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STEPHEN KAPPATA, ARTIST WITH A DEMOCRATIC VISION

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Stephen Kappata, Artist with a Democratic Vision

Stephen Kappata has been presented to the Zambian and international public over the last ten years or so as a 'naive' artist. A standard English dictionary defines naive as follows: 'artless, innocent and unaffected; unconsciously and amusingly simple'. Although the word may have a more technical meaning when applied to painting, referring, perhaps, to lack of formal training and unfamiliarity with the principles of perspective, it is difficult to see how any of its usual senses can apply to the work of Stephen Kappata. For his paintings are with their meticulous draughtmanship, their striking compositions, and effective, if somewhat idiosyncratic, use of colour, anything but artless. Unaffected they may be but their innocence is open to question for the paintings, with their often ambiguous inscriptions and content, are frequently susceptible to different, conflicting, and even subversive, interpretations. Amusing they often are, occasionally provoking hearty laughter, but they are more often knowingly complex than unconsciously simple. It is possible that the label 'naive' may in the case of Kappata be intended to draw the sting from the work of an artist whose paintings of traditional, colonial and contemporary scenes carry a distinct political message. In any event the adjective 'naive' seems quite inadequate to describe one of the most original, and now most successful, contributors to Zambia's artistic scene. It is the purpose of this article to examine in some detail the life and art of Stephen Kappata and to place his work in a broad historical

and cultural context.

KAPPATA'S LIFE

Stephen Chipango Kappata(the spelling of the surname is idiosyncratic as the double p is unknown to Zambian Bantu languages) was born at Namenga village in the southern part of Mongu district in Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, now the Western Province of Zambia, in May 1936.[1] The village lies about thirty miles east of the Zambezi river. His father, Kapata Wakoma, who was Luchazi, had migrated from Angola into Zambia at the turn of the century, escaping from Portuguese colonial wars of conquest. As such he was one of a large number of people from a variety of ethnic groups, known to the older established and dominant Lozi inhabitants of the area, as 'Wiko', meaning people from the west, who have entered Zambia from Angola in a continuous stream in the course of this century. His father was a poor subsistence farmer who was frequently away for long periods as a migrant labourer in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The Luchazi people were noted as hunters but also as wood carvers. Stephen Kappata remembers his father as a successful craftsman who made and sold wooden drums, and pestles and mortars, and was also a basket-maker. Stephen was the son of his father's third wife, Musole Mesele, a Luvale woman who was also an immigrant from Angola. Stephen was the only surviving child of seven born to his mother. He had two half-brothers and a half-sister from his father's earlier wives.

Stephen Kappata was brought up in a Luchazi village in a predominantly Lozi area. He spoke Luchazi at home and learned Lozi, the local lingua franca, and later English, at school. His family were converted in the early 1930's to the Watchtower sect, a millenarian movement of Jehova's Witnesses, which became popular in Barotseland at that time, especially among the poorest and most marginalised of immigrant people. He has remained faithful to the movement, with some lapses from orthodoxy such as his involvement in nationalist politics in the early 1960's, until the present. The Watchtower movement was viewed with deep suspicion by the British colonial authorities who saw it as at least potentially subversive and anti-European, but has been viewed with equal suspicion by independent African governments on account of its disapproval of all political parties, and the refusal of its memebers to recognise the symbols of nationhood such as flags and anthems.

EDUCATION

Kappata first went to school in 1943 at the village school which was run by the French protestant Paris Evangelical Mission. Kappata recalls that the first four years of school were free. Pupils were provided with slates, and later on with pencils and exercise books. After two further years at a lower middle school Kappata proceeded to the Sefula Mission School at the headquarters of the Paris Mission. He left school after three years at Sefula in 1951. He had completed Standard VI, the last year of primary school, but there was no possibility of going on to Munali School

in Lusaka which was then the only boys' secondary school in the country. It was a remarkable achievement for a boy from a poor and illiterate home, with the added disadvantages of belonging to an immigrant tribe, and a suspect church, to have come so far through the highly selective, and grossly underfunded, colonial educational system.

Kappata recalls that he very much enjoyed school. He acknowledges the influence upon him of several Zambian teachers and of the French superintendent of Sefula Mission, the Reverend J.P. Burger, a man who was deeply interested in the history, culture and languages of Barotseland. He was in Kappata's own words 'the first white man who liked me' and treated him as a son. There was no art teaching at school, but he remembers that he was always interested in drawing. He had his first lessons from an older boy, Kakoma, before he went to school. He learnt from him to draw cattle with a stick in the Kalahari sands of Barotseland. Like other boys of his age he modelled cattle figures from clay. At school he continued to draw, at first with chalk on slates, and later with pencils and pens in the margins of exercise books. His teachers and fellow pupils recognised his talent as a draughtsman, though there was no formal outlet for his skills. At home he annoyed his elderly uncle by his attempts to draw his portrait.

