

Urban Research in a Hostile Setting: Godfrey Wilson in Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia, 1938–1940

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Acknowledged for his pioneering urban anthropological research in Broken Hill through the publication of An Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia (Parts I and II, 1940 and 1941), Godfrey Wilson's professional career was cut short by his death during World War II. The late 1990s transfer and cataloguing at the University of Cape Town of the Monica and Godfrey Wilson papers has made an enormously rich research archive accessible to the public. For the first time, Godfrey Wilson's notes from his fieldwork in Broken Hill enable us to examine his research project through his own observations. Based on a preliminary overview of these records and a tentative analysis of some of their contents, this article revisits the Broken Hill research project against the background of the published essay on the economics of detribalisation. Wilson's argument about temporary urbanisation is demonstrated through migration histories, information about length of stay in towns, and an analysis of the economics of urban livelihoods that focuses on wages including rations, household expenditures, and urban–rural transfers. But the published essay barely explains how in fact he conducted his field research. Although there are very few direct indications, we can infer some of his fieldwork practices and field methodology from notes that occasionally evoke an immediate sense of the trials and tribulations of everyday African life in Broken Hill in the early World War II years. How might experiences in the field have influenced Wilson's analysis? Overall, I discuss his work from two angles, first in the context of a time and place characterised by conflicting agendas, and secondly, in retrospect as the conceptual space and time of early World War II colonial Northern Rhodesia have yielded to different explanatory perspectives.

Keywords

Urbanisation, Northern Rhodesia, race relations, 1930s fieldwork, research methodology, consumption

The publication of Godfrey Wilson's two-part *Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia* (hereafter *Essay*)¹ in the early 1940s challenged prevailing views of the colonial administration and mining companies concerning migrant

1 G. Wilson, *An Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia*, Parts I and II, *Rhodes-Livingstone Papers* 5 and 6 (1941 and 1942) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968).

labour and urban life.² In the *Essay*, Wilson argued that Africans in urban areas were actively engaged in establishing economic, social, and cultural relationships based on the town and town life rather than on a town-country basis. The work also identified some of the major difficulties Africans experienced in their efforts to establish urban households and pursue their aspirations such as low wages and substandard housing and services. In explanatory terms, the analysis was path-breaking for its time in anthropology by going beyond the village and situating local urban economic activities in a world setting.

Wilson's *Essay* has drawn considerable scholarly interest both in the context of its time and place and in terms of its theoretical framing. In particular, his analysis of social change and its underpinning notion of disequilibrium have been re-evaluated from a variety of perspectives.³ Remarkably, the published work gives little, if any, indication of how he conducted his research. The recent opening of the Wilson archives containing Godfrey Wilson's field notes from Broken Hill (today Kabwe) provides a unique opportunity to examine the work he carried out in the tense situation of war-time colonial Northern Rhodesia.⁴ Adding a different perspective to existing scholarship, this article focuses on the scope and nature of Wilson's field research in Broken Hill. Drawing on preliminary work on the archival records, I revisit Wilson's Broken Hill research project against the background of the published *Essay* and information about his research gleaned from letters his wife Monica wrote to her father during the Wilsons' time in Northern Rhodesia.⁵ I explore three concerns. First, what sort of research methodology did Godfrey Wilson employ? Do the archival notes reveal evidence of the kind of co-production of knowledge that has been so richly demonstrated in Monica Wilson's interaction with her assistants?⁶ Second, how might the circumstances under which he conducted the research and his experiences during fieldwork have informed his findings? And third, what insights may we draw from these archival notes about the study of African urban life at a particular time and place and about anthropology both then and now?

2 Many thanks to Andrew Bank for introducing me to the Wilson Collection and the staff of the Archives and Manuscript Division at the University of Cape Town Libraries in 2013 as well as for his advice and encouragement of my research on Godfrey Wilson's notes from Broken Hill and the writing of this article. I am grateful to Hugh Macmillan, Sean Morrow and Francis Wilson for their insightful comments on a draft of this article.

3 As evident in the debate between James Ferguson and Hugh Macmillan. See J. Ferguson, 'Mobile Workers, Modernist Narratives: A Critique of the Historiography of 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 on the Zambian Copperbelt: Another View', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4, 1993, 681–712; J. Ferguson, 'Modernist Narratives, Conventional Wisdoms, and Colonial Liberalism: Reply to a Straw Man', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4, 1994, 633–40; H. Macmillan, 'More Thoughts on the Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 22, 2, 1996, 309–12; and J. Ferguson, 'Urban Trends on the Zambian Copperbelt: A Short Bibliographic Note', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 22, 2, 1996, 313.

4 The Wilson papers were deposited and catalogued in the Manuscripts and Archives Department of University of Cape Town in the late 1990s. See A. Bank and L.J. Bank (eds), *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and her Interpreters* (London: The International African Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2013), xiii. When Lyn Schumaker conducted research on the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, she had very limited access to Godfrey Wilson's papers. L. Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 59–65, 280–2, nn 58–79. See also R. Brown, 'Anthropology and Colonial Rule: Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia' in Talal Asad (ed), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (New York: Humanities, 1973), 173–98.

5 My reading of Wilson's research notes from Broken Hill is preliminary due to his nearly illegible longhand and extensive use of the Bemba language in interviews.

6 A. Bank and L.J. Bank (eds), *Inside African Anthropology*.

I begin by explaining Wilson's choice of Broken Hill as the site for his research into the economic aspect of African urban life and the problem of migrant labour. Next I turn to his methodology, using the published work and archival records⁷ to explore how Wilson conducted the work and the role of his research assistant. Drawing on his biographical sketches about African workers in Broken Hill and other observations, I identify some of the contours of African urban life *on the line*, as the north–south railway line was referred to in Northern Rhodesia. The details about everyday urban African life that the notes reveal were important to Wilson's argument as I show in the following section, turning to specific observations he used in his demonstration of temporary urbanisation. His preoccupation with clothing is the focus of the subsequent section. Wilson's analysis of temporary urbanisation, I suggest, hinges on consumption, specifically of cloth or clothing in a racially segregated employment field where wages had barely risen since the Depression,⁸ the cost of living had increased, and African purchasing options were limited. Concluding, I return to Wilson's research methodology and the question of what influence his research experiences might have had on the *Essay*, situating the work in its own time and place as well as exploring how we might analyse such processes today.

Broken Hill

Monica and Godfrey Wilson arrived in Northern Rhodesia in the early months of 1938, setting up house in Livingstone, where Godfrey Wilson had accepted the position as the first director of the newly opened Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI). 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. Aside from having worked intermittently together in the field, they shared deep religious commitments and an egalitarian outlook on social life.

The study of migrant labour was a priority of Wilson's research programme when he became director. Soon after arriving, he began to explore research prospects in several urban areas. According to his notebooks, between April and June 1938 he met colonial officials, housing superintendents, missionaries, and a labour recruiter in Livingstone. Later that year, he spent three months in the north, learning Bemba.⁹ In December 1938 he travelled widely, meeting colonial officials, mining representatives, and compound managers in Broken Hill, and subsequently on the Copperbelt in Ndola, Luanshya, Nkana, and Mindolo, where he had similar discussions. Reaching Lusaka later during December, he continued his explorations and looked around for a couple of days, including in the compounds, before returning to Livingstone for Christmas.

7 University of Cape Town Libraries, Archives and Manuscript Division, Monica and Godfrey Wilson Papers BC880, especially the E series containing Godfrey Wilson's notes from Broken Hill. All references to these papers are drawn from BC880.

8 Not only in Zambia but in southern Africa in general, 'wages were sticky and barely moved in real or money terms during the half-century 1900–50', according to H. Heisler, *Urbanisation and the Government of Migration: The Inter-Relation of Urban and Rural Life in Zambia* (New York: St. Martin's, 1974), 127.

9 'IciBemba' was the common term used during the colonial period.

The mining companies and colonial administration were reluctant to approve Wilson's wish to work on the Copperbelt, where a strike by African miners in 1935 had exacerbated the already difficult relationships between African workers, government officials, and the mining companies. At the suggestion of the RLI board, he focused instead on a 'study of native urban life, taking Broken Hill as my point of observation.'¹⁰ In January 1939 Monica and Godfrey Wilson went to Broken Hill where they were accommodated at the Great Northern Hotel. Housing, in fact, proved to be a problem. Wilson mentioned several times that he planned to conduct research in one of the mining towns on the Copperbelt. In a letter to her father during their first months in Broken Hill, Monica indicated, 'We had expected to start at Ndola or Luanshya, but Broken Hill, G. found, suited him better for work and there was the chance of getting a home here. None are available in any of the Copperbelt towns.'¹¹

The town of Broken Hill, some 140 kilometres north of the capital Lusaka, and about mid-way to the Copperbelt, is home to the oldest mining operation in Zambia. The discovery of lead and zinc deposits in the early 1900s led to the registration in London of the Rhodesian Broken Hill Development Company. The railway line from the south through Livingstone reached Broken Hill in 1906. After that, the town grew as a railway headquarters and a centre of road transport business, yet Copperbelt developments only began in the late 1920s. Broken Hill also hosted a government administration, local commerce, and some farming activities. In short, its economy was more diversified than that of most Copperbelt towns where the mining sector dominated. Broken Hill's heyday was in the early 1950s when postwar developments stimulated town growth.¹² The population at the time of Wilson's study comprised 15,000 Africans, 1600 Europeans, and a small Indian community.¹³

When the Wilsons arrived in 1939, Broken Hill's development had picked up after the Depression but was slow compared to the Copperbelt. The town's three residential groupings – mine, railway, and town – were racially segregated with employers responsible for housing their African workers. In addition to the African residential compounds overseen by white managers, African accommodation in Broken Hill included the 5-acre plots, or farms, where workers in long-term employment both on the mine in government, and to a limited extent the railways, were allowed to rent, build homes, and cultivate the land. Initiated in the late 1920s, the 5-acre plot system provided one of the attractions for Africans to work in Broken Hill rather than in the developing mines on the Copperbelt, where wages were higher.¹⁴ With the completion

10 E12.1 Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Director's Report to the Trustees of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, On the Work of the First Three Years (1938–40), 2.

11 B5.1, Letters from Monica Wilson to her father, 24 February 1939.

12 See J.F. Holleman and S. Biesheuvel, *White Mine Workers in Northern Rhodesia 1959–60* (Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1973), 77–82.

13 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 35.

14 *Ibid.*, 22. In Luanshya on the Copperbelt in the early to mid-1930s, the Roan Antelope Company made plots available to miners' wives for cultivation. Unlike in Broken Hill, these plots served subsistence gardening rather than residential purposes. G. Chauncey Jr, 'The Locus of Reproduction: Women's Labour in the Zambian Copperbelt, 1927–1953', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 7, 2, 1981, 139.

of the Great East Road from Fort Jameson (today Chipata) to Lusaka in the mid-1930s, migrant workers' journey to work had been considerably shortened.¹⁵

Broken Hill was Godfrey Wilson's research base for three months from January through March 1939; the Wilsons' first son was born in Livingstone in May 1939. They were in Broken Hill again for nearly seven months between the end of November 1939 and the end of June 1940, when they returned to Livingstone. In Broken Hill they had no 'luck in purchasing a house', Monica reported to her father. 'The one that was going went to higher bidders. The mine is expanding fast—war materials—, so houses are at a premium.'¹⁶ They remained in the Great Northern Hotel until just before Christmas 1939, when they moved into a vacant house. 'The owner of the house ... is staying away until the end of the month', she informed her father. 'By then a government house might be available.' In March 1940 they were back at the hotel only to move into a furnished house some weeks later. 'We're ... much more comfortable than in the hotel', Monica explained. Effusively, she told her father that she had gone with her husband to an African dance to 'cover' the frocks. 'Great fun writing them up;' 'it was so nice to be doing "field work" again.'¹⁷ Then in April 1940, Godfrey Wilson's troubles with the mine management and town management board about his research in the compounds began. His permission to work in the mine and town compounds was revoked, only to be reinstated for a short period in June and then finally withdrawn.¹⁸

The Wilsons returned to Livingstone at the end of June 1940 and remained there until the end of April 1941, when they left for South Africa. In his final report to the RLI board Godfrey Wilson noted that, of all the big mining companies, only the Broken Hill Development Company had given him facilities. 'These were withdrawn after the recent Copper Belt riots, when I had spent a total of 9 months working in its compounds.'¹⁹ The mine management had suggested supplying him with an office for interviews if he 'would stop visiting men in their quarters, chatting and smoking with them.'²⁰ Explaining the circumstances leading to his resignation as director of the RLI he observed: 'The ground of withdrawal was that my methods of work involved too much "fraternization" with its Native employees. At the same time I became aware, also, that my pacifist views on war made the Government dubious about the wisdom of supporting my researches among potential recruits.'²¹ Last but not least, his research findings challenged the prevailing view about migrant labour held by government and mining companies who were reluctant to accept that urbanisation of Africans was well under way.

15 H. Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire: The Story of Susman Brothers & Wulfsohn, 1901–2005* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 142.

16 B5.1, Letters, 10 December 1939. The Wilsons' intent to purchase a house may indicate a commitment to live in Broken Hill for a longer period.

17 Ibid, Letters, 9 February 1939, 20 December 1939, 4 March 1940, 17 March 1940.

18 Both the mine management and town council allowed him to continue until the end of June, according to a letter from Monica Wilson to her father. Ibid, Letters, 21 April 1940.

19 E12.1, Director's Report, On the Work of the First Three Years, 5. The Wilson papers at the University of Cape Town archives do not include correspondence with mine officials and the town management board in Broken Hill concerning the withdrawal of his research permission.

20 M. Wilson, 'The First Three Years, 1938–41', *African Social Research*, 24, 1977, 279.

21 E12.1, Director's Report, On the Work of the First Three Years, 4–5.

‘Applying Our Methods to Urban Conditions’

When Godfrey Wilson launched his research in Broken Hill he was an accomplished field worker, to judge from his and Monica Wilson’s studies among the Nyakyusa in southern Tanganyika between 1934 and 1938.²² Inspired by his academic mentor Bronislaw Malinowski’s insistence on the acquisition of local language skills and intensive involvement with the study population by participating in and observing everyday life, watching work, play, and ritual, Wilson began with language study. Already in February 1938, he had travelled north from Livingstone to Kasama where, as a guest of the Bemba paramount chief Chitimukulu and senior chief Mwamba, he did a course of concentrated Bemba. As he wrote to Malinowski, ‘I am trying to follow up Audrey’s [Richards] work with a study of the Bemba ... on mine and in town. I am very pleased to have an opportunity of applying our methods to urban conditions.’²³ He also told Malinowski that Monica would be joining him on the Copperbelt the following year. From his base in Livingstone during July 1938 he continued to learn Bemba, ‘pulling on fast’ with his language study according to Monica, who told her father that Godfrey expected to be on the Copperbelt for some months in the autumn.²⁴

In January 1939, Godfrey Wilson began his field research in Broken Hill on the 5-acre mine plots and then on the government plots. Next came the mine compound and the railway compound. In March, he focused on the town compound. He also interviewed shop workers and tailors in Broken Hill’s commercial centre. Hut censuses were collected in all the African compounds and on the 5-acre plots. Along with the work in the compounds, he interviewed officials, compound managers, health inspectors, missionaries and clerics from several churches, discussing administration, legal issues, welfare matters, and religion, among many other topics, using checklists of them to explore.²⁵ He collected information on wage rates, labour turnover, and savings, and many other matters. In the published work, he indicates that he made most of his observations in the mine compound and the town location.²⁶

Throughout the periods they spent in Broken Hill, Monica commented on her husband’s work. ‘G. is busy piling up facts,’ Monica informed her father, but ‘getting around by car he does not feel it so tiring as country work.’ ‘He finds he needs a great deal of statistical data in town and of course it is slow work collecting that.’²⁷ ‘G. is busy in the compounds,’ she told her father in March 1939 just prior to their return to Livingstone, ‘and occasionally an African clerk or other acquaintance of his comes on to see us.’²⁸ Back in Broken Hill in December, she reported: ‘G. spends a part

22 S. Morrow, ‘“This Is from the Firm”: The Anthropological Partnership of Monica and Godfrey Wilson’, Unpublished paper presented at the Monica Hunter Wilson Centenary Conference, Hunterstoun, South Africa, 24–26 June 2008.

23 B4.11, Correspondence, Letter from Godfrey Wilson to B. Malinowski, 2 February 1938.

24 B5.1, Letters, 3 July and 24 July 1938, 26 January 1939.

25 E9.4, Native Welfare, Lines of Investigation, 21 February 1939 and E9.15, Mine Compound and Mine Work, List of questions to ask in interview, 10 July 1940.

26 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 75.

27 B5.1, Letters, 24 February 1939.

28 *Ibid.*, 20 March 1939.

of each day in the compounds and the rest of the time, writing up notes.²⁹ In January 1940 she continued: 'G. is still very busy collecting life histories and budgets in the compounds,³⁰ and in February she reported: 'G. is working hard paddling in the compounds in the rain but he is quite fit.'³¹

Godfrey Wilson's notes leave the impression that he frequently went beyond urban fact-finding in his conversations, comparing approaches to stabilisation on the different mines in Northern Rhodesian and the Belgian Congo with the manager of the Rhodesia Broken Hill Development Company,³² for example, and discussing his views about the functioning of society with missionary R.B. Moore, who had received some anthropology training when studying theology.³³ The matter of tense race relations also entered such discussions, as when District Commissioner Crawford told Wilson that he 'constantly had annoyances ... with particular Europeans who go into African girls.'³⁴ Middleton, a compound manager, told Wilson that he had heard 'about 50 complaints from Natives of ... interfering with Native women. He [Middleton] went to the commissioner of police but couldn't get anything done about it.' The man in question had been sacked from a previous position 'because of women.'³⁵

The published *Essay* does not provide any formal statement either in the introduction or within the body of the work of how Godfrey Wilson went about conducting field research in an urban racially segregated setting at the outset of the Second World War. There is no acknowledgement that he mainly interviewed Bemba-speaking men or that he worked with at least one assistant during his research. The closest readers come to realise the focus on Bemba speakers in *Essay* is prompted by several statements like the following: 'Here is a case in point ... Charlie, a Bemba railway employee', 'I know a Bemba couple', 'Yotam, for instance, a Bemba man.'³⁶

Field Research

Participant observation in a racially segregated setting was a challenge. Godfrey Wilson confronted it by interviewing Bemba-speaking workers in their homes in the compounds and on the 5-acre plots, collecting biographical sketches from married men, bachelors, and a few women. He went around the compound markets and the commercial area in Broken Hill, interviewing Bemba-speaking workers in shops and stores. Judging from the notebooks, he interviewed Bemba-speaking Africans nearly whenever he met them, for example, when taking walks with his wife and when visiting.³⁷ He went to some meetings of the African Welfare Association and

29 Ibid, 10 December 1939.

30 Ibid, 16 January 1940.

31 Ibid, 9 February 1940.

32 E2.3, General Condition and Structure of Compounds: Includes Labour Returns and Notes of Interviews with Mine Managers, 27 November 1939.

33 E1.10, Notebook diary 1938, 16 December 1938.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 36, 71, 72.

37 E7.1, Outline Biographies of Six People from Other Places in Broken Hill (including aerodrome).

addressed its Literary Society.³⁸ And he attended one of the few African-organised events at which a European presence was considered acceptable, namely ballroom dance competitions.

Godfrey Wilson's chief research methodology was a biographical sketch, sometimes referred to in the notes as a life history, the numbered topic outline³⁹ of which he followed when interviewing and writing notes, many of them in Bemba, beginning with tribal background, migration history, wages, marriage and children, visits to home villages, and ending with religion and education. He also collected budget information on urban household expenditures and rural transfers in cash and in kind. Wilson interviewed his informants in their homes, most likely seated outside their dwellings, often with other Africans around, and sometimes he interviewed several persons in such groups. Towards the end of January 1939 on the 5-acre plot on the mine farms, for instance, he interviewed John Mutale Mwamba,⁴⁰ whose father Mwamba had been a Bemba senior chief, second only to Paramount Chief Chitimukulu. Mwamba had worked on the Broken Hill mine since arriving there in 1921 and never been back to his village of birth, though he had recently sent his wife and children on their first visit. As a mine *capitao* and tribal elder, Mwamba had an influential position in Broken Hill's developing African urban life.⁴¹ Like many other men who lived on the 5-acre plots, he employed a man to work his fields as well as to cook while his wife was absent.

Wilson's note taking often stretched over the course of several sessions. He used ruled notebooks as well as loose-leaf notes, some of which contain longhand notes, comments, and questions he added at a later stage. The interview with John Mwamba extended over at least three sessions and involved conversation with other men who happened to be present about a variety of topics ranging from ethnic stereotypes to beer brewing. The notes leave the impression that Godfrey Wilson and his informants got on really well and easily. In the second interview session with John Mwamba, for example, Wilson's question of whether Mwamba's hired farmhand was a Bemba was met by 'roars of laughter' by those present. But no, he was told, the farmhand was a Kalwena from Portuguese West Africa, and Mwamba hired a different man each year.⁴² Providing most of Broken Hill's night-soil removers, the Kalwena performed one of the most unpleasant jobs in town. Wilson provoked giggles, when interviewing Duncan Canda in the mine compound towards the end of February 1939. Canda had arrived at Broken Hill from Kasama in 1927, working as a cook until he got his job at the mine. Describing his recent remarriage, Canda asked Wilson 'how we

38 Ibid.

39 There are different versions of the outlines of biographies and slight variations in the topics to be addressed to men and women. E9.4, Lines of Investigation, and E6.1, Broken Hill Railway Compound, Outline Biographies 1939. A shorter topic outline also appears in E9.15, Zachim (assistant), Biographies of Various Individuals.

40 Godfrey Wilson's handwriting is barely legible. I may have misread several names.

41 The *capitao*, or boss boy, headed a gang of mine workers. Tribal elders advised compound managers about disputes and customary practices. They were often close relations of chiefs in their home areas. With the change developing in urban leadership following the 1940 strike by miners on the Copperbelt, the tribal elders lost most of their significance. See 'Tribal Elders to Trade Unions' in A.L. Epstein, *Scenes from African Urban Life: Collected Copperbelt Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 42–8.

42 E4.1, Outline Biographies of People Living on the Broken Hill Mine Farms. Kalwena may refer to the Luena or Lovale ethnic groups.

[Europeans] got married.⁴³ Another interview session involved Kolata, who came to Broken Hill in 1925, had worked in the railway shop since 1928 and never been back to his Bemba village since he first left it. There were several relatives living around Kolata's house in the railway compound. In the interview, Wilson's use of Bemba terms provoked friendly laughter.⁴⁴ Also in February 1939, when Wilson interviewed workers in the commercial centre of Broken Hill, Sammi Zimba, a tailor at an Indian-owned store, and some of his friends talked about race relations. One of them asked why European masters always were after their African servants. Wilson tried to explain but Sammi went on arguing: 'Yes, but if you Europeans define us as poor men and ignorant, why then do you love our women so much?'⁴⁵ And the Reverend Petro Pelowa, minister at the Dutch Reformed Church, a Chewa from Fort Jameson who hardly spoke any Bemba, laughed loudly when answering 'no' to Wilson's question of whether he ever held services for Europeans.⁴⁶

To be sure, the notes present Godfrey Wilson as a sociable and outgoing person, someone I imagine to have been an excellent listener with a fine sense of banter and repartee. So it is not surprising that some of the Africans he interviewed called on him at 'our house' in Broken Hill, both at the Great Northern Hotel and in the temporary house, for a variety of purposes. At the Great Northern Hotel, the Wilsons met Bemba-speaking Charlie Sebediah, who had worked at the hotel as a waiter for one year. They hired him as their personal servant when they went to live in a vacant house just before Christmas 1939.⁴⁷ Likewise at the Great Northern Hotel, probably keen to practise his Bemba, Wilson got into talking with Filemon, one of the waiters, who invited him and other hotel guests to attend a ballroom dance performance in the beer hall in the town compound. A handout announcing the Gala Performance invited them 'cordially ... to attend and see for yourself how the Africans of Broken Hill dance.' Filemon was the captain of the band, whose playing Wilson complimented. At Filemon's prompting, Wilson attended several dance performances, including a dance at the beer hall in the town compound organised by the Native Welfare Association to raise war funds, and a competition dance at the railway compound with champions from dance clubs on the Copperbelt.⁴⁸

Some of the men Godfrey Wilson interviewed in the compounds and on the farms called on the Wilsons at home. His notes give evidence of friendly interactions, and Monica Wilson described several such visits when writing to her father. Monica was used to such encounters at her parents' home on the Lovedale Mission in South Africa.⁴⁹ Some of these interactions were quite incidental, others involved Africans whom Godfrey Wilson had interviewed, and still other were visitors who had been specifically invited to the Wilson home. Early on during their stay in Broken Hill,

43 E2.1.4, Outline Biographies of People Living in the Broken Hill Mine Compound. The name Canda might be Chanda (a common Bemba name) or Kanda.

44 E6.1, Broken Hill, Railway Compound. Outline Biographies, 1939.

45 E7.1, Outline Biographies of Six People from Other Places in Broken Hill (including aerodrome), 20 February 1939.

46 E9.3, Churches and Schools, 25 January 1939. African clerics were not allowed to minister to Europeans.

47 E9.8, Houseboys, 11 December 1939.

48 E9.9, Dancing, 1940.

49 A. Bank, 'Family, Friends and Mentors: Monica Hunter at Lovedale and Cambridge' in A. Bank and L.J. Bank (eds), *Inside African Anthropology*, 39–45.

Monica reported to her father: 'I met some of the more civilized of his acquaintances here – a fascinating Methodist minister was in the other morning, a nice man. His father, a Pedi from the Transvaal, came up to Bulawayo as an evangelist.'⁵⁰ In his notes, Godfrey Wilson wrote that the man had come to Livingstone in 1931 to organise the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Northern Rhodesia and was responsible for the whole of *the line* and Barotseland.⁵¹ 'We had a middle-aged man from Nyasaland in two days ago,' Monica told her father the next month, 'he is in his 50's but still hopeful of continuing his education.'⁵² In January 1940 the headmaster of the local government school came to visit. A Bemba from this part of the world, as Monica told her father, 'he was six years at Lovedale in the High School 1919–25 and remembers us all well ... He worked for a good while with Thomas Cook in Elizabethville and since then has had government jobs in Northern Rhodesia ... He is married to a teacher from Mbereshi.'⁵³ Later that same January, E. Muwamba, the provincial commissioner's clerk at the *boma* (the administrative headquarters), came to tea. A Tonga from Nyasaland, educated at the Livingstonia Mission, he had worked in Northern Rhodesia since 1913. The conversation included topics like religion and ancestors.⁵⁴ Clearly, many of these callers were part of the emerging urban African elite. Other visits were less formal. Towards the end of February 1939, for example, Mwamba, whose extensive labour history Wilson had collected, came to ask if Wilson would sell him some stockings (or socks) because 'those which they buy from the Indians' were not good at all.⁵⁵ Wilson was also asked for assistance, as in March 1940, when three men from the mine farms turned up at his home with a problem. Asking why they did not go to the *boma* with the matter, he declined intervening, explaining that he was private citizen.⁵⁶

Language and Research Assistance

Very early in his directorship 'Wilson made a trip to Lubemba,' noted Audrey Richards when the 50-year anniversary of the RLI was observed, 'in order to learn *iciBemba*, which he afterwards used in his fieldwork in Broken Hill.'⁵⁷ Wilson was keen to carry out research on the Copperbelt where Bemba would have served him as a *lingua franca*. In Broken Hill, where the Bemba made up only 8 per cent of the African population in ethnic terms, the Bemba language is likely to have been used on the mine.⁵⁸ Some other ethnic groups from the north very likely were conversant in Bemba. Nowhere in the published *Essay* does Wilson explain his nearly exclu-

50 B5.1, Letters, 24 February 1939.

51 E9.3, Churches and Schools, 16 February 1939.

52 B5.1, Letters, 20 March 1939.

53 Ibid, 16 January 1940. Mbereshi was the premier boarding school for African girls.

54 E9.14, Biographies about Various Individuals, 21 January 1940. As a clerk at the *boma* in Ndola, Earnest Alexander Muwamba was one of the early organisers of African welfare associations. See Robert I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia 1873–1964* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 126–8. Hugh Macmillan drew my attention to this.

55 E7.1, Outline Biographies of Six People from Other Places in Broken Hill (including aerodrome), 23 February 1939.

56 I believe the problem had to do with unlicensed visitors. Most of the notes are in Bemba. E9.5, Legal Proceedings, 21 March 1940.

57 A. Richards, 'The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute: An Experiment in Research, 1933–38', *African Social Research*, 24, 1977, 275–8.

58 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 42.

sive focus on Bemba-speakers, and he provides no information about his strategy for selecting informants. Beyond general observations about the town population such as ‘of the Africans some have come from adjacent, and some from distant tribes,’⁵⁹ the published work does not specifically discuss ethnicity, or tribal background in the language of the day.⁶⁰ He did note that over 30 per cent of the marriages in Broken Hill were intertribal.⁶¹

Wilson himself conducted the interviews for the majority of the biographical sketches he compiled in the compounds and on the 5-acre plots. What is more, his research notes clearly indicate that he employed one assistant. The assistant’s name, Zacharia Mawere, appears on several notebooks and Wilson refers to him in notes on various topics as Z.M. or Zachi. Zacharia Mawere collected the observations for the hut censuses in all the African residential areas, listing location, name, tribe, number of persons, and the work of the male head of household. He also compiled some biographical sketches, mainly of non-Bemba-speaking persons. A reading of some of the biographical sketches he compiled reveals Mawere’s background as in fact he described members of his own family. It is unclear whether these sketches were the result of Wilson’s prompting or whether Mawere himself took the initiative to set down his family record. He would have been fluent in Nyanja, the language spoken by the Ngoni and several other groups in the Eastern Province and widely in the Central Province as well. Like many other Africans, Mawere in all likelihood spoke several Zambian languages.

According to the family biographies he compiled, Zacharia Mawere was the fifth of John Mawere and Mereya Shawa’s eight children (seven sons and one daughter). He was born between 1909 and 1917, judging from the birthdates of his immediate siblings. The eldest son, Herbert Zilole Mawere, who was born in 1901, sponsored the education of the rest of his brothers. Herbert was one of the first to attend the newly established Dutch Reformed Church Mission school near Fort Jameson. After some odd jobs, he migrated to Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia, where he worked for more than ten years, saving money. Returning to Fort Jameson in 1929, he built a bakery, where he employed most of his relatives. ‘We hope,’ Zacharia concluded his eldest brother’s biography, ‘that all his brothers even when they fail clerical work, they can work easily as cooks.’⁶² In 1931, Herbert Mawere sent Zacharia to Mwami Mission school near Fort Jameson and then to the Blantyre Mission in Nyasaland in 1935. When he compiled the family biographies, Zacharia was unmarried. In 1939, another brother Jeremia[h], who was born in 1920, lived at Chipembi Mission near Broken Hill.

59 Ibid, Part I, 18.

60 The notes contain some lists of ethnic groups, including one of men in the married quarters of the mine compound. Of a total listing of nearly 500 men in the compound, nearby ethnic groups (Lala, Swaka, and Lenje) comprised nearly 44 per cent, ethnic groups from the Eastern Province (Ngoni, Kaonde, Nsenga) around 17 per cent, the Bemba 10 per cent, and a variety of other groups made up the remainder. E 9.14, Biographies of Various Individuals, Handwritten tabulation, 1 December 1939.

61 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 41.

62 E9.17, Zachim (assistant), Biographies of Various Individuals, Herbert Zilole Mawere. The archival file is mislabelled, in all likelihood it should read Zachi M.

Wilson's Broken Hill notes do not give any indication of where he hired Zacharia Mawere, for example whether the assistant came along from Livingstone to Broken Hill or was hired there, and we do not learn anything about how and through what contacts they met. Mawere might have accompanied Wilson from Livingstone to Broken Hill, judging from one of his notebooks that hid an envelope from a Gentlemen's Outfitters in Livingstone, addressed to him Poste Restante in Broken Hill.⁶³ And on a page near the end of another of his notebooks was an unaddressed draft of a letter to 'enquire for my goods which I ordered from you on 20 September 1939' in which Mawere listed his return address as the P. O. Box number of the RLI in Livingstone.⁶⁴

In addition to compiling hut censuses and collecting some biographical sketches, Mawere composed notes on Ngoni legal issues and marriage practices.⁶⁵ Some of the archival files include entries he wrote on various subjects, for example, credit practices, and he reported some conversations between African women and men about town life.⁶⁶ Zacharia Mawere appears occasionally in Wilson's own notes as a carrier of diverse information, explaining for example a fight in the town compound between two courtroom clerks, a Barotse and a Lunda, over a woman whose husband was away at the front.⁶⁷ He also accompanied Wilson to some ballroom dance events.⁶⁸ It is unclear to what extent Mawere might have served as an African sounding board for Wilson.

Wilson made longhand edits on some of Mawere's notes, for example on Ngoni marriage and Ngoni oaths and on credit practice. He also inserted marginal notes in some of the biographies Mawere collected. And some of Mawere's handwritten notes appear as typescripts in the files. Did Wilson intend to incorporate some of these observations into his published work? Half of Part II of *Essay* details marriage-related practices of Bemba and allied tribes.⁶⁹ There are no references to Ngoni practices, specifically identified by Mawere, or to any of the workers, mainly Eastern Province men, from whom Mawere collected biographical information. His contribution to Wilson's work, especially the extensive legwork involved in compiling all the hut censuses, is evident in the archival notes, as are other types of notes, observations, and biographical sketches in less than perfect English that are entirely absent from the published work.

African Urban Life on the Line of Rail

The men whom Wilson and Mawere interviewed in 1939 and 1940 in Broken Hill would have found the new town attractive. Their average age was nearly twenty-five years, they had spent 75.5 per cent of their lives working in urban areas, holding

63 E1.14, Notebooks of Assistants, Recording Hut Censuses, December 1939.

64 E1.17, Notebooks of Assistants, Biographical Sketches.

65 E.20, Ngoni Marriage (notes by assistant).

66 E1.15, Notebooks of Assistants, Recording Hut Censuses, Police Camp, 'Giving Chance.'

67 E3.3, Town Compound, General Conditions and Structure, 29 April 1940.

68 E9.9, Dancing, 8 February 1940, 4 March 1940.

69 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 49–73.

slightly more than seven different jobs over a ten-year period. Forty per cent had wives with them, while nearly 15 per cent had left their wives at home, and the rest were single men and youth.⁷⁰ In Broken Hill, the mine provided recreation and health facilities. There was a recreation hall, movies were shown with 'roaring' success in the railway and town compounds,⁷¹ the legal beer hall was in the town compound and illegally brewed beer was available in all the compounds and on the farm plots. The African congregations of several churches were growing. Children could attend one government and several mission-run schools. Women could take domestic science classes. There were markets in the mine and town compounds, and the commercial centre had stores and shops, some of them employing African tailors who sewed to order and undertook repairs. For those who felt like it, there was gambling, men gambling for money and women for beads.⁷²

To be sure, Broken Hill was an attractive place for men and women about town. Of the total African population of 15,000, 7500 were men, 3500 women, and 4000 children.⁷³ With the uneven sex ratio, marriages were fragile and women were 'normally ... found to be living with their second or third husbands.'⁷⁴ As a young Ngoni woman explained to Mawere: 'I like when we come *on the line* [italics added] to be married to several husbands... The reason being to have more cloths.' 'I feel very much pleased to have money for beer drinking and to buy everything I like. But at home in Fort Jameson I cannot do this.' 'Men and women', Mawere commented on this conversation, 'always ... appreciate the building of a person and richness just when he or she is well dressed.'⁷⁵ Dealing with issues of a broader concern, the Native Welfare Association, started in 1929, provided Africans with a forum to meet, some meetings private, others public, with minutes sent to the DC if members voted for government action.⁷⁶ Last but not least, labour relations were less tense than on the Copperbelt, and Broken Hill did not experience the strikes that unsettled the north in the mid-1930s and again in 1940.⁷⁷

The migration and work histories of the men Wilson and Mawere interviewed span a period of great transitions as rail and motorised road transport made movements easier and wage labour opened up new exchange opportunities. Mawere, in particular, was impressed by the experiences of early migrants. Unlike Wilson, who tended to summarise migration histories, Mawere went into detail about the trials and tribulations of early migrants. Several migrants from the Eastern Province reported payments in yards of cloth in their first jobs around the turn to the twentieth century. Hut taxes were imposed around that time, when remuneration for work gradually changed from cloth to cash and rations. After several work stints in

70 Ibid, Part I, 21, Table III; 41, Table IV.

71 E9.4, Native Welfare.

72 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 79.

73 Ibid, Part I, 36.

74 Ibid, Part II, 41.

75 E1.15, Notebooks of Assistants, Recording Hut censuses.

76 E7.1, Outline Biographies of Six People from Other Places in Broken Hill (including aerodrome), Wilson Mundula interview, 18 March 1939.

77 I. Henderson, 'Early African Leadership: The Copperbelt Disturbances of 1935 and 1940', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2, 1, 1975, 83-97.

Southern Rhodesia and occasional service during World War I, they reached Broken Hill, as did Malekenya, a Ngoni man from Fort Jameson, in 1919. When Mawere asked how many days it took to reach Broken Hill, Malekenya told him that ‘in those days there were no motor cars... We spent three and a half weeks, the place [was] not built yet, [there were] only camps there.’ Chingongolingo Ngoma, a ‘very old man’ working as a tailor in an Indian store, had his first job with the early settlers at Fort Jameson. ‘Everybody was being paid ... cloths of white calicoes ...’ ‘He told me,’ Mawere observed, that ‘when he came here in Kawe [Broken Hill] with a European official in 1902, he did not find [many] houses. No lorry in those days, people used to walk from Fort Jameson up to Kawe.’⁷⁸ Magula Ngoma was also paid two yards of cloth a month in his first job as a domestic worker for a European in Fort Jameson. After serving in the Great War, he left in 1920 with friends, ‘walking on foot that time’ for Kafue (just south of Lusaka), where a European employed him to purchase maize in the villages in exchange for salt and beads. After various jobs in Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia, he came to Broken Hill in 1923. Ezekiel Zulu left Fort Jameson in 1919, walking on foot to Broken Hill with 11 other friends. None of the men Mawere interviewed had returned to Fort Jameson since their first arrival in Broken Hill.⁷⁹

In comparison, the biographical sketches Wilson compiled summarised expansive migration histories, yet provided much more detail than Mawere on marriage arrangements, bridewealth exchanges, transfers of money and presents to rural relatives, the location of wives and children, and visits to and from villages. He collected budget information, listing household expenditures. Wilson was an observant field-worker in several respects. He described the housing for married and single workers in the different compounds, commenting on the lack of space and the difficulty of accommodating children, noting that young boys sometimes worked as cooks for single men and slept in the bachelor quarters.⁸⁰ The 5-acre plots on which several dwellings were built much like a rural family compound relieved some of the problem of cramped quarters. He also wrote about activities he noticed during interviews, such as illicit brewing of beer in the compounds and on the farm plots and work parties on the 5-acre plots. He saw shared eating practices involving women neighbours cooking for one another, making meals available to men, regardless of ethnicity, whose wives were temporarily absent, and to bachelors who might not employ young men to prepare their food.

In some other respects Wilson’s notes are less detailed. Aside from noticing that dwellings were small, and in spite of sitting in the homes of the people he interviewed, he offers little information about the fittings of their interiors. How did they live in the one-roomed dwellings that were ‘so small that there is almost no room for furniture’?⁸¹ Did they sleep on beds or floors? Were there tables and chairs? And what about decorative objects like calendars, framed photographs, and even curio art?

78 E9.17, Zachim (assistant), *Biographies of Various Individuals*.

79 E1.17, *Notebooks of Assistants*, Biographical sketches.

80 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 75.

81 *Ibid*, 15.

Although he noted in *Essay* that clothes were ‘tended lovingly and carefully housed in boxes at night’, he in fact offered few glimpses of actual dress practice.⁸²

Temporary Urbanisation

The colonial administration of Northern Rhodesia held on to the notion that African workers like those Wilson studied in Broken Hill were migrants who would return to their rural areas of origin once they completed their work contracts. But the lack of rural development made village livelihoods depend on worker remittances, prompting an increasing reliance on wages earned elsewhere. In fact, by 1939 more than half of the male able-bodied population was working away from home, as many outside the territory as within it.⁸³ ‘Migrant labour’, Monica wrote to her father no doubt in reference to Audrey Richards’ work,⁸⁴ ‘inevitably means hunger in the country for women can’t do all the agriculture work (involving tree cutting here) and so when their husbands stay long at the mines they follow them, sooner or later. Even if the men send home money (which they rarely do) there is no store food to be bought.’⁸⁵ The mining companies, by contrast, had begun to realise that socio-economic developments in the region at large were making the migrant model outdated although they were slow to alter their policy.⁸⁶ Yet in Broken Hill already in the late 1920s, major employers had made a longer-term urban residency option available for workers in the form of the 5-acre plots. It took until the mid-1940s for the government and the copper mines to initiate policies directed towards the stabilisation of urban African residents.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, increased wartime production caused labour scarcity⁸⁸ and placed the issue of urban stabilisation on hold.

Wilson aimed his work specifically to challenge the assumption that African men were migrant workers. ‘They are not,’ he argued, ‘they are temporarily urbanized.’⁸⁹ The *Essay* presents a methodology to demonstrate that argument. Combining observations from many diverse sources on length of stay in Broken Hill, the presence of wives and children, visits to the rural areas, and on wages (cash and rations), savings, household expenditures, and transfers in cash and kind to rural areas, Wilson found many families living in town in which the men had not been back to their villages for several years and their children had never lived in the country at all. He explained: ‘The rising demand for labour in the towns, the possibility of bringing wives to town and the manless rural areas have combined to change *MIGRANT LABOUR* into *TEMPORARY* urbanization’ (upper case italics in the original).⁹⁰ As Monica

82 Ibid, 18.

83 A. Roberts, *A History of Zambia* (London: Heinemann, 1981 [1976]), 191.

84 A. Richards. *Land, Labour and Diet: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939).

85 B5.1, Letters, 29 December 1939.

86 R.L. Prain, the chairman of the Roan Selected Trust, one of the two major mining groups on the Copperbelt, explained shifts in the mining policy towards African urbanization in ‘The Stabilisation of Labour in the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt’, *African Affairs*, 55, 1956, 305–17.

87 Heisler, *Urbanisation*, 103.

88 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 14 n 2.

89 Ibid, 80.

90 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 46.

commented to her father: “Detribalization” [quotation marks in the original] has gone much further than the government seems to know here.⁹¹

In his demonstration of temporary urbanisation, Wilson drew on several employment sources, while his most detailed analysis of urban cash expenditures pertains to workers on the Broken Hill mine.⁹² Using composite figures, he found 69.9 per cent of the workers to be temporarily urbanised, a situation he defined as workers spending over two-thirds of their time in town since first leaving their tribal areas.⁹³ The racially segregated urban conditions under which Africans lived and worked did not reckon either with the need for urban living wages or the fulfilment of personal aspirations and desires. Cash wages and food rations were inadequate to ensure good nutrition, making children a heavy economic burden and crowding the limited space in employer-provided housing.

A Dressed People

Colonial rules and regulations limited the economic involvement of urban African workers who, by law, could own neither land nor homes, had to shop and trade in designated areas, and hardly had access to commercial credit. While wages barely had risen, the cost of living increased throughout the war years, and import restrictions confined the supply of already limited goods. Northern Rhodesia had never developed a domestic manufacturing industry to speak of except in areas supplying the copper mines. In fact, the country imported many of its manufactured goods from much larger markets like South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, enjoying ‘empire preference’ on payments of customs and tariffs.⁹⁴

How did urban African workers spend their hard-earned cash? To be sure, they used some money on food purchases, supplementing the rations (some meat, produce, and the staple maize flour) or ration allowances they received from their employer. In addition, Wilson reported that nearly every African worker in Broken Hill pooled his wages with a partner, alternately, each month. ‘Giving chance’, as Mawere called such agreements, compels someone to be in debt while getting more money in the month when it is due.⁹⁵ A worker might spend a single wage packet far too easily, whereas a pooled sum made it possible to purchase larger items, ‘like a suit, which he really wants badly’.⁹⁶ And spending money on clothes the Africans in Broken Hill most certainly did: about 60 per cent of their cash earnings.⁹⁷ They were, as Wilson

91 B5.1, Letters, 29 December 1939.

92 He used formal figures from employers and his own estimates about commercial and domestic workers. *Essay*, Part II, Table XIV, 10. His general analysis on urbanisation is based on 198 cases (Part I, Tables IV and V, 41–2) and the rural transfers on 130 cases (Part I, Tables VI to VIII, 43–5). For wage rates, he drew on records from the compound while he drew on 106 cases in his analysis of cash expenditures, and on 34 cases in the analysis of extra food and rations (Part I, Tables XV, XVIII, and XIX; Part II, 13, 23–4).

93 G. Wilson. *Essay*, Part I, 47.

94 K.T. Hansen, *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 47.

95 E1.5, Notebooks of Assistants, Recording Hut Censuses.

96 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 77.

97 Wilson sometimes referred to cloth and sometimes to clothing. In his estimates about clothing, he included boxes, suitcases, bed clothes and beads. *Ibid.*, 24, n 4.

argued in a much quoted statement, 'not a cattle people, nor a goat people, nor a fish-ing people, nor a tree cutting people, they are a dressed people.'⁹⁸

The significance of observations such as these becomes clearer once we recog-nise the special socio-economic and political circumstances during which Wilson undertook his research. In a situation where access to a wider world of manufactured goods was restrained, clothing remained an important source of wealth and served as a means of exchange. Taken together, low wages, the rising cost of living, and wartime restrictions on manufactured goods made accumulations of clothing the one sure saving option. 'If they have clothes saved up,' he noted, 'they can convert a dismissal into an honourable journey home.' He estimated that at any moment, there was 'about £6,000 worth of unused clothes, or of cash saved up for buying clothes.' 'These clothes are kept,' he elaborated, 'sometimes in boxes in their own homes, sometimes in the stores where they were purchased.'⁹⁹ A legal ordinance from 1915 regulated the 'box system' that enabled workers to accumulate clothing in stores either for safekeeping or as a security against payment.¹⁰⁰

The backdrop for Wilson's descriptions was a major shift in the material culture of consumption practices across southern and eastern Africa, 'between the 1880s—earlier in some parts of South Africa—and the 1950s, though in most parts of the continent it had been completed before then,' which according to Robert Ross 'en-tailed the virtually complete reclothing of half a continent, and also the remaking of a whole variety of other articles of consumption.'¹⁰¹ Many of the men Wilson and Mawere interviewed were born during the first two decades of the twentieth century, and some had lived through the shift from payment for labour in cloth to wages. In Broken Hill they were experiencing the transition at a point when the significance of clothing as wealth had not been overridden entirely by its role as a commodity with a value determined by the supply and demands of the market.

Of the cash part of their wage packets, Africans in Broken Hill spent a large chunk on clothing. But, aside from emphasising their 'intense desire' for clothes,¹⁰² Wilson provides little insight into clothing practice except in notes about the dance competitions, some of which his wife supplied. In a tiff with Wilson over a declined wage advance his domestic servant wanted in order to purchase formal evening wear to attend a ballroom dance competition, the servant lamented: 'These people are coming here from the copper belt and we don't know *what* [italics in the original] they will not [sic] be wearing; I simply must have some proper clothes.'¹⁰³ In his notes from one such event Wilson described half of the men in evening dress but only one with a real stiff shirt. Others, like a houseboy and a waiter in uniforms, wore work clothes. At another event he reported men wearing ordinary jackets, trousers, and ties; a store *capitao* wore a black serge suit and a white bow tie. Most of the women

98 Ibid, 18.

99 Ibid, 35.

100 Hansen. *Salaula*, 35.

101 R. Ross. *Clothing: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 121.

102 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 15.

103 Ibid, 19.

were in evening dress. 'I enquired its origin from Mwamba [who said that] sometimes Europeans sell them second-hand, and the tailors also make them.'¹⁰⁴ His wife and four other Europeans were invited to judge the dancing and the dress at one event.¹⁰⁵ Monica offered details about the attire of the winning couples and others: 'Winner. White satin, very well cut. Cape edged with expensive fur. High heeled evening shoes (very becoming). A small pale blue felt cap on the back of her head. Partner in tails. Runner up. Black satin, white fur cape, rather motheaten looking. Partner in tails.' She also described remarks on the performance by other European women present, for example Mrs Crawford, the district commissioner's wife, who commented about the winner: 'I never knew they could dance so well. That is a lovely frock – really lovely, I mean. It looks as if she had it made for her.' Yet she wondered, 'but do you think it is good for them. I mean (pause). Surely they feel themselves Europeans now.' And a Mrs Record exclaimed, 'Just think, they dress up like this and then they go back to their little kayas [servants' quarters in the back of their employers' gardens].' Ending her comments, Monica added tersely that the 'Records left early because they could not stand the smell and stuffiness.'¹⁰⁶

Dance clubs involved only a minority of Broken Hill's African population. Wilson provided some information about what sources of garments were available in general. The bulk of the clothes, he reported, were sold in European and Indian stores and sourced 'on the world market from Japan, America and Europe.'¹⁰⁷ He also mentioned tailors and mail order firms. In his survey of one of the compound markets on market day, he lists 'unusually few' clothes sellers.¹⁰⁸ What kind of clothing was for sale in such venues, new or second-hand? Were there hire purchase or other instalment arrangements? Several of the men he interviewed had told him about gifts of clothes they took (or sent with relatives) to their home villages, like Duncan Canda, who presented him with a list of goods, including their costs, he had taken on a visit home from Broken Hill, including one blanket, one cloth, four dresses (to wife), and two cloths to his own mother. On another visit home, his wife brought 12 dresses and lots of cloth.¹⁰⁹ William Busuka sent his younger brother home in 1936 with money and clothes for his parents, including cloth to his mother and mother-in-law.¹¹⁰ Yards of cloth are multifunctional and were no doubt used as wrappers and for many other purposes, as they still are today. While Wilson identified several tailors in Broken Hill, some employed commercially and others independent, he does not describe the variety and styles of garments they might have produced to fulfil the needs and desires of their customers.¹¹¹

Wilson mentioned that Broken Hill Africans sometimes bought clothes from mail order firms in England, spending 'considerable sums' in this way until the out-

104 E9.9, Dancing, Dance of the new Broken Hill dance club, Dance organized by the Native Welfare Association, 8 February 1940.

105 B5.1, Letters, 4 March 1940.

106 E9.9, Dancing, Typescript notes by Monica Wilson on frocks, African dance, 2 March 1940.

107 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 20. In footnote 3, he qualifies Japan's role as a major clothing exporter 'at least in normal times'.

108 E9.16, Miscellaneous, Census of Broken Hill Mine Market on a Market Day, 31 January 1940.

109 E 2.1.4, Broken Hill Mine Compound. Notes on Canda, 6 December 1939.

110 E4.1, Outline Biographies of People Living on the Mine Farms, William Busuka, 31 January 1939.

111 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 11, 36–8.

break of the war.¹¹² His notes contain information about mail order purchases in the form of several short observations about men accounting for purchases from well-established mail order firms, for example, John Noble, Lennards, and Oxendale. He would have included such costs in his overall estimate of cash expenditures on clothing. Wilson Mundulu, a member of the African Welfare Association, for example, had placed several orders. 'My average is four times a year. Just now another parcel is coming', he told Wilson in 1939, showing him an invoice.¹¹³ In one of his interview sessions with William Busuka, a miner also serving as a tribal elder, in Busuka's home on his 5-acre plot, Wilson saw several mail order receipts from Oxendale for purchases between 1936 and 1939, one of them an alarm clock. The orders included more men's garments than women's, such as suits, shirts, trousers, hats and caps, and shoes. Among women's garments were blouses, petticoats and cardigans. Some orders included blankets.¹¹⁴

Zacharia Mawere, who appears to have exchanged letters with Gentlemen Outfitters, might well have been one of the men about whom Wilson wrote: 'Every man of whatever social group tries to dress smartly for strolling around town, or for visiting in his spare time, and loves to astonish the world with a new jacket, or a new pair of trousers of distinguished appearance.'¹¹⁵ Mawere's keen clothing sense is evident in his comments about his eldest brother, Herbert Zilole Mawere. After a stint in Bulawayo, sometime in the 1920s Herbert Mawere had rejoined a previous employer, travelling with him from Livingstone to Fort Jameson, his home area. 'Everybody was happy', reported his younger brother Zacharia. 'But some difficulties arose when they came to Fort Jameson, the trouble did not come from his master but from some other Europeans. They hated him because he did not like to wear the cloths which Europeans used to offer their boys, but he himself used to put on a suit, and he wished always to put on a suit in the Southern Rhodesia style.'¹¹⁶

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the clothes 'they used to offer their boys', as Mawere put it, were simple, and in some employment settings they remained so for quite a while. Jehiel Jacobs, a labour recruiter for Southern Rhodesia based in Livingstone, told Wilson during the early months of his stay in Northern Rhodesia about the articles of clothing he supplied to new recruits from his store, consisting of a blanket, a sweater and shorts. 'As you are aware', Jacobs had written to the district commissioner, in a letter of complaint over the portion of wages for new recruits he was allowed to spend on their outfitting, 'these recruits come into Livingstone in a semi-nude state and in practically all cases do not want to go on their journey in that condition. In the interests of my recruiting business I do not overcharge these boys and sell the goods to them at a very small profit to myself.'¹¹⁷ The deferred pay from completed work contracts was available at Jacobs' store. Men

112 Ibid, 20.

113 E9.16, Miscellaneous.

114 E4.1, Outline Biographies of People Living on the Mine Farms, 31 January 1939, 2 February 1939.

115 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 18.

116 E9.17, Biographies of Various Individuals, Herbert Zilole Mawere.

117 Ibid, E1.9, Notebook, Livingstone 1938, 18 May 1938; Jacobs to District Commissioner, 29 June 1936.

returning from work contracts wanted to buy goods at his and other stores to take to their home villages, where few goods were available and prices higher. Altogether, the working experiences of many of the men Wilson and Mawere interviewed encompassed the final transition in the reclothing process, from dressing ‘the way boys used to’ in very simple outfits to wearing suit and ties with panache, or, in Wilson’s words, to having become a dressed people. In a general analysis hinging on consumption, Wilson used dress as a proxy for access and aspirations.

Conclusion

Godfrey Wilson’s anthropological participant observation took him into the racially segregated residential areas to the homes of African workers in Broken Hill, examining their background, work histories, and livelihoods. Linguistically gifted, at ease in their company, his presence in the compounds readily violated the racial limits of colonial society. Race-conscious concerns with status and hierarchy prevented the kind of gregarious association and masculine sociability, involving food, beer parties, hunting, and discussing women that Wilson had enjoyed in his prior field setting in rural Tanzania.¹¹⁸ In his notes from Broken Hill, we can almost hear the companionable laughter and feel his hospitality. But there is no laughter in the published *Essay*, the dry narrative of which does not leave any indication either of methodology or of the circumstances under which he conducted the research.

The archival notes from his field research in Broken Hill make amply clear that Wilson himself conducted the interviews (many in Bemba, that are the basis of the biographical sketches he compiled of many urban workers), collected a wide variety of household expenditure information, and spent much time and effort on finding official information on employment, wages, and services provided to urban workers from the mine company and the town management. The notes also introduce his assistant Zacharia Mawere, who assembled the hut censuses from the African residential areas and collected other types of information, which were not included in the published work. Reading across Wilson’s archival notes, I have identified Mawere’s very keen sense of clothing and style. We will never know if Mawere’s clothing savvy influenced Wilson’s preoccupation with clothing consumption in the *Essay*.

Godfrey Wilson’s brief field research in Broken Hill, undertaken during a time of economic and political upheavals in Northern Rhodesia and beyond, challenged colonial conventions of social distance. Interacting with Broken Hill’s African workers including members of the emerging urban elite, Wilson discussed a wide range of topics with his informants, among them, livelihoods in Broken Hill, marriage, town–country relations, and religion. The notes make clear that they also discussed race relations and the widespread lack of respect many African urban workers experienced when interacting with Europeans. Little of this made its way into the *Essay*, yet it appears in fuller form in *The Analysis of Social Change*, the co-authored book Monica

118 Rebecca Marsland, “Fraternizing with the Africans”: Godfrey Wilson and Masculine “Good Company” in 1930s Bunyakyusa. Paper in progress presented at the Royal Anthropological Institute seminar, London, on 19 June 2013.

and Godfrey began discussing before they left Northern Rhodesia.¹¹⁹ No doubt Wilson's personal research experience coloured the *Essay's* concluding observations concerning the inevitability of resolving the social contradictions within Northern Rhodesian society. His resignation as director of the RLI was prompted by several issues: the tense racial situation, the hostile attitude of both the colonial and mining administration to his 'fraternizing' with natives against the backdrop of recent strikes on the Copperbelt, wartime recruitment efforts of Africans along with assumptions that he might inspire disloyalty, and last but not least, by the *Essay's* demonstration of African urbanisation.

In his own time, Wilson's published work was challenging in several respects because of its urban focus and its argument.¹²⁰ His research project in Broken Hill was in fact well in advance of its time in the colony. Only after the war and well into the 1950s did later RLI directors launch urban research projects again. Remarkably, Wilson's successor as director of the RLI, Max Gluckman, never even visited the Copperbelt.¹²¹

From his theoretical perspective, Wilson viewed the situation during which he worked in Northern Rhodesia as characterised by uneven change. The resulting disequilibrium was bound to change, he predicted.¹²² It did, more than once, and in a variety of directions, although we today might analyse it differently.¹²³ Even then, his theoretical insights resonate remarkably with much more recent explanatory frames. In spite of its functionalist underpinnings, Wilson's overall theoretical orientation transcended Malinowski's limiting conceptualisation of culture contact between different bounded systems. Instead, he conceived of a world economy in which Northern Rhodesia was only a small part, unevenly developed to be sure, where much of what went on depended on political and economic developments elsewhere.¹²⁴

119 Godfrey Wilson and Monica Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change: Based on Observations in Central Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945).

120 As Andrew Bank demonstrates in his forthcoming book, the pioneering role of women anthropologists in South Africa in urban field research has not been fully acknowledged. Included among the urban pioneering work is Monica Hunter's (Wilson) study in East London and Grahamstown in 1932, included in *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, 1936). See L.J. Bank, 'City Dreams, Country Magic: Re-Reading Monica Hunter's East London Fieldnotes' in A. Bank and L.J. Bank (eds), *Inside African Anthropology*, 95–126. In the early 1930s, a cohort of Winifred Hoernlé's students including Hilda Beemer (Kuper), Ellen Hellman, and Eileen Krige conducted urban research, of which Hellman's much later published study has received most attention. See E. Hellman, 'Rooiyard: A Sociological Survey of an Urban Native Slum Yard', *Rhodes-Livingstone Papers* 13 (1948). The Wilsons were on excellent social terms with Hellman and Hoernlé and conversant with their research. Hellman and Krige published some articles in the 1930s which are not referred to in G. Wilson's *Essay*. The only piece of urban research cited in *Essay* is Monica Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest* in the context of a discussion of the space limit on African consumption desires for furniture in Broken Hill compared to the Union of South Africa. G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 15. The *Essay* does not include a separate bibliography or reference list but uses bottom-of-the-page footnotes, the vast majority of which are explanatory notes and not scholarly references. Gluckman, according to Robert Gordon, was dismayed at Wilson's lack of acknowledgement of the input of others in *Essay*. See R. Gordon, 'On Burning One's Bridge: The Context of Gluckman's Zulu Fieldwork', *History in Africa*, 41, 2014, 177–8.

121 R. Brown, 'Passages in the Life of a White Anthropologist: Max Gluckman in Northern Rhodesia', *Journal of African History*, 20, 4, 1979, 525–41.

122 Hugh Macmillan argues that Wilson's theoretical argument bears significant unacknowledged debt to E.A.G. Robinson's work on urbanisation in Zambia, undertaken nearly a decade earlier. E.A.G. Robinson, 'The Economic Problem' in J. Merle Davis (ed), *Modern Industry and the African: An Enquiry into the Effect of the Copper Mines of Central Africa upon Native Society and the Work of Christian Missions* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 2nd edn 1986 [1933]), 136–74. See H. Macmillan, 'The Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt: Another View', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4, 1993, 691–5.

123 See n 2.

124 G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 14–15.

When viewed from today and aside from its contribution to urban anthropology, we might consider Wilson's *Essay* as a pioneering study of consumption, undertaken at a time when that subject had not attracted anthropological attention as a research concern in its own right. The topic sentence that opens Part II of the *Essay* set the tone magisterially: 'Into the circle of world economy the Africans of Broken Hill put their unskilled and semi-skilled labour, out of it they take food, firewood, houses, clothes, cooking utensils, furniture, bicycles, guns, sewing-machines and a variety of services.'¹²⁵ In fact, clothing took pride of place in Wilson's analysis at a time when European dress not only was a topic out of place in African studies but also viewed as a trivial subject matter in research in general. European residents in the hostile colonial situation in which Wilson undertook his urban research evaluated African preoccupations with clothing ambiguously at best.

In effect, Godfrey Wilson's *Essay* is a study of a brief historical moment. Vast transformations took place in Northern Rhodesia during the postwar years and the early 1950s, when among many other changes more family housing was constructed in urban areas, schools were built, the ration system abolished, wages increased and became all-inclusive, and Africans involved themselves increasingly in nationalist-oriented politics. There were new initiatives in the rural areas. There were even some efforts to establish a local manufacturing industry. Developments in society at large during the war years made the 'box system' obsolete, and in 1948 a repeal of the legal ordinance that had regulated it went into effect.¹²⁶ Economic growth in the late 1950s lasting into the 1960s and through the onset of independence in 1964 ended the lingering role of clothing as wealth, turning it into a market commodity like most others, though still one with which people in Zambia continue to engage constructively.¹²⁷ The lasting significance of Wilson's *Essay on the Economics of Detribalization* beyond its own time and place lies in its combination of economic and political processes into one analytical frame comprising the world at large. Indeed, the conflicts enmeshed in such developments reverberated in the town of Broken Hill where Wilson conducted his research and were influential in shaping both the rise and sudden end of his career in Northern Rhodesia.

125 Ibid, Part II, 9.

126 Hansen, *Salaula*, 35.

127 Hansen, *Salaula*.