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Life and Work in Northern Rhodesia: Godfrey Wilson and Xavier Kofie

by

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Abstract

This essay narrates the biography of one migrant labourer in interwar Northern Rhodesia (modern Zambia), which he shared with social anthropologist Godfrey Wilson in vivid detail when he was Wilson's language tutor in Livingstone in 1938 and again when they met in Broken Hill in 1939-1940. The essay presents Xavier Kofie's recollections of growing up in Kasama and Mpika in the Northern Province of Northern Rhodesia, being educated at a succession of mission schools until the level of Standard Three, and then of his working life, successively in Mazabuka, Lusaka, Wankie and Livingstone as research assistant to an agricultural officer, farm worker, cobbler, court messenger, football player and mission school teacher. In addition, the notebook record contains in much greater detail the story of his three months of intensive daily work in Livingstone teaching Wilson iciBemba and sharing often remarkably incisive sociological insights about African migrant labourers in Northern Rhodesia. Although partial and incomplete due to the limits of the archive present Xavier Kofie's life history as emblematic of the experiences of migrant labourers in colonial Northern Rhodesia. I view his life history through his interaction with the anthropologist. Thus, this essay also reflects the relationship between an African informant and an anthropologist in interwar Northern Rhodesia. It demonstrates how multi-lingual collaboration was crucial to the work of anthropologists and underscores the need for more studies on relationships between 'professional' anthropologists and research assistants like Xavier Kofie.

Key Words: African research assistant, biography, Rhodes Livingstone Institute, iciBemba, field-notes, fieldwork method, Godfrey Wilson, Northern Rhodesia, Xavier Kofie.

Introduction

Godfrey Wilson's *An Essay in the Economics of De-Tribalization*, published by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in two parts in 1941 and 1942, and republished by Manchester University Press in 1968, is widely acknowledged as a landmark text in the history of African anthropology.

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[1] Wilson challenged the conventional wisdom of the colonial government of Northern Rhodesia regarding the process of African urbanization. Based on extensive data he had collected during seven months of fieldwork in Broken Hill (Kabwe), he demonstrated that three-quarters of its African migrant workers had spent a significant period of their working lives in town and regarded themselves as urban dwellers rather than rural visitors.[2] Modern scholars became well acquainted with this text when it became the topic of an intense and extended debate between two renowned scholars James Fergusson and Hugh McMillan. The debate, centred on the underlying politics and theory of society which informed Wilson's anthropology.[3]

The opening of the Monica and Godfrey Wilson Papers in the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the University of Cape Town Libraries,[4] later transferred to the University's African Studies Library Special Collections, allowed for an in-depth engagement with the processes of knowledge production and fieldwork methods associated with Wilson's African fieldwork. This archival record has facilitated a more nuanced understanding of the field methods that informed Wilson's urban anthropology in Northern Rhodesia. For example, based on a close reading of the 17 notebooks he recorded in Livingstone and Broken Hill in 1938, 1939 and 1940, Karen Tranberg Hansen provides a vivid reconstruction of Wilson's urban fieldwork techniques.[5] The author has equally drawn attention to Wilson's research methodologies at Broken Hill, highlighting the "triangulation in relationships" involving the anthropologist, his unacknowledged research assistant Zacharia Mawere and a cast of informants from whom Wilson and Mawere collected life histories or biographic sketches.

[1] I am deeply grateful to Andrew Bank for his input in the drafting and redrafting of this article, his engaged supervision of my 2015 University of the Western Cape M.A. thesis 'A Triangulation of Relationships: Godfrey Wilson and his Interpreters' and his patience in working over my many months of archival research in Cape Town. Special thanks also to Karen Tranberg Hansen and the late Lyn Schumaker for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this article.
[2] Godfrey Wilson, *An Essay on the Economics of De-Tribalization in Northern Rhodesia, Parts I and II, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers 5 and 6* (1941 and 1942) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968).
[3] See J. Ferguson, 'Mobile Workers, Modernist Narratives: A Critique of the Historiography of the Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt', Parts 1 and 2, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16, 3, 1990, 385-412 and 16, 4, 1990, 603-21; H. Macmillan, 'The Historiography of Transition of the Zambian Copperbelt: Another View', *JSAS*, 19, 4, 1993, 681-712; Ferguson, 'Modernist Narratives, Conventional Wisdoms, and Colonial Liberalism: Reply to a Straw Man', *JSAS*, 20, 4, 1994, 633040; Macmillan, 'More Thoughts on the Zambian Copperbelt', *JSAS*, 22, 2, 1996, 309-12; and Ferguson, 'Urban Trends on the Zambian Copperbelt: A Short Bibliographic Note', *JSAS*, 22, 2, 1996, 313.
[4] For an account of 'The Rich Life of the Wilson Collection' see Andrew Bank, 'Introduction' in Andrew Bank and Leslie J. Bank, eds., *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and Her Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 26-34.
[5] Hansen, 'Urban Research in a Hostile Setting', 194.

From these biographic sketches, Wilson drew his conclusion on "partial detribalization" of Africans in urban centres.[6]

In the light of this information, as a fluent ciBemba speaker, I ventured (with some trepidation) to the African Studies Library at University of Cape Town in February 2014 to read these extracts from Wilson's notebooks to reveal what they could tell us about the relationship between Wilson and his African assistants and interpreters. What could we learn about the African interpreters that he had failed, for reasons that I reflect on in the conclusion, to openly and adequately acknowledge in his published essay? Andrew Bank, had recently explored the complex issues associated with the politics of under-acknowledged African researchers in relation to Monica Wilson's fieldwork in Pondoland and classic ethnography *Reaction to Conquest*.[7]

From my first days in the archive I learnt that Wilson recorded his field-notes in standard-sized A5 hardbound notebooks which he had brought with him from England.[8] He wrote the place and date on the cover of most of his notebooks, including occasionally a title: for example, 'Cibemba' and 'Urban sociology' on the covers of his first two Northern Rhodesian notebooks.[9] I saw that he wrote his notes on one side of the page, the odd numbered side if we were to number them, using the flip side to write extra notes. These additions include short explanations, follow-up questions and frequently in the earlier part of his research, new vocabulary. I was able to pick out two different 'styles of field writing' (following James Clifford's terminology).[10] Wilson's notebooks contained 'transcriptions' of whole conversations with an informant or group of informants. When he asked questions on these occasions, he recorded his questions as well as the answers of the interviewees, using symbols in the form of dashes and initials of participants to indicate where his question or comment started and ended. During these occasions, Wilson also occasionally indicated, in brackets for example, the actions of the parties involved. I also found evidence of 'description', as when Wilsonwrote up his notes after his observations as he did for portions of Xavier Kofie's life history discussed below.[11]

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[6] For the concept of triangulation, see See P. Reynolds, 'Gleanings and Leavings: Encounters in Hindsight' in Bank and Bank, eds., *Inside African Anthropology*, 311; Mary Mbewe "A triangulation of relationships: Godfrey Wilson, Zacharia Mawere and their Bemba informants in Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia, 1938–1941" MA thesis submitted to the University of the Western Cape (2015), http://hdl.handle.net/11394/4610

[7] Andrew Bank, 'The "Intimate Politics" of Fieldwork: Monica Hunter and Her African Assistants' in Bank and Bank, eds., *Inside African Anthropology*, 67-94.

[8] Marsland, 'Pondo Pins and Nyakyusa Hammers', 143-160.

[9] WC, Godfrey Wilson, Broken Hill Research, Notebooks, E1.1-E1.2.

[10] Marsland, 'Pondo Pins and Nyakyusa Hammers', 143-160.

[11] J. Clifford, 'Notes on (Field)notes' in R. Sanjek, ed., *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). In found no evidence of 'inscription' in the notes, the on-site record of flowing conversation and social interaction, the third of Clifford's terms for the different modes of field writing.

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Wilson typically wrote up notes at home in the evening, as Monica Wilson informed her father in one of her letters from the field.[12] This advice about notetaking from the Wilsons first co-authored publication, a short handbook for administrators in Africa willing to record ethnographic information, gives us more information about how and where Wilson went about taking notes.

> Whenever possible notes should be made during a ceremony or during conversation with an informant. We ourselves often find it possible to take down long statements at the time they are made, when friends go slowly for us and pause while we write. Otherwise rough notes made at the time can be written up the same evening. And as far as possible statements should be taken down in the vernacular.[13]

His vernacular texts, I found, were a rich repository of information about the lives of African labour migrants and research assistants. This was because he used a field method that was highly unusual for his time: 'the biographical sketch, sometimes referred to in the notes as a life history'.[14] But as I immersed myself more deeply in the notebooks over many months of intense and daily work in 2014, the vernacular record proved much more difficult to decipher than I had anticipated. Despite my fluency in ciBemba, which had been reinforced by my studies of Bemba language and literature across my high school years, there were many times where the words or the meanings of the texts were obscure. Wilson's handwriting is not always easy to read. While Wilson was conversationally adept, his grammar and spelling were poor, especially in the early stages of his record of dialogue. I very frequently had to consult with Bemba friends in Zambia about particular words or sentences. In the end I would estimate that as much as half of my research time on my M.A. thesis was spent on this work of poring over ciBemba text and finding a workable English translation. I sought to analyse this collective testimony in relation to what Monica Wilson's former student Pamela Reynolds evocatively referred to as 'a triangulation of relationships between the anthropologist, the assistant(s) and the informant(s)'.[15]

What did these stories of Africans, particularly most vividly recorded biographical sketch, that of a man I came to regard as his more significant research assistant, Xavier Kofie, have to contribute to scholarly knowledge about the history of African anthropology? In the subsections that follow I reconstruct the life story of Xavier Kofie as it emerged from three sources in these notebooks: his daily conversations with Wilson between July and September

[12] BC880, B5.1, Monica Wilson Family Correspondence, Monica Wilson to her father, 10 Dec. 1939.
[13] G. Wilson and M. Wilson, *The Study of African Society* (Livingstone, Rhodes Livingstone Papers, 1939), 15.
[14] For an account of his range of field methods and easy fieldwork style in Broken Hill see Hansen, 'Urban Research in a Hostile Setting', 198-204.
[15] See P. Reynolds, 'Gleanings and Leavings: Encounters in Hindsight' in Bank and Bank, eds., *Inside African Anthropology*, 311.

1938, a biographical record dictated by Kofie and transcribed by Wilson but only partially translated, and an independent essay written by Kofie on the different kinds of labour migrants in Northern Rhodesia. As a postscript I also consider four short conversations that they had in Broken Hill when Wilson met up with him again at intermittent intervals a year and two years later. A highly skilled raconteur, Xavier Kofie shared with social anthropologist Wilson in vivid detail and often times his recollections of growing up in small towns of the Northern Province of Northern Rhodesia, being educated at a succession of mission schools until the level of Standard Three, and then of his working life, successively in Mazabuka, Lusaka, Wankie and Livingstone as a research assistant to an agricultural officer, farm worker, cobbler, court messenger, football player and mission school teacher. The notebook record contains in much greater detail the story of his three months of intensive daily work in Livingstone teaching Wilson ciBemba and sharing often remarkably incisive sociological insights about African migrant labourers in Northern Rhodesia, and then being interviewed several times by Wilson in Broken Hill at intervals, many months later.I conclude with reflection on the difficulties I have faced in bringing to publication what I have always regarded as an extraordinary life story, but that readers of successive versions of my article in manuscript have found wanting with regard to 'historical argument' or 'sociological argument'.

The Childhood and Mission Education of Xavier Kofie, 1916-1932

Xavier Kofie's narrative of his life takes up an entire of Wilson's notebook.[16] Wilson recorded it during the final stage of his three months of language learning with Kofie. Wilson and his wife Monica had arrived and set up house in Livingstone in the early months of 1938. 'Leaving their former field-site in southern Tanganyika after four years of research, they flew from Mbeya to Johannesburg where they purchased a car, took a break, and drove to Livingstone … [B]etween April and June 1938 he [in his new role as founding director of the Rhodes Livingstone InstituteLI] met colonial officials, housing superintendents, missionaries and a labour recruiter in Livingstone.'[17] He first encountered Xavier Kofie in July, and here is the story that Kofie shared with him about his childhood, youth and life as a migrant labourer in August 1938.