EARLY WORK EXPERIENCE

After leaving school he could, perhaps, have trained as a primary school teacher but he had no interest in doing so. He stayed at home in the village for a while and then went to look for work at the nearest industrial centre - the Zambezi Sawmills which exploited the extensive indigenous teak forests of Barotseland, and provided sleepers for the railways of Southern Africa. These sawmills were the nearest centre of large-scale employment, but they were 200 miles, and an arduous ten days walk, from Kappata's home village. He and his companions travelled with food, cooking pots, and blankets through wild and sparsely populated country. He worked at the sawmills for a few months as a junior ticket clerk at a wage of £1.8.0 a month with food. His job was to check on the days and hours worked by the mass of labourers. He went on from there to work for a year for an Italian building contractor at Livingstone, close to the Victoria Falls, and then to work for a year or so each for the Federal Post Office and the Rhodesia Railways in the southern province of Zambia. In 1957 he moved to the capital, Lusaka, and worked for a year at the Pioneer Brickworks. He was employed variously as a storeman, a linesman, and in his old job as a ticket clerk. In the meantime he had not abandoned formal education. He attempted to complete the first two years of secondary school through the Central African Correspondence College.

He was not happy in Lusaka. After an abortive attempt to become a policeman which involved a period of training at the Lilayi Police College - the inspiration of many later pictures - he

heard rumours of the wealth which could be acquired on the South African gold-mines. He made his way in 1958 to Kazangula, in what is today the Caprivi strip of Namibia, and signed on with WENELA - the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, which had been recruiting labour for the South African mines from Barotseland since the mid 1930's. After medical tests, and painful injections, he was flown by DC 3 (Dakota) to Francistown in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate, now Botswana. He was transported from there by train to Johannesburg.

He soon found that his new employers at the Consolidated Main Reef Gold Mine were uninterested in his hard-won educational qualifications and previous experience. They seemed to be deeply suspicious of anyone who could speak English. Within ten days he was sent underground to work as a lasher with pick and shovel. He was not used to such work, and was immediately involved in a clash with his Mozambican 'boss-boy' or foreman. After a month of underground work he was, after repeated letters to the management, transferred to surface work in the kitchens. He was soon promoted to stores work, and later established himself once again as a ticket clerk.

Although he objected very strongly to the way in which the mine-workers were treated by 'the Boers', he enjoyed his time in South Africa. After two years he came back as far as Kazangula for the sole purpose of signing on for another contract, and returned to the south without going home. While on the mines he travelled

freely in the Witwatersrand area, and knew well townships such as Orlando, the oldest part of the massive Soweto housing complex, where he was able to enjoy a more normal social life away from the frustrations of the single-sex mine hostels. But he was also able to make himself at home in the hostels with his many Lozi, Luchazi, Luvale, and Chokwe companions, many of the latter coming from Angola. There were few Zambians from outside the western and north western provinces, but there were many 'Nyasas' from what is now Malawi and was then, with Northern Rhodesia, a part of the settler-controlled Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

ARTISTIC TALENT

It was at the mines that Kappata was first able to put his artistic talents to profitable use. He found that he could sell drawings done to order for half-a-crown(two shillings and sixpence) a time. He drew whatever he was asked to draw, but remembers that there was a particular demand for drawings of naked women in the sex-starved atmosphere of the hostels.

After a dispute with a Swazi head clerk, who disliked Africans from the north, and after a period in hospital suffering from what he believed to be poisoning, Kappata left South Africa in 1962 and returned home. He had been in South Africa during a period of great political crisis, following the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, which resulted in the banning of the ANC and PAC. He returned home at a critical moment in the history of the Federation and of Zambia.

from 1959, and in Zambia from 1961, the Federation was on the verge of collapse. Zambia and Malawi were destined for independence in 1964. The more militant of the two nationalist parties, UNIP, under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda, was in 1962 just beginning to establish itself in Barotseland, an isolated part of Zambia, where the natural lines of communication were with the south, and political developments had lagged behind the rest of the country.

POLITICS

Kappata maintains that he had taken no interest in politics when he worked in Zambia in the mid 1950's, which were in any case a period of political quiescence. He now looks back on the Federal period, as do many of his generation, with some nostalgia, as the time when 'development' got started, and when the cost of living seemed to be relatively low. He professes also to have had little interest in or knowledge of South African politics during his time on the mines, though he shared in the general resentment and bitterness produced by the racism, and violence, of the mining industry. It may, therefore, seem surprising that on his return to Zambia he became for two years firstly branch secretary, and then branch chairman, of UNIP in his home area. His short involvement in active politics was in conflict with the Watchtower beliefs of his family, and of his upbringing. Clearly he was for a time swept along by the current of popular enthusiasm for UNIP and forthcoming independence. It seems probable that his time in South Africa had

also been a mind-broadening and radicalising experience.

Kappata's brief involvement in local level politics provided him with a new opportunity to exercise, and to display, his artistic talents. His main duties as a branch secretary involved the sale of party cards for a small commission, but he soon found that he was in demand as a cartoonist, and a producer of posters and placards. He remembers drawing cartoons showing, for instance, Harry Nkumbula, the leader of the ANC, the more conservative rival of UNIP, seated on a stool as a sign of withdrawal from the political fray, and of Sir Roy Welensky, the prime-minister of the doomed Federation, packing his bags in preparation for departure. It was not only in the field of graphic arts that the political upsurge of the early 1960's allowed Kappata to demonstrate his talents. He is a guitarist and was able to compose and sing popular political songs in Luchazi.

It was very soon after independence that he ended his brief political career. He was under some pressure to withdraw from politics from the Watchtower members of his family who objected to any political activity. He was also annoyed by the failure of the party headquarters to respond to his request for assistance with the repair of his bicycle which had been worn out in pursuit of party card sales. He resigned from his position as branch chairman in 1965 and went to work for a brother-in-law as the manager of his grocery, and tea-cart, at Nalikwanda.

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS ASSISTANT

He continued in his new job to practise his drawing, and had by now acquired a local reputation as an artist. When Ian Murdoch, the training officer at the Namushakende Farm Training Institute, near Mongu, asked his extension workers to look for some-one who could draw they recommended Kappata. He was called to Namushakende and asked to demonstrate his skills. He performed satisfactorily and was recruited as an Audio-Visual Aids assistant. Murdoch told him that their film projector was not working and that 'we want to use you as our projector'. He was recruited at first for a trial period of a few months but was soon told that he could stay.

His duties involved the production of drawings to illustrate courses conducted at the institute for peasant farmers. He was called upon to draw, for instance, men ploughing with oxen and women sowing seed to illustrate the slogan 'Plant early'. Murdoch gave him training in silk screen printing, enabling him for the first time to experiment with the use of colour. In 1968 he was transferred to the Provincial headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture at Mongu. He was then sent to Mount Makulu Agricultural Research Station near Lusaka for a short course on lettering and stencilling. He performed very well and was invited to demonstrate his skills as a speedy draughtsman on Zambian television. In 1976 he was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture headquarters in Lusaka where he was required to work on the production of posters, brochures, and booklet covers.

In the following year he was sent to Britain for a fourteen week course at Tavistock House in the use of visual aids in non-formal education. He found the course interesting but it was too short. It included work on photography, film, booklet production, book-binding and design. It was unfortunate that on his return to Zambia lack of facilities and resources made it impossible for him to practise much of what he had learned.

APPRENTICE PAINTER

Meanwhile he had, with a little help, taught himself to paint. It was in 1969 that a friend introduced him to a Zairean painter in the Linda township of Livingstone who made a living by producing pictures of the Victoria Falls for the tourist market. The Zairean artist, who had the typically Malawian or eastern Zambian, name of Phiri, gave him a one day course in the use of oil paints with sable brushes. The paint then used was commercial oil-based paint which was sold in large tins at a price of K7(£3.50) for a five litre tin. After some experimentation Kappata began to sell paintings in 1970 and has kept a careful record of his output documenting subject, price and purchaser since then.

At first his major outlet was the clothes shop of a Zambian friend in Mongu. His friend sold his paintings as a favour and without commission. Prices were very low with pictures selling in the early 1970's for prices ranging from 75ngwee (7shillings and sixpence) to a few Kwacha.(K1 = 10 shillings). The initial market

was, as with the drawings which he had produced in South Africa in the early 1960's, or in Zambia in the later 1960's, a wholly African one. From the beginning he concentrated on three broad themes which have remained his stock in trade until today. These were and are: Zambian traditional culture and history; the colonial experience in Zambia; and contemporary social comment.

It seems important to stress that his choice of themes is very much his own, and was originally aimed at an African audience, because he soon found that there was a more lucrative market for his work in the expatriate population of Mongu. This consisted initially of a small group of development workers and volunteers, many of them from Scandinavia and the Netherlands. The discovery of an expatriate market had the effect of raising his prices beyond what most Zambians could afford, or would be willing, to pay. He says himself that while many Zambians like his paintings they can no longer afford to buy them. Others, he laments, are prepared to live in houses with bare walls 'without even a photograph'. When Kappąta lived and worked in Lusaka from 1976-82 he apparently retained a small expatriate clientele centred around Scandinavian and Dutch aid and diplomatic circles, but he was not well known even among the small group, mainly of expatriates and long-term Zambian residