strife  
I don’t want to walk back  
Don’t kill my dream  
Don’t take me back to life of strife  
I don’t want to go back  
Don’t kill my dream

## Verse 2

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone but I am a big man's brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie

God does not sleep and that's no lie

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone, but I am a big man brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie  
*Bamafuna nikalasiwe na* thunder  
*Bamamvela mushe ngati nigona panja eh*

God does not sleep and that's no lie  
They wish I could be struck by thunder  
They love it when I have no place to sleep

## Chorus (repeat)

## Verse 3

Don't judge before you get to know me  
I don't know why you hating on me  
You wanna see me down, you wanna see me lonely  
You better know

*Ndine mwana wapakhomo*  
*Kuli door osaikhomako*

I am a child of this household  
Don't lock the door

*Awe iyo, awe iyo oh oh oh ho*

Them always wanna see the boy under

*Bamafuna nikalasiwe na* thunder  
*Bamamvela mushe ngati nigona panja eh eh*

They wish I could be struck by thunder  
They love it when I have no place to sleep

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone, but I am a big man brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie *eh*

God does not sleep and that's no lie

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone, but I am a big man brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie

God does not sleep no lie

### Chorus (repeat)

### Verse 4

#### Chibemba

#### English Translation

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone but I am a big man's brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie

God does not sleep and that's no lie

They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone, but I am a big man brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie  
*Bamafuna nikalasiwe na* thunder

God does not sleep and that's no lie  
They wish I could be struck by thunder

*Bamamvela mushe ngati nigona panja eh*

They love it when I have no place to  
sleep

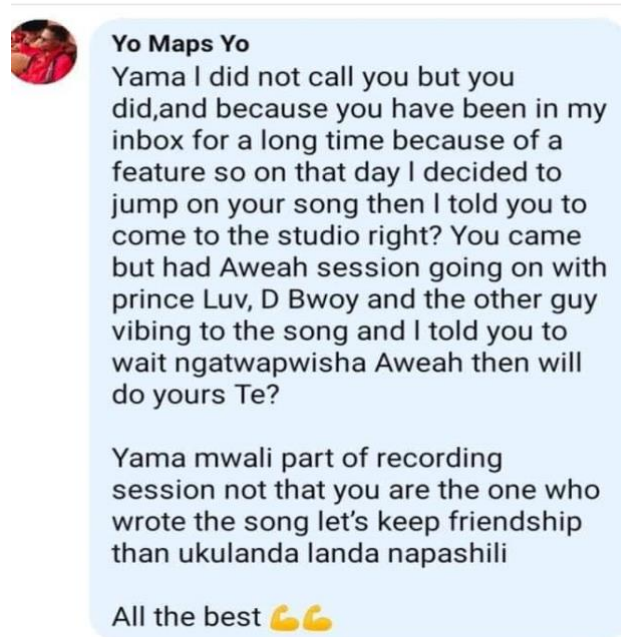
They want me down; they want me suffer  
They want me gone, but I am a big man brother  
They wanna see me cry, don't know why

Anyway, *Mulungu samagona* no lie

God does not sleep and that's no lie

**Figure 55: "Aweah," Text**

The pre-chorus of the song that Blake says he wrote introduces the chorus and occurs four times in the song. It is one of the most interesting sections of the song other than the chorus. However, Yo Maps argued that Blake Zambia was just a part of the recording session on the day the song was produced and that he did not write the part. The following text was Yo Maps' response to Blake Zambia posted on his Facebook page (Figure 56).



**Figure 56: Yo Maps' Response to Blake Zambia on Facebook**

The last part of Yo Maps' response reads, "*Yama mwali* ('you were') part of recording session not that you are the one who wrote the song. Let's keep friendship than *ukulandalanda napashili* ('instead of talking unnecessarily'). All the best." According to Blake Zambia, he, Yo Maps and producers Prince Luv and D Boy were in the studio when "Aweah" was being recorded. The following is an excerpt of an interview between Prince Luv and radio personality DJ Showstar):

DJ Showstar: *Iwe, wenzeko pebenzorekoda “Aweah” banzako aba?* (Where you present when your friends were recording “Aweah?”)

Prince Luv: Eeh (Yes).

DJ Showstar: *Ndani akamba vazoona pali babili aba?* (Who is telling the truth between the two [Yo Maps and Blake Zambia].

Prince Luv: [Laughs] *So muziba mu studio mweimankhalila ai? Mu studio mumankhala uyu aponyapo ka idea, uyu aponyapo ka idea awe imbako so* (You know how recordings in these studios go? In the studio, everyone around can contribute to a song). Just like that. He was just part of the session. Not *ati ndiye analemba nyimbo awe* (It does not mean he wrote the song).