Kofie revealed that he wasborn in 1916 at Masongo Village between Kasama and Mpika in the Northern Province of Northern Rhodesia. His father's first wife had died leaving a female child. Kofie senior then took another wife with whom he had four children. Xavier was the eldest of four children. Before his birth, he would later learn, his father had travelled in the company of an elder brother from Mpika to Serenje in search of work. After a short time, his elder brother fell ill and died in the newly built hospital at Serenje. On the advice of Malcolm

[16] WC, E1.8, Bemba Notes, July-August 1938.
[17] Hansen, 'Urban Research in a Hostile Setting', 195.

Moffat a nephew of David Livingstone and grandson of Robert Moffat, his father went to Livingstonia mission in Blantyre in neighbouring British Nyasaland to learn carpentry. Kofie Senior was converted and baptized into the Free Church of Scotland. Xavier's mother and three sisters, however, were baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. On completing his training, Kofie Senior worked for Moffat before returning to Kasama and later Mpika to take up employment under a colonial government official identified as 'Bwana Simpson'.

Xavier moved around the country towns as a young boy with his father and family. They moved from Mpika to Kasama, then still a very small colonial outpost in the northern reaches of the Northern Province. Thereafter, they moved to Shiwa Ng'andu, the estate belonging to Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Gore-Browne, 100 kilometres to the south of Mpika. Two years later they left the Gore-Browne estate and returned to Mpika.[18] At Wilson's prompting, Kofie recalled 'a few significant events' from his pre-school years. Three months after his father had taken up employment at Mpika, he told, a lion attacked the homestead where the Kofie family were staying with at least two other African families. The lion killed one of the boys in another family. It was shot by a neighbour and died the following morning. In another incident a lion killed a man, in this instance a headman. The third of his childhood narratives told of his traumatic encounter with white settlers. This is my translation of the story as Kofie narrated it.

> One day I went with my friends to play at the place of Europeans. We took eggs and oil, flour and sugar with us. We went to a place near the golf course on top of the hill where there was thick grass in which we were accustomed to hide from the messengers, for they beat us if we played on the golf course. Now, at the foot of the hill was a huge cattle kraal belonging to the [Mpika] *boma*. It was built of mud bricks but roofed with thatch. So, when we reached our chosen spot, we lit a fire and began to cook the food that we had brought. And then one of us was chosen to act the part of bwana, another that of cook, another that of pantry boy, yet another that of dishwasher, and a further one was chosen to scrub pots.
>
> We heard the midday bell. So thinking that the messengers were going home, we heaped more firewood on the fire. As soon as we did this, the fire began to spread to the grass, and we soon realized that the fire would soon become an inferno … We immediately realized that the fire was

[18] At the time of Xavier's interview with Wilson, his father was still working as a carpenter, now for the government in Bembaland.

> headed for the kraal. We heard the bell again … The *bwana* came running, the store keepers, the brick makers, everybody! We ran away for we expected to be thoroughly thrashed … The messengers knew it was we who had set the grass on fire. They beat out the fire until it was extinguished …
>
> When two days had passed we went to the hill to look for gum and afterwards to the garden to snare birds, and there the workers in the garden saw us! And they went to tell the messengers … They ran after us and caught us. They took us to the *bwana* who gave us two strokes each … A fortnight later my father sent me to Chilonga [mission school] and from there my father sent me to Chilubula. This was 1924.[19]

Kofie was only eight or nine years old at the time of these events, but evidently still remembered them in vivid detail and narrated them with flair. He implies that he was sent to mission school early as punishment for his unwitting act of arson and what his father would have regarded as his shameful beating at the hands of the *bwana*. His friends were also sent to mission schools in the neighbourhood. He recalls having spent six months at Malole, ten months at Kaputa, and then two years at the 'small' (here meaning junior) seminary school at Chilubula. This was the catechist training centre for the Roman Catholic Church in Northern Rhodesia. He progressed to Chilubula senior seminary school at the age of twelve and then spent five years studying and training for the priesthood. Kofie recalled his teenage years with equal clarity. His narrative highlighted the constraint and discipline that the mission fathers enforced on their young converts. Routine was rigid and the priests ensured that the boys were separated from what they saw as the negative influences of African culture. The boys wore khaki shorts and matching shirts. They slept in a large dormitory. Their daily activities ran by the clock. Latin was a compulsory subject. After school the boys were expected to work in the garden with each pupil having portion of work. On weekends they beat drums at mass, and he also learnt to play the piano.

The seminary was set in an isolated area within three kilometres of Chilubula Mission and here the narrative takes on a more sombre tone. A large wall ensured that they were kept away from the outside world. Two women from a nearby village were allowed access. They cooked food for the pupils. The boys' families were not permitted on the property. Nor were the boys allowed to set foot outside the walls of the seminary, save for scheduled trips on Sundays when they were permitted to go swimming or bird-hunting. This is conveyed as a harsh departure from the less strict life that Kofie associated with his early childhood as expressed in the extract cited above. For these teenagers the priesthood represented the

[19] BC880, E2.1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie.

possibility of social mobility, as reflected in the conversation below which I have translated from the ciBemba text in one of Wilson's notebooks and scripted. They reveal a sense of what I would term Kofie's 'sociological sensibility', his ability to see himself in the context of the wider world.

> K [Kofie]: The young men want to be priests so that they can work for God and have a mission station built for them. A few who are very intelligent become bishops. After being bishops for three years, many are sent to meet the pope, to tell the pope that these are the black people from Africa we have trained as priests.
>
> W [Wilson]: Did you agree to leave the seminary [after his five years there]?
>
> K: No! I was very grieved. Because if I had stayed in the seminary, I would have been a rich man by now.
>
> W: How would you have been that?
>
> K: Having riches and being respected by white men, but it wouldn't have been my individual wealth, no![20]

At the age of seventeen and at the evident request of his parents, Kofie left the seminary. The White Fathers were evidently deeply reluctant to let him leave. His father contacted his former employer Mr Moffat who had now moved to Chitambo, the mission station of the Free Church of Scotland where David Livingstone had died almost half a century before. The mission was still run by the Moffats, Livingstone's in-laws. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the religious associations of his father with the Free Church of Scotland were the real reason for what the resentful Xavier Kofie conveyed as Kofie Senior's conflictual encounter with the White Fathers when he insisted on removing his high-performing son to another mission school. Chitambo probably offered a better education given its larger size.[21]

Kofie recalled his first journey in a motor car when a Mr Harvey took him from Mpika to his new school. There were ten other Bemba boys at the school along with three boys he described as 'half-castes'. They were the children of a white settler named Chirupula who had settled in a small town near Broken Hill, marrying two African women. The Wilsons were later scorned by white settlers for associating with this 'negrophile'.[22] Kofie was admitted to Standard Two. He remembers that his parents had to pay two pounds and ten shillings a year, surely a shock after his free schooling at the seminary. The boys were also required to provide their own clothes and bedding. The young men at Chitambo were required to cut down trees,

[20] My translation from ciBemba. Wilson did not translate any of this section of the life history.
[21] By 1908 the main mission school had five teachers and 120 pupils. See M.A. Currie, *Livingstone's Hospital: The Story of Chitambo* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011), 60.
[22] See M. Wilson, 'The First Three Years, 1938-1941', 279.

as well as doing their own gardening and work on the mission station's fields. His year at Chitambo was punctuated by such hunger that many of the boys run away. A shortage of food had been a complaint during earlier years at the mission school.[23] In 1932-3 this might have been exacerbated by the acute food shortage across Bembaland.[24]

In 1933 an inspector of schools, '*Bwana* Miller' visited Chitambo to administer a test to the pupils. *Bwana* Miller was Douglas Miller, the education officer at Kasama who as 'a young man who had worked with B.M. [Bronislaw Malinowski] at the school [London School of Economics where Wilson had studied].'[25] Kofie was now in Standard Three. He and three other Bemba learners passed the exam, enabling their progression to the even more prestigious Lubwa Mission School in the Chinsali District. Lubwa had been the second station established by the Free Church of Scotland in Northern Rhodesia after Mwenzo Mission and was an outstation of the Livingstonia Mission of Nyasaland. It had been founded in 1905 by David Kaunda, father of Zambia's first president, who had been ordained together with Malcolm Moffatt.[26] Miller encountered Kofie again at Lubwa when the teenager sat for a grammar examination which saw him qualify for Standard Four.

During the holidays before progressing to Lubwa Mission in Chinsali for Standard Four, a colonial agricultural officer, Bwana Allen, who worked in Mazabuka, a small town some 100 kilometres south of Lusaka, offered Kofie a job. It was here that he began his fascinatingly diverse career as a young urban labour migrant in colonial Northern Rhodesia. This would have been around 1934.

Kofie's Career as a Migrant Worker, 1934-1937

'*Bwana* Allen' worked at the Locust Control Research Centre in Mazabuka. He was, in fact, William Allen, the agricultural officer and government researcher who would later publish a 192-page study entitled *Land Holding and Land Usage among the Plateau Tonga of Mazabuka District: A Reconnaissance Survey* (1948), as part of the impressive series of Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Papers that Wilson launched as director. He also published a wider overview entitled *Studies in African Land Usage in Northern Rhodesia*,[27] suggesting that he was a researcher of long residence and considerable knowledge. Kofie moved to

[23] Currie, *Livingstone's Hospital*, 62.
[24] On this year of intense hunger in rural parts of Bembaland, see Audrey Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia. An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 35-7, 50-2.
[25] BC880, B4.7, [GW] Correspondence, letters to and from Audrey Richards, Richards to Wilson, 28 September 1937.
[26] A. Ipenburg, *'All Good Men': The Development of Lubwa Mission, Chinsali, Zambia, 1905–1967* (Boston: Boston University African Studies Centre, 1996).
[27] These two books feature as the first entries in the updated bibliography of Audrey Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (London: IAI and Oxford University Press, 1960, Second Edition), 416.

Mazabuka against the express wishes of his father and to the great annoyance of Miller and Moffat. His choice suggests a precocious independence of mind.

His moving to Mazabuka was the first time that Kofie ventured outside of the Northern Province. His grandmother, father and sisters saw him off at the Mpika *boma*. He recalls having been astounded by the bright lights of Kapiri Mposhi, a town 50 kilometres north of Broken Hill. While Allen spent the night in a hotel, Xavier slept in Allen's car. He remembered his first view of a train on the south side of Broken Hill. He asked Allen to stop so that he could take in the spectacle. In Broken Hill he heard, for the first time, people speak ciNyanja, another lingua franca common in urban centres in colonial Zambia. African traders came over and greeted him in this strange tongue: '*Moni*'.

His research work involved collecting locusts, documenting research findings and typing, which one assumes he was taught by Allen. He earned a poundper month. Food rations and boarding facilities were provided. He lived in an inter-ethnic compound, but found his fellow migrants "uncultured", rowdy and quarrelsome. He had clearly taken on the Western values of the missionaries. He pooled his monthly rations with a Bemba friend. But after just one year his circumstances took a sudden turn for the worse, showing just how capricious the colonial labour market could be even for highly skilled and adaptable young men like Kofie.

In 1934 Allen left to study locusts in Kalomo, a neighbouring district. It is not clear why he did not ask Kofie to accompany him. Perhaps it was a temporary field expedition. In the interim Kofie went to work for a local cotton farmer. Here working conditions were extremely harsh. The workers started very early every morning preparing the land. Kofie recalls that there were days on which they were made to work until midnight! When he complained of a deduction from his wages for reporting late for work on one Sunday morning, having missed his lift to the farm, he was beaten by his employer. Notwithstanding the efforts of the more liberal Allen to mediate on his behalf, he was fired! He does not explain why Allen did not choose to take him again. He was now forced to go to Mazabuka *boma* in search of new work. He found a job as an apprentice cobbler under another white employer, but now earning a pitiful two shillings a month. After six months this man closed shop and moved to Durban, again confirming the chronic labour insecurity associated with the African labour migrant experience. Ever resourceful, Kofie used his scant savings to buy a train ticket to Lusaka, then still a small town with a population of just few hundred Europeans and some 500 Africans.[28] He recalls spending three shillings and three pence on the ticket, suggesting that it represented a considerable investment for a man still on the margins of this rapidly changing urban economy. He started his own business repairing shoes in Lusaka. Here he worked

[28] Estimates derived from the 1931 and 1946 census figures in Hansen, *Keeping House in Lusaka*, 32.

alone, moving from one place to another within the city. In 1935 he found work as a court messenger at a salary of 30 shillings per month.

However, by 1936, he resigned as a Court Messenger after just six months to go to work in Wankie in Southern Rhodesia at the invitation of a Bemba friend. Evidently feeling that work as a court messenger was of higher status than that as a miner, Wilson asked Kofie why he had resigned his job after such a short time. Kofie replied in forceful terms: 'Do not be too surprised at my decision to stop work, no! I used to walk about too much. My feet used to pain a lot! Sometimes when I got tired, I used to sleep wherever I was, even in the bush, away from people.' Moreover, he explained, he envisaged a career as a competitive footballer rather than as a miner. He told Wilson that his interest in football had developed during his school days at Kaputa, Chilubula, Chitambo and Lubwa. His team at Lubwa had played competitive matches against teams from other places like Malole. At Mazabuka he had played for the Nakambala Football Club which still exists today. In Lusaka he and his friends started a new team which they registered at the boma under the title Elephant Tanganyika, which was multi-ethnic as its name suggests, although most of the players were fellow Bemba. Given his relatively high degree of education, he was chosen as the team secretary. Given this experience it may well be that he played competitive football during the year that he spent in Southern Rhodesia, but it is unlikely that there was much money to be made from football in these very early years.

In 1937 he returned to Northern Rhodesia, now moving to Livingstone where he stayed with a cousin. He soon found a job as an orderly at a mission hospital. The missionaries evidently saw his intellectual potential and after just six months offered him a teaching position at their primary school. This was his job when the Wilson first met him in July 1938.

Teaching Wilson iciBemba, Livingstone, July to September 1938

The following conversation on Kofie's background and work as schoolteacher was recorded as part of Wilson's early language lessons. The italicized sections of the dialogue represent the iciBemba conversations and the sentences that I have translated from the notebook record, while the other text represents sentences translated by Wilson.

W: *Ni nchito nshi ubomba? What is your work?*

K: *Yabu kafundishya.* I work as a teacher.

K: *Yabu Mwalimu.* I work as a teacher.

Mwalimu is a Swahili word meaning teacher. Though it is uncommon, it is still used today.

W: *Nikwi wasambilile? Where did you study?*

K: *Na sambilile ku Lubwa musukulu yabalumendo.* I studied at Lubwa in a boy's school.

W: *Nomba ulikafundishya waku Lubwa elyo ukusambilila wasambilile ku Lubwa ku Free Church of Scotland, chinshi?* Now you are a teacher from Lubwa and you studied at Lubwa's Free Church of Scotland. Why?

K: *Nabalile ku Chilubula ku seminali kukusambilila ichi Latino*. I began at Chilubula at the seminary to study Latin.

W: *Icho walekele ukusambilila ichi Latino chinshi?* Why did you stop studying Latin?

K: *Pantu tachakwata milimo mu chyalo cha bangeelsi.* Because it has no use in this country of the English.

W: *Bushye Bakatumine ku Lubwa nibapatali (fathers) nelyo we mwine weka?* Was it the priests who sent you to Lubwa, or did you go on your own?

K: *Iyo nibatata! No, my father sent me!*

W: *Chnshi bakutumine?* Why did he send you?

K: *Ni kukuya sambilile chi-ngelesi. To learn English*.

Wilson later recorded the following new words with their English translations on a separate page: '*Mwalimu* – teaching', '*Ukusambilila* - to study', '*Ukubala* - to start', '*Ukukwata* - to have', '*Mulicalo* – country', and '*Neka* - alone'.[29] The record of Wilson's language lessons over the following weeks and months suggest a patient progress. That at least some of these sessions were held indoors, either in the Wilson's rented home or at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute office, is evident from this conversation.

W: *Isalako Icibi. Close the door.*

W: *Wisalek0. Please*.

W: *Wisaleko. Please close it.*

W: *Nga waingila wisaleko. When you enter, close the door.*

W: *Ikala nalaisa. Sit still, I am coming.*

K: *Iwe ulesosa, nakulaumfwa nokulemba. You do the talking and I will do the listening and writing.*

Two days later Wilson began recording a notebook he would title 'Bemba-Nyakyusa Vocabulary'. In the early weeks he used kiNyakyusa, in which he was fluent[30] as a guide in his acquisition of a second African language. He began by recording long lists of kiNyakyusa words and translating them into Bemba, indicating similarities, in the relevant cases, in root words, verbs and nouns.[31]

His notes reveal that he and Kofie met every day. This is indicated by conversations at the start and end of sessions. There is often reference to the previous day's discussion.

[29] WC, Broken Hill Research, Godfrey Wilson Notebooks, E1.1-E1.3.
[30] Marsland, 'Pondo Pins and Nyakyusa Hammers'. As started earlier, he learned kiNyakyusa in Tanzania where he and his wife Monica had done fieldwork before leaving for Northern Rhodesai.
[31] WC, Broken Hill Research, Godfrey Wilson Notebooks, E1.3.

More tellingly, many conversations end with either party stating that such or such a topic would be discussed the next day, or with Wilson referring to their arrangement to meet the following day. Kofie began by teaching him basic words such as verbs and nouns. Long lists of words then appear, related to different things without much discernible pattern. Wilson labelled this his 'Bemba reader' or 'Bemba dictionary'. In one entry in which Wilson records both Bemba and English he tells Kofie, 'I want you to help me with verbal distinction (noun verb)'. The entries that follow are detailed records in ciBemba of uses of verbs in the present, present perfect and future tenses, as in 'work, working, was working, will work'. A month later Kofie was still teaching Wilson grammatical rules by working on 'exercises in tenses'. For example, Wilson listed the words '*ukukaka* – tie', '*ukwisa* – come', '*kuya* – go', '*ukufwaya* – want', '*ukumona* - see'. He then recorded these words in various tenses and wrote sentences to show how they were used in each case.

The next step in this language learning was practice not only in how to pronounce Bemba words, but in how the pronunciation changes situationally. This was important as ciBemba is phonetically complex and pronunciation varies according to the tense, the relationship between the people in conversation (for example, whether they are old or young), and whether the words are spoken in the plural or singular. It may also change depending on what word follows a particular word. Wilson's notes have detailed linguistic symbols on how to pronounce words according to their arrangement in a sentence. For example, when saying *leta* (bring) the ending changes to 'e' if the next word starts with a vowel, as when *leta-insalu* (bring a cloth) is pronounced *lete-nsalu*. Kofie explained the difference between written forms and pronunciations when compared with the forms standardized by European missionaries. For example, many Europeans, including Wilson, dropped the 'h' in words like *chikanda* (a plant food), *chitemene* (the agricultural method the Bemba used where trees are cut and burnt to fertilize the soil), *chisungu* (the Bemba girls' initiation ceremony) or Chanda (a common Bemba name which Wilson wrote as Canda).

He also taught Wilson about Bemba etiquette. There were sessions with different forms of greetings for general and specific situations. There are sessions on varied forms of address depending on whether the person addressed is a senior, peer, or in-law. Bemba letter writing was the next chapter in Wilson's curriculum. Lessons on Bemba traditional culture were frequently woven into these language (or letter-writing) sessions. Kofie taught Wilson about many aspects of his cultural background, including land rights, marriage rites, cultivation, '*citemene*' and family relationships. Rarely, there were conversations that hint at what I believe to have become a friendship, albeit an obviously unequal one in terms of power, between these two young men who were eight years apart in age. I read this in the tone of interaction in the following conversation:

Zambia Journal of History, Volume 10, Number 1, 2023, pp, 79-101
https://journals.unza.zm/index.php/zjh/information/authors
ISSN: 1815-025X

W: Were you sick?

K: Yes, I was sick.

W: What were you sick from?

K.: Headache and stomach.

W: Are you now at peace (better)?

K: Yes, much more so.

W: I am happy/joyful.

I see 'friendship' in the fact that the two men got comfortable enough to discuss intimate matters. We might recall Marsland's argument about Wilson's success at engaging with the sociable and public world of Nyakyusa men, to which his wife Monica would have been expressly excluded. She suggests that his fluency in kiNyakyusa and easy warm relationships with men allowed for male friendship across the two cultures.[32] Meghan Vaughan recounts Wilson's uninhibited conversations with the rainmaker Kasitile over Europeans kissing and the swapping of information about the preferred sexual positions used by Nyakyuysa and European men.[33] His lessons with Kofie in Livingstone were equally explicit in their references to sex though here they took the form of the naming for sexual parts rather than discussion about sexual positions: '*ukutomba* – to have sexual intercourse, *ukukanda* – to copulate (male), *ukukandwa* – to copulate (female), *kalingilingi* – clitoris, *nyo* – vagina, *ukukuna* – to stretch the lips of the vagina, *imfwalo* – male genitals, *matope* – female sex fluids, *icikala* – penis, *amatole* – testicle, *amaso* – pubic hair'.[34] Wilson evidently regarded sex as an important future line of enquiry.

After a month Wilson knew enough ciBemba to begin to explore the possibility of recording narratives.[35] His experiment, his first extended work of 'transcription', began with the record headed 'Xavier Kofie's life history taken by me by dictation'. They worked on it from mid-August to mid-September. 1938[36] The substance and texture of the story have been relayed above. Wilson continued to pick up new vocabulary. While it involves patient and close reading, it is important to explore by way of examples just how fluid and dynamic the process of language learning proved to be, as in this conversation.

W: *Waikalamo shani muno Livingstone?How long have you lived here in L'stone?*

[32] Marsland. 'Pondo Pins and Nyakyusa Hammers'.
[33] M. Vaughan, 'Anthropologists and Others in South-West Tanganyika' (Unpublished Paper presented at the Monica and Godfrey Wilson Centenary Conference, Hogsback, 24-26 June 2008), 3-7.
[34] WC, E1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie, for Wilson's translated English version.
[35] For the story of how language acquisition could lead to narrative recording in an earlier cross-cultural encounter see Andrew Bank, *Bushmen in a Victorian World: The Remarkable Story of the Bleek-Lloyd Collection of Bushman Folklore* (Cape Town: Double Storey Press, 2006), 72-101, 154-177.
[36] WC, E1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie, for Wilson's translated English version.

Zambia Journal of History, Volume 10, Number 1, 2023, pp, 79-101
https://journals.unza.zm/index.php/zjh/information/authors
ISSN: 1815-025X

K: *Naikalamo umwaka umo nemyeshi mutanda*.[37] I have lived here for one year and six months.

Wilson now recorded the new vocabulary: '*Ukukala - to live*', '*Umwaka – year*', and '*Umwenshi – month*'. The same set of questions is immediately practised using other phrases, as in:

W: *Mwapwamo imyaka ingamuno? How many years have you lived here*?

K: *Wapwamo* [**].

K: Napwamo [**].

The new word '*Ukupwa: finish'* is recorded and translated, and then forms the basis for another round of enquiries.

W: *Wafumine kwi?* [Where did you come from?]

K: *Nafumine kumushi.* [*I came from the village*.]

W: *Wapwile imyaka inga kumushi?* [How long did you finish (i.e. stay) in the village?]

K: *Napwile imyaka itatu kumushi* [I spent (i.e. finished) three years in the village.]

W: *Chinshi uleila kumushi?* [Why are you going home?]

Here Wilson recorded the tense *uleila* (going) incorrectly, as it is a future tense instead of the past tense so should be *waile*. On the flip side of this page Wilson recorded and translated the word: '*Mushi - village or home*'. After a short digression, the conversation turns back to his village history.

W: *Ku munshi kumwenu ni kwi? Where is your village?*

K: *Kwa Chitulika (at Chitulika's).*

Wilson's addition of two new words that do not feature in these sentences but are related to village life ('*Mwine Mushi - headman, Mfumu: chief*) indicates that there was language acquisition on the side. My guess is that as Wilson prepared to ask questions, he would first ask how to say given words. These preparatory negotiations are not recorded. What is recorded is thus a streamlined version of what was an even more spontaneous and fluid conversation. Wilson uses new vocabulary to find out more about Kofie's life, reversing the usual process of life story dictation, again leading to the acquisition of new vocabulary. That Kofie was aware that it required patience on Wilson's part to come to grips with a new language and new narratives is evident from his query towards the end of yet another session on his life history when he asks: 'Do you not tire of listening to all these stories?'

We can only guess at how significant methodologically speaking his experiment of recording of Xavier Kofie's life history proved to be. As highlighted above, the outline biography was used as the basis for his fieldwork method across his seven months of interviews in Broken Hill. The format has no counterpart in his earlier work in Bunyakyusa, nor (as far as I

[37] There is no English translation in the original. This m translation.

can establish) was it adopted by any of his anthropological peers in Africa whose categories were typically those of kinship and ritual, say, rather than individual life history. But given that he does not specify how he came upon this technique in his published text, we can speculate that it was developed during his months of working with Kofie in Livingstone, but this remains no more than a likely hypothesis.

The two also had detailed conversations about Kofie's opinions of how migrant labourers lived in town, how they related with their rural homelands, sent money and gifts home, whether they married in town, and other issues. Part of this learning was about Kofie's own experiences. We find Wilson asking Kofie, for example, about how much money, if any, he sent to his kin back home. The two had lengthy discussions about African life in Livingstone, including detailed conversations about African beer brewing and drinking, both activities which Kofie condemned in the strongest of terms possible. They also spoke about the lives of the unemployed, marriages in urban centres, religion and 'paganism'. Considering the extent to which Wilson pursued these lines of investigation in his work in Broken Hill, it seems likely that Kofie served as 'an African sounding board for Wilson', as Hansen puts it in relation to Mawere, but the archival and published record is too limited for us to be sure.

The most remarkable record associated with Xavier Kofie is, however, his independently recorded three-paged essay headed '*Amachona*'. It was written on 23 July 1939 before Wilson had enough fluency to transcribe ciBemba, but presumably at Wilson's request. Although poorly punctuated, Kofie's essay is written in well-spelt Bemba and in a neat and clear handwriting. Wilson translated '*Amachona*' as 'exile'. I feel the word refers to people who came to urban areas or centres of employment as migrants and after retiring decided to settle in the urban areas and not go back to their rural homes as was expected.The connotation of distance might be why Wilson rendered to it as 'exile'. Lyn Schumaker indicates that: 'The later RLI researcher Victor Turner translated it as "The Lost Ones" in his famous essay on "Muchona the Hornet" [his research assistant in Kajima Village working among the Ndembu]. This suggests that the term denotes not just distance but the inability to find one's way back home.[38]

This interpretation is supported by the view of *amachona* presented in popular culture such as music, in particular, in Pichen Kazembe's *aPhiri Anabwela* and Peter Tsotsi Juma's *Muka Muchona*, for example.[39] This is my translation of Kofie's essay.

[38] Lyn Schumaker, Editorial Comments on Draft, Jan. 2019. See V.W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1967). When I visited this region in June 2018, I met with Muchona the Hornet's son who proudly displayed ten photographs sent to him by Victor Turner's wife Edith of her 1985 return to the field on the wall above his bed, including a group portrait featuring Edith Turner and Muchona.

[39]APhiri Anabwera tells the tale of Mr Phiri who went to Harare for work for many years. After the many years, he went back to the village with his empty suitcase and found all his kin had died. He was at a loss for no one

> The state of being a migrant can be defined in various ways. The hard-core migrant is the one whereby when he comes to town, he starts working, and then he hears that your father passed away, thereafter he hears that his mother passed away, and his siblings too and his grandmother and grandfather too, all his relatives. Then he thinks, there is no one in the village to go back to. If he is not married, he then gets desperate and marries here in town, saying I don't have a wife in the village. I will never go back to the village. Who will I go back to? I do not have a father. I lost my mother to death also, and my kin are all dead. So he cannot think about the village. No! He says I will die in town. He is a migrant.
>
> Another kind of migrant is this one. A person comes from Bembaland, he comes here and then he cannot find a job. He moves from one place to another looking for a job. When he finally finds a job, he starts desiring clothes. Once he acquires the clothes he starts thinking of moving forward to another place. And then he reaches the place he desires. He gets tired of the new place, he then thinks of another place to go and he goes there. He eventually forgets the village, hence he stops writing letters there, and he says it's been long since I left the village. I am sure my parents are both dead. I will never go back to the village. He is a migrant; people in the village presume he is dead.
>
> Another kind of migrant is this one. A person comes from the village and starts working. He begins frequently shopping, very expensive suits. He then starts to love beer and to dance. He does not save any money. No! He continues in these ways for many years, even when he receives letters from the village! Even when this guy works, and he desires to go home to the village, but he can't go, because he has no money for transport. This man has become a migrant.[40]

His overview of these three clearly distinct categories of migrant labourers is highly original even if it bears the hallmarks of Christian mission-inherited values. It adds texture to his detailed autobiography of educational achievement and occupational mobility, demonstrating what he was capable of in terms of more abstract sociological insight along with what we later learn to have been his great gifts as a raconteur. In this sense, I consider him a 'social scientist' rather merely 'a servant to science' in Nancy Jacobs' terms.[41]

recognized him. Muka muchona tells a similar story of loss of familial ties, where Muchona has been away from home for long and another man proposes marriage to her. The wife to muchona reveals her loneliness and desire for her husband who has been away from home for long.

[40] BC880, E1.8, Bemba notes, July-August 1938, for the original Bemba version. See also E2.1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie for Wilson's translation.

[41] See N. Jacobs, 'Servants to Science: African Assistants in Twentieth-Century Ornithology' (Unpublished Seminar Paper presented at the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, May 2006).

Zambia Journal of History, Volume 10, Number 1, 2023, pp, 79-101
https://journals.unza.zm/index.php/zjh/information/authors
ISSN: 1815-025X

There is a brief afterword to the Xavier Kofie story. I was surprised when I came across his name on a list of married men that Wilson interviewed at Broken Hill.[42] He had been single when they worked together in Livingstone. I learnt that Kofie left his job as a schoolteacher in Livingstone two months after working with Wilson. His father had written to him to request that he check up on one of his sisters who had moved to the mining town where he arrived on 7 November 1938. Within weeks he had landed a job as a clerk at the mine compound office, earning a pound a month plus food and lodging. Wilson conducted four interviews with him between January 1939 and March 1940. These interviews place, successively, in Kofie's hut (mine compound hut number 448), at the mine compound office, and in the hut of another miner (hut number 17).[43] Here we learn that Xavier Kofie had taken on a 'classificatory brother', a younger Bemba man who travelled up with him from Lusaka and who worked at the Broken Hill aerodrome. We learn that he had co-habited with a 'half caste' named Dinah whom he had married on 4 March 1939. She was the 'illegitimate daughter' of a German man named Brigham from Livingstone and a Bemba woman. Kofie did not know her age but claimed that she 'had come of age' in 1938, suggesting that she was still in her teens. Born in Mpika, she had been educated up to Standard Three, a very high level of education for young African girls at the time. She had been baptized as a Roman Catholic.

By the time of his last interview in March 1940, it is evident that Kofie had marital problems. The conversation began: '[Kofie] came into Chanda's hut to greet me.' When Wilson asks after Dinah, Kofie 'anxiously' related a tale about his marital conflicts, indicating that he had been led to give Dinah 'a suspension' of three months, sending her to stay with her relatives back home. In another interview held three months later, Wilson learnt (from Enoch, his interviewee) 'that X. Kofie and Dinah were divorced. She was living with her mother'. Again, we can only speculate that 'contribution' that this information made to Wilson's analysis regarding the fragility of urban African marriages in Part II of his *Essay*. Wilson associated the preponderance of migrant men over women with what he found to be a relatively high level of divorce in the urban setting.[44] Was this based in part on Kofie's testimony? Perhaps. Similarly, we might ask whether Kofie's accounts of his traumatic experiences of settler racism being beaten as an eight-year-old boy and then before being unfairly fired influenced Wilson in his co-authored account with his wife of the intensely racist settler attitudes and behaviour in British colonial Africa in their short theoretical book *The Analysis of Social Change, Based on*

[42] BC880, E2.1.1, Outline biographies of married men in the mine compound, February 1939-May 1940.
[43] Interviews took place on 27 January 1939, 7 February 1940, 27 February 1940, and 7 March 1940 in the mine compound, this time in hut number 17. See; E2.1.1, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men I includes the list of men interviewed; E2.1.2, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men II; E2.1.3, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men III.
[44] G. Wilson, *Essay, Part I*, 20-21.

Observations in Central Africa.[45] Wilson's impressions were of course cumulative, based on the collection of many biographies of which Kofie's was just one. On the other hand, given that his relationship with Kofie was closer than that with any other informant, this life history may have loomed larger in his sociological imagination than those of other interviewees. But we can only speculate.

Conclusion: Why or How Does Xavier Kofie's Life History Matter?

It has taken me more than 7 years to bring Xavier Kofie's story from a section in an unpublished 2015 University of the Western Cape WMA History degreedissertation to the published form in which you find it here. The details of Kofie's childhood, education and mobile life as a migrant labourer in an urbanizing and rapidly changing colonial Zambia had always seemed compelling and interesting to me in their own right. Yet, this story never seemed quite enough to make 'the argument' that readers demanded for scholarly publication. Since it was as an unacknowledged research assistant to the highly recognized African anthropologist Wilson, Kofie's story constantly needed to be given more meaning than seemed to me possible from the archival sources. How does one prove 'contribution' in cases where his collaborator made no explicit published reference to it, nor wrote in a style that allowed the human story of his fieldwork to emerge in an abstract sociological text buttressed by quantitative rather than qualitative data? Rereading my dissertation, it is evident that I was already aware of the need to make some kind of 'declarations of significance' regarding Kofie's work with Wilson as his most obvious claim to fame.

> Why [I wrote there] should we take an interest in the life of a hitherto unknown person? Firstly, and in line with the general purposes of this study, I hope that a detailed narrative of Xavier Kofie's story may help illuminate how the history and experiences of Xavier Kofie as Godfrey Wilson's foremost informant shaped Godfrey's knowledge project, his later research at Broken Hill and his conclusion in the essay. Secondly, I have always thought of this study as a narrative of 'subaltern' subjects in the history of anthropology. I therefore see the life history of Xavier Kofie as emblematic of African experiences and narratives at a particular point in time.[46]

These now seem to me overambitious claims. In the end I am left with a feeling rather than an argument and a sense of duty to narrate Xavier Kofie's experiences, and his contribution to Wilson's anthropological research. It is a sense of admiration for the resilience, ambition and humanity of a Bemba speaker, albeit of another generation and of a different

[45] G. Wilson and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change: Based on Observations in Central Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945).
[46] Mbewe, 'A Triangulation of Relationships: Godfrey Wilson, Zacharia Mawere and their Bemba Informants in Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia, 1938-1941', 49.

gender, who did somehow make his presence felt in Wilson's Northern Rhodesian notebooks. In the end he seems to me a lively, innovative and imaginative young and modern African whose life story, from those often-remarkable glimpses to which I was privy as a researcher in a 'colonial archive'. It still feels like a story worth sharing in its own right, a life that matters and is worth celebrating.

Zambia Journal of History, Volume 10, Number 1, 2023, pp, 79-101
https://journals.unza.zm/index.php/zjh/information/authors
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