DJ Showstar: *Sakamba ati analemba nyimbo yonse. Akamba chabe ati ninalembako. Ninathandizako kulemba* (He [Blake Zambia] is not saying that he wrote the whole song. He says he wrote part of the song).

Prince Luv: *Ija nyimbo, aliyense, like monga ine, naine ninakamba ati chitako so.* Most of the time *ndiye mwetimachitila...* (I also contributed to that composition. That’s what we do most of the time [in the studio]).

D Boy refused to comment when he was contacted by DJ Showstar (Jonathan Phiri [DJ Showstar] 2022).

Participation by all present is a part of *ukupanga ulwimbo or kurekoda* in *Zed Beats*. In the *Chinsenga*, *chifwinda* refers to spaces in which music and dance performances take place. *Chifwinda* also refers to the actual performances that take place in those spaces. *Vifwinda* (plural) are participatory performance spaces (Tembo, 2019). Turino notes that in participatory performances attention is focused on the sonic and kinesthetic interactions among participants rather than on an end-product that results from the activity (Turino 2008: 28). In *vifwinda*, everyone present is a part of the music-making process. These interactions facilitate what I refer to as *unrestricted corporeal mobility* where bodies’ mobility is not restricted based on skill or identity (for example, as an artist, or spectator). Performances are owned by the whole community in which the music was made.



Similarly, *vifwinda* in *Zed Beats* ensure producers, performers and potential performers interact, share, and compose together. Whoever is present can contribute toward composing a song building on the concept introduced by the artist who paid for the recording session. However, *Zed Beats*' *vifwinda* have become a contested space as far as ownership of the music is concerned. Often, the artist who pays for the session owns rights to the piece of music being recorded. When the producer funds the session, they own the rights to the song regardless of who sings or composes the song. In the case of "Aweah," it was Yo Maps' recording session. Although there were questions about who wrote which part of "Aweah," the artists Prince Luv, Yo Maps and his manager Evans Kandeke (a.k.a. Kandeke), who were present when "Aweah" was being composed in the studio, agreed that recordings of *Zed Beats* are participatory, but they insisted that Yo Maps owned the rights to the song because it was his session.

#### **5.4 From Drawing *Zed Beats* to Pursuing "Liveness" in Home Studios**

Music critics in Zambia have denigrated *Zed Beats* because, in their opinion, it does not involve actual performances on musical instruments. For example, music critic Lazarous Chewe explained that *Zed Beats* is poorly performed on workstations as compared to the earlier genres of *kalindula* and Zamrock (personal communication, July 10, 2023). Tabitha Lilungwe, who has worked as Content Creator at Bloggers Zambia and Projects Manager at People's Action for Accountability and Good Governance in Zambia (PAAGZ) says of *Zed Beats*: "Excess use of technology, no lyrical content, lacks authenticity...too much stealing of other people's *beats*. Lyrics are usually mumbled on the spot, not having a clear story" (interview, June 2020). Mau Mwale referred to music making in home studios of the mid- to late-1990s as *drawing music*

(interview, 2020). *Drawing music* because music producers then actually drew musical notes using a computer mouse on the grid in a music software to make music.

When *Zed Beats* emerged in the Zambian music scene in the early 2000s, digital recordings defined the genre, a situation that gave producers total control of the production of music. The only parts that were recorded live then were vocals. Examples of such recordings include Lily T's debut album *Lily T* (2004), Danny's *Mvelani* (2000). However, in the same time period, some producers of *Zed Beats* began to incorporate live instrumentation in their productions, particularly guitars. JK's debut album *JK* (2001), Danny's *Kaya (We Don't Know)* [2005] and Shatel's *Unbreakable* (2002) are some of the albums that prominently featured live guitars in their production. Producers incorporate live instrumentation for various reasons, commercial reasons being the main one. Live instrumentation is incorporated in musical productions of *Zed Beats* to align the music to older fans who still have an appreciation for productions that were performed live to buy the music. Producers also incorporate live guitars in *Zed Beats* to authenticate the music. Live guitars sound better and more authentic than sampled guitars from a digital audio workstation (Jones Kabanga, interview, January 4, 2024). The other reason for incorporating live instrumentation is that better digital audio workstations now available in home studios can facilitate live recordings although drum kit is still a challenge to record live in these studios. Some producers fuse in live guitars to give their music a unique sound. The incorporation of live instrumentation in the production of *Zed Beats* engendered further shifts in musical labor as session musicians began to be reincorporated in the production of Zambian popular music.



**Figure 57: Daliso Tracking Live Bass in Chalila Studio**

Music that involve recordings of live performances in the studio give them a human feel, an important element in communal music-making communities in Africa. Lwando and Kanjo (2013:39) note that programming music on keyboard synthesizers and digital audio workstations have a constraining effect on African rhythms, even in the hands of an adept programmer. Programmed and sample-derived *beats* are limited in compositional gestures (Ullman, 2016:17).

*Zed Beats* artists who are searching for a unique sound incorporate live instrumentation in the hope that they will sound different from others whose productions are completely performed on digital audio workstations. Some artists incorporate live instrumentation, particularly guitars, as a way of reconnecting and reviving the music of the past generation. Moreover, incorporating live instrumentation is used to celebrate a *Zambian music identity*.

In the pursuit of “liveness,” producers Gene B, Jerry Fingaz, and Silentt Erazzer among others note that when dealing with an electronically mediated form such as *Zed Beats*, “liveness” can be achieved by incorporating some instrumentation and/or by creation an illusion of it. *Zed Beats* acts including Yo Maps and Frank Chirwa (a.k.a. Afunika) pursue “liveness” by incorporating live guitars in their music. Yo Maps told me that he loves the sound of the guitar (interview, November 5, 2021). Since the samples of guitar in most music software do not sound real, he prefers a guitar that is performed live. Afunika refers to his style as *new version of kalindula* (interview, November 5, 2021). The *kalindula* and Congolese soukous genres that inspired Afunika’s musical style are guitar-dominated even though some of his productions have been digitally produced and do not include live instrumentation. In such cases, Afunika has achieved “liveness” by manipulating sound samples on a digital audio workstation to make them sound live, creating an illusion of it. An illusion of “sounding live that is constructed through technological intervention in the studio...” (Meintjes, 2003: 112). Reason and Lindelof (2016:7) argue that “...research suggests that audiences invest meaning and value in the possibility of change, of risk, of mistakes, even in the absence of them actually occurring. Indeed, perhaps specifically because of the absence of them occurring, with the ability to pull something off live producing an admiration of virtuosity and an appreciation of the skill and craft of the performer...Liveness is often discussed with regard to the ephemerality of performance and from the perspective of production in which the work is re-made anew on each representation. It is the possibility of change and change itself that make a performance more interesting.” Sanden (2013:4) observes that “despite whatever benefits that recording technologies may have offered, live music was typically considered more real, more authentic, and in the final balance, more

desirable.” It is the ephemerality, the fleetingness, the transiency that makes live music real, more authentic and more desirable.

In Gene B Zone Studio on July 5, 2021. I lamented about how the digital approach of recording music has marginalized musicians, particularly the players of musical instruments. My argument was that eventually, musical talent that involves performing on a musical instrument will be lost if producers of *Zed Beats* don’t incorporate live instrumentation in their productions. Gene B, one of the few producers in the Copperbelt who incorporates live instrumentation in his productions, countered my argument (interview, 2021):

Mathew Tembo (MT): So, ...you incorporate live instrumentation into the *beats* that you make. Why do you do that? Because, initially, for me, I have always thought, you make *beats* [in home studios] ...*chapwa ifyofine* (that’s it, just that). But why do you sometimes incorporate live instrumentation in the music that you produce?

Gene B: Okay, to start with, live music is live music. You cannot run away from that... All these sounds which [are] in [music] software... came from live instruments. So, us producers of nowadays... are just adding on what is already there. But the actual sound is coming from the live. Like for example, a guitar plays a very big role. Someone will be playing a guitar [and] the sound which is going to come out from there ... will be different [from that made] by someone sitting on the computer [plotting guitar notes in a music software] ... There is that difference. Very big difference. So, personally, I feel there is that feel which is in live music, which we cannot run away from ... Even up to now, we will use it and will continue using it. For example, the kind of music that we are doing. These artists are doing this time around, it is very easy for someone, Mr Tembo, [to] just to wake up and produce a song. Pa pa! It becomes a hit. It’s very easy this time. But good content of music, there is supposed to be that aspect of live music. For me to call, this is good music, “liveness” has to be there because it will sound different...

MT: So, last time we talked, you talked about the lifespan of the music in relation to live instrumentation. Remember?

IS: ...Yeah...music of nowadays...someone will just wake up, plot everything on the computer, then a hit song will come out. And that will just be for a short period of time. But for live, live music will stay for a longer period of time because of its “liveness” in it. So, for me, like I was saying, me, the kind of music that I am doing this time around, I am looking at the lifespan of the music. So, for me, every sound that I am putting across, there is that “liveness” in it. Hoping that that music will live forever ... Because of the “liveness” in it.

Gene B reports that the digital recording technology is modeled on live instrumentation. Sound samples in music software are simulations of sounds that are performed live on a musical instrument. *Zed Beats* producers draw from music that was once performed live. However, Gene B is aware that simply *drawing notes* of samples of those instruments in a music software can be limiting because some plugins cannot accurately simulate intricate African rhythmic performances, let alone replace the human feel. He observes that music that lacks a human feel has shorter longevity. “liveness” ensures the longevity of a piece of music.

When I observed a mixing session in Chinx Studio, I had a brief interview with Chinx after the session about incorporating “liveness” in the production of *Zed Beats*. The following is an excerpt from that interview (July 6, 2021):

Chinx: “The way I see it, I think there are two types of musicians. There are those who like the sound digital. Like they want the sound to sound like it was made on the computer and it’s digital. Everything is, you know, digital. Then there are those who want the sound to emulate live sound...”

Mathew Tembo: Why?

Chinx: ... When I am working, let’s say I am mixing, or when I am producing, I always take that approach [sounding live]. I am trying. Even instruments [samples] that I use, I use instruments that are more like emulations of live, you know, sounds.

As Kabanga observes, older fans will spend money on that kind of music. “liveness” identifies Zambian music as Zambian. It adds cultural value to the music. “liveness” is perceived as a marker of difference, a promotional gimmick, or even an evocation of cultural value (Reason and Lindelof 2016:1).

On Friday November 5, 2021, I went to see a concert at Ebony VIP Club in the Parklands neighborhood of Kitwe. Yo Maps and Afunika headlined the concert. When I got to the venue at

about 9 pm, local Kitwe acts had begun performing. The performances consisted of rappers and singers lip-syncing to their own songs. The sound was muddy and distorted, but the musicians and their youthful fans did not seem to mind as they danced and sang along to the music.

A few minutes after 10 pm, Afunika was invited to the stage to perform his set. He also lip-synced to his own songs. Occasionally, he invited some female fans on stage to dance with him. After his set, I spotted Afunika sitting at the back of a van that was parked at the entrance to the bar at Club Ebony. He recognized me and invited me to the back seat of the van. Afunika and I have collaborated on a recording before. I inquired why he did not perform with a band. Although he prefers to perform with a band, most music promoters in Zambia do not pay enough to afford hiring a band. He told me that he incorporates live guitars in his recordings to authentic his *new version of kalindula*.

While Afunika and I were talking in the back seat of the van, Yo Maps joined us. His recent recordings have incorporated a considerable amount of live guitar performances. He reported to me that he has always loved the unique sound of the guitar. Other than Yo Maps' preference for the sound of live guitar, he realizes that incorporating live instrumentation adds a *Zambian identity* to his music. By incorporating live guitar performances, Yo Maps is reviving the guitar music culture that was prominent in the production of longstanding genres *kalindula* and *Zamrock*. This is exemplified in his hit song "So Chabe" (Let it Be) [2020]. In the song, sung in *Chinyanja*, Yo Maps talks about how true love perseveres through the hardships of life. Figure 58 displays the text of the song.

## Verse 1

### Chinyanja

*Ye ye ye ye yeye  
Oh, na na na na ah ha ah ah aaaah  
Eeh he he*

*Tenzogona njala, kugona pansa na iwe*

*Ngati sinafole wenzosova ma pressure na iwe*

*Babe wenzochita understand  
But bamanidabwisa  
Bamafuna kuti nikuleke nikusiye iwe  
Bamafuna kuti nifune baja benangu ine  
Sibaziba, kwenachoka nawe  
Apa bamanisekesa  
Kuniuza vamushe vakumutima  
Sibaziba kwamene tachokela  
Babe, nakula nawe*

### English Translation

We went to bed hungry; I slept on the floor  
with you

When I didn't get paid, you solved our lives'  
problems

Babe, you would understand  
They shock me though  
They want me to leave you  
They want me to be with other girls  
They don't know how far we have come  
They make me laugh  
They tell me nice things of the heart  
They don't know where we have come  
Babe, I have grown with you

## Chorus

*Nangu bakambe ndiwe hule, so chabe  
Babe, so chabe  
So chabe, babe nakula nawe  
Ati siuniwamila neo so chabe  
Babe, so chabe  
So chabe babe*

It's okay even if they say you are a whore  
Babe let it be  
Let it be, babe I have grown with you  
They say you don't fit me, let it be  
Babe let it be  
Let it be babe

## Verse 2

*Chimanibaba penango  
Nimafuna kukupasa vonse umafuna iwe  
Nomba nilibe chuma chokupasa iwe  
But babe, umachita understand ah  
But bamanidabwisa*

Sometimes it hurts me  
I want to give you everything you want  
But I do not have riches to give to you  
but babe you understand  
They shock me though



*Bafuna bankhale muchikondi  
chathu bakanfinsa*

They want to be involved in our love affair

*Ma pressure malegeni badonsa  
Babe, nakula nawe  
Abo bamanisekesa*

They put pressure on us  
Babe I have grown with you  
They make me laugh

*Bafuna batikontolole mu chikondi abo  
ba Mwiza*

They want to control our relationship

*Ine kusiya mutima mwandi sinzayesa  
Ah mami, nifuna kukota nawe*

Leaving [my] heart I won't do  
Mummy I want to grow old with you

### Chorus (repeat)

### Figure 58: “So Chabe” (Let it Be), Text

“So Chabe” features live guitars and maintains the *du-nka* drum pattern, bass, synthesized strings, and xylophone all orchestrated in a music software. The guitar, the only musical instrument that was performed live throughout the recording, is the most prominent in the mix of the song, particularly on the choruses. “So Chabe” exemplifies Ullman’s observation that live instrumentation encourages interaction between vocals and instrumentals (2016). The song features two guitar parts performed live. One, more rhythmic and arpeggiated, plays throughout the song, and the second part, a riff that responds to Yo Maps’ singing on the first chorus is introduced at 1:26. The descending guitar part is also performed as a variation of the first one, a fourth interval higher in pitch (see Figure 59).



Figure 59: “So Chabe,” Guitar Part

The second half of the guitar performance follows the same arrangement as the first half except the part this time is a perfect fourth of the original but maintains the rhythmic pattern and the melodic contour of the first part (Figure 60).



**Figure 60: “So Chabe,” Guitar Part Variation**

The variation leads to the second verse of the song. The two variations are employed very similarly on the second chorus of the song. The guitar parts are performed in a call and answer style alternating with Yo maps’ singing.

Although Afunika brands his music *kalindula*, most of his music features more Congolese soukous musical elements than *kalindula* influences. His song “Piki Piki Skirt” (The Shaking Skirt) exemplifies this fact. The song is sung in *Chibemba* and *Lingala*. *Lingala* is spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo DRC). Afunika grew up in Chingola in the Copperbelt where *Lingala* is sporadically spoken by Congolese traders who trade in the region. The Copperbelt borders Congo DRC in the north. The lyrics of the song are displayed in Figure 61.

### Intro

#### Chibemba

*Twende piki piki*  
*Twende piki piki*

#### English Translation

Let’s go piki piki  
 Let’s go piki piki

## Chorus

<i>Bushe webo skirt chinshi itenkanine ifi</i>	Why is your skirt shaking like so
<i>Lolesha mona abanobe aba bena ikelefye zii</i>	Look at how your friends' skirts are not [shaking]
<i>Bushe webo skirt chinshi itenkanine ifi</i>	Why is your skirt shaking so bad
<i>Lolesha mona abanobe aba bena ikelefye tondolo</i>	Look at how your friends' skirts are at peace
<i>Skirt yobe ni hmmm ah eh ah eh ah ...x2 Ale chikate chikate</i>	Your skirt is hmmm ah ah eh ah eh... x2 Hold it, hold it

## Verse 1

<i>Eihe iyeiye</i>	
<i>Ka njipushe efyo namona pantu mtima ine tetiwikalefye</i>	Let me ask what I have because my heart won't let me
<i>Mummy fintu namona pali iwe fisuma Fyekafyekafye</i>	Love, I have only seen good things on you
<i>Wampela umutende nga namona kunuma kwekakwekafye</i>	You give me joy when I see your behind
<i>Nomutima wandi wasendwa nga namona ukwenda kwekakwekafye</i>	My heart is taken when I see your walk
<i>Niwe shing'anga wamtima Aba bambi baleibepafye</i>	You are the doctor to my heart These others are lying to themselves
<i>Oh mummy, konse walaya, nalakukonka mpakafye mbone efyo uleenda</i>	Oh love, wherever you go, I will follow so I watch how you walk
<i>Nga uleenda kwati kushana</i>	It's like you are dancing when you are walking

**Chorus (repeat)**

**Verse 2**

<i>Iye eh Tekanya mummy</i>	Take it easy love
<i>Watutumya kunuma kwati kwaba taser</i>	You shake your ass as if there is a taser installed there
<i>Ifi wanchita apa Watutumya kunuma kwati kwaba taser Kwena uyu mufulo</i>	What you have done to me right now You shake your ass as if there is a taser This is a deliberate act
<i>Nga uleshana iwe kwatifye mufulo</i>	You are doing it on purpose when you dance
<i>Awe kwena bamwene webo pakuimba ndombolo</i>	They saw you when they sang <i>ndombolo</i>
<i>Ifyo uletensha uko kunuma awe ni ndombolo</i>	The way you shake your ass, it's <i>ndombolo</i>
<i>Oh, abanobe bonse ama skirt yalifye tondolo</i>	Your friends' skirts are at peace
<i>Bushe chinshi icho ichiletenkana ku numa kuli iwe webo?</i>	What is that shaking at your back?
<i>Ndefwaya njishibe pakuti mailo nkese uchungulo</i>	I want to know if I can come see you tomorrow evening
<i>Oh, ho oh konse konse walaya</i>	Everywhere you will go
<i>Nalakukonka mpakafye mbone efyo uleenda</i>	I will be following you until I see how you walk
<i>Nga uleenda webo kwati ku shana</i>	You Walk as if you are dancing

**Chorus (repeat)**

## Rap in Lingala

<u>Lingala</u>	<u>English Translation</u>
<i>Eh aluka toleka</i>	Let's go
<i>Apesa nga loteka nyata ah</i>	Give me step ah
<i>Eh Baluka</i>	Summersault
<i>Aaah ha ah ah ha skirt yobe ni</i>	Aaah ha ah ha your skirt is
<i>Aha baluka. Alepesa ngaloteka nyata</i>	Give me, hit it

**Figure 61: “Piki Piki Skirt” (The Shaking Skirt), Text**

The rap toward the end of the song is the only party sung in *Lingala*. In the 1980s when Zambia's music economy was faltering, Congolese soukous dominated Zambian musicscape. Soukous musicians regularly toured Zambia. Percussion was the most prominent part of the genre. Most percussion patterns in Afunika's music, although not performed live, simulate Congolese soukous drum patterns. Figure 62 is the drum pattern in “Piki Piki Skirt.”



**Figure 62: “Piki Piki Skirt,” Drum Pattern**

The emphasis on the snare playing alternating patterns with the kick drum is prominent and in the front of the mix of the song. Although the percussion part of the song was programmed in a music software, the idea was to create an illusion of “liveness.” The song structure of “Piki Piki” is similar to that of most of the 1990s Congolese soukous songs. Table 3 shows the arrangement of the song.

Chorus 1 in moderate tempo
Verse 1 in moderate tempo
Chorus 2
Verse 2 in moderate tempo
<i>Sebene</i> in high tempo dominated by guitars and snare drum
Rap in the Lingala language

**Table 3: “Piki Piki Skirt,” Song Arrangement**

*Sebene* is a section in a soukous song that comes after the singing. The section is dominated by fast-paced tempo guitar riffs in the high register and snare drum rolls. The section, usually performed in harmonic progressions that involve chords I, IV, V and sometimes vi, is meant to excite the performer and the listener. By branding his music the new version of *kalindula*, Afunika assigns his music a Zambian identity. Incorporating live musical elements, including soukous, is an effort to construct that ‘liveness.’

Audiences invest meaning and value in live performances because people have “an admiration of virtuosity and an appreciation of the skill and craft of the performer” (Reason and Lindelof, 2016:7). Less mistakes in a live performance indicates greater skill. Similarly, in Zambia, some fans I talked to do not attach great value to performances that involve lip-syncing to recorded music. Such performances do not highlight virtuosity on the part of the performer. The modes of musical production of *Zed Beats* in home studios have influenced live performances of popular music in Zambia. Most *Zed Beats* concerts I have attended involve artists lip syncing to the recordings of their own music as the artists strive to maintain the aesthetics of the genre.

The pursuit for “liveness” by way of incorporating live instrumentation in *Zed Beats* has impacted musical labor in home studios. Since most *Zed Beats* singers are not skilled accompanists, session musicians are hired to provide live instrumentation during the production

of the music in the studio. Frank Kabwe, session guitarist in Chinx Music Studio, argues that session musicians perform various roles in home studios. Beside tracking live instrumentation on recordings, musicians are also expected to critique the music of their client and rearrange it if necessary (interview, July 6, 2021). Jones Kabanga reported to me on how he composed guitar parts or even co-produced some of *Zed Beats* biggest hit songs of the early 2000s without being rightly credited (interview, 2021). Despite not being credited on most of the productions, session musicians are co-composers, co-producers, and co-arrangers of the music in home studios.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Professional studios monopolized the production of popular music in Zambia before the rise of semi-professional and home studios. In part because they were funded by corporates who could afford the expensive recording facilities, the space in which to set up these facilities and hire of specialized musical labor to staff the studios. In professional studios, musicians were recorded simultaneously using multi-track recorders onto tapes. Bands through their band leader or executive producer (also referred to as band manager) directed the production of the music in collaboration with sound engineers. The mixing and mastering (or editing, as it was called then), which were exclusively the sound engineer's tasks, involved balancing the sounds and cutting out unwanted sections of recordings. Accompanists and vocalists used standalone preamps, compressors, and other hardware for capturing acoustic signals and processing them (Lupiya, interview 2017).

In this dissertation, I argued that the social economic conditions of the late-1980s and 1990s including the demise of many musicians (to HIV/AIDS), night curfews introduced by the UNIP government in the late-1980s, the proliferation of mobile discos, the decline of Zambia's economy and its liberalization led to the rise of semi-professional and home studios. In 1986 when Central Studio was set up, Zambian popular music began to be produced in semi-professional studios, and three years later in home studios after the launch of Mushima Studio.

The neo liberalization of Zambia's economy facilitated the transformation of the production of Zambian music economy, as the liberal market that was introduced by the neo liberalization process made computers and other related accessories needed for home studios available and accessible to music enthusiasts, aspiring musicians, and producers. In this



dissertation, I also highlighted how neo liberalization in other music economies in the region engendered similar results as those witnessed in Zambia. For example, neo liberalization in Tanzania encouraged innovation, private ownership and commodification of cultural forms (Perullo, 2011). In Zambia's case, neo liberalization policy encouraged individuals in the music scene to own the means of production. Musicians and music enthusiasts developed innovative ways of sustaining the production of music and the music economy at large. Between 1990 and 1999, businesses such as Digital Networks International (DNI), WEFA and Mondo Music set up more semi-professional studios. Individuals, including Michael Linyama and Francis Mwiinga, launched their studios in their homes. The modes of producing music in these studios impacted shifts in musical labor in Zambian music scene.

I have used *Zed Beats* as a site for analyzing shifts in musical production and musical labor. In the late-1980s, ensembles began to be replaced by the producer with his keyboard synthesizer and computer, and eventually digital audio workstations. Musicians were pushed to the margins of musical production. Producers took up roles of composer, musician, arranger, and sound engineer, roles that had been carried out by specialized individuals in professional studios. I further highlighted how these producers came to possess power and social capital as they owned and controlled the means of production of *Zed Beats* and its circulation.

Today, the spaces in which the music is produced in home studios are constricted as the compact studio recording equipment in use does not require much space. Changes in the spaces where music is produced have made the production of *Zed Beats* a more intimate endeavor. The intimacy in the way *Zed Beats* is produced, the participatory nature of music making in them and the potential for a lucrative career have encouraged women, who had for a long time been

marginalized in Zambian popular music circles, to participate in the production of music as lead singers, songwriters and composers.

In the penultimate chapter of this dissertation, I examined the business side of *Zed Beats*. Typically, *Zed Beats* artists have two sources of income: royalties from online platforms, and performances (including radio and television). Up and coming and less known artists hardly benefit from their labor. However, producers tend to have several streams of income as a result of their labor. Most of the producers I interviewed during my fieldwork have assumed the roles of booking agent and record label where they get a cut from their artists' royalties, collaborations with other artists and sometimes performances. In this chapter, I also analyzed the production process of subgenres of *Zed Beats* in different home studios.

In the last chapter of this dissertation, I examined shifts in musical labor that were brought about by new compositional approaches to *Zed Beats* in home studios. The participatory nature of composing and producing *Zed Beats* in home studios by the producer, artist, visiting artists, session musicians, and others present during studio sessions has shifted the roles of composer, musician and producer. The practice has further exposed the power dynamics among different actors involved in the production of music in home studios as producers maintain their position and claim even the composer's role as they adapt their digital audio workstations as a musical instrument in the compositional process of the genre.

In this dissertation, I also examined the evolution of musical production in home studios in Zambia, which consisted of plotting notes through MIDI and music software. Further advancements in the recording technology beginning in the 2010s later coincided with the pursuit of "liveness" in the production of *Zed Beats*. Producers began reincorporating guitarists as session musicians in the production of the genre. Guitarists who had been pushed to the margins of music

production in the 1990s after the closure of semi-professional and professional studios were drawn back to the center of music production in home studios. These musicians took on multiple roles as music critics, co-producers, co-arrangers and co-composers. However, as guitarist Kabanga noted, session musicians were not given full credit for their labor.

Emerging in the early 2000s, *Zed Beats* is a case study of popular music in Zambia that demonstrates changes in the production of music dating back to the late-1980s. These changes involve new historical conditions, new technologies, new social relations, musical innovations, and new meanings for popular music in Zambia. *Zed Beats* did not “cause” these changes to happen as these changes are based on larger political, economic, and cultural factors. As I demonstrated in this dissertation, other kinds of music besides *Zed Beats* were recorded under similar conditions in home studios from 1989 to 2000 when the sound morphed into *Zed Beats*. But the genre of *Zed Beats* exemplifies and represents those changes and continues to participate in moving Zambian music history forward.

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- Banda, Jerry (a.k.a. Jerry Fingaz). Music producer and Proprietor of Jerry Fingaz Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. August 8, 2017.
- Chali, Alice. Lead singer [female] in Amayenge Cultural Ensemble. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. August 6, 2017.
- Chama, Patrick (a.k.a. PC). Proprietor of Collabo Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 4, 2021.
- Chanda, Jagari. Lead singer of Zamrock Band WITCH. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. July 27, 2021.

Chibuye, Gift (a.k.a. Silent Murder). Producer at Collabo Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 5, 2021.

Chinkwenge, Lwanda (a.k.a. Chinx). Proprietor and music producer at Chinx Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 6, 2021.

Chipanuka, Jonas (a.k.a. Dope Nigga). *Zed Beats* artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 1, 2021.

Kabanga, Jones. Guitarist and producer. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. August 21, 2017.

Kabwe, Frank. Guitarist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 6, 2021.

Kapela, Deborah (a.k.a. Deborah). *Zed Beats* female artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. June 16, 2021.

Linyama Michael. One of the first music producers in home studios. He produced music at Mushima and Zintwastic among other studios. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. June 27, 2017.

Lupiya, Lwarence. One of the recordists at dB Studios. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. June 27, 2017.

Lilungwe, Tabitha. Music fan who worked at Bloggers Zambia. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. June 8, 2020.

Malowa, Maurice (a.k.a. Raydo). Proprietor and music producer at Digital X Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. June 19, 2018.

Mkosha, William (a.k.a. Shattaman Selassie). *Zed Beats* artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Chilanga. July 16, 2021.

Muleya, Mizinga. Teacher of music. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. December 22, 2023.

Mutale, Che (a.k.a. Che). Artist and music producer at MUVI Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. August 28, 2021.

Mulalami, Chali (a.k.a. Chali Bravo). Proprietor and music producer at Sling Beats Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. July 28, 2021.

Mulenga, Gerald (a.k.a. Kellz). Music producer at Cozy Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. June 28, 2021.

Mwaba, Pethia (a.k.a. Young Kid). *Zed Beats* artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 1, 2021.

Mwale, Mau. Singer in Mwale Sisters and recording artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. September 12, 2020.

Mwale, Mzenga (a.k.a. DJ Mzengaman). Proprietor and music producer at Mzenga Beats Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. 20 July 2021.

Mwanza, Mutinta. Singer, song writer and recording artist (female). Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. August 20, 2019.

Ng'ambi, Teresa. Singer, song writer and recording artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Chilanga. September 16, 2020.

Phiri, Angel. Film maker. He was also the manager at MUVI Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. June 20, 2021.

Phiri, Felix (a.k.a. Rocky). Proprietor and music producer at Rocky Nation Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 10, 2021.

Phiri, Moses (a.k.a. DJ Momo). Music producer at Chalila Studio). Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 5, 2021.

Saidi, Chriss. Anthropologist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. July 21, 2018.

Sawelo, Samuel. Music Producer. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. December 22, 2023.

Siyanga, Munalula (a.k.a. Beat Freak). Music producer at Beat Freak Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kabwe. September 3, 2021.

Silwamba, Ian (a.k.a. Gene B). Proprietor and music producer at Gene B Zone Studio). Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kitwe. July 5, 2021.

Taptap, Julius. Music producer. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kabwe. September 3, 2021.

Taptap, Leah. Singer and recording artist. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Kabwe. September 3, 2021.

Tembo, Elijah. Proprietor and music producer at Kula Music Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. July 17, 2021.

Zulu, Emmanuel (a.k.a. Silentt Erazer). Proprietor and music producer at Silentt Erazer Studio. Interview by Mathew Tembo. Personal interview. Lusaka. May 24, 2021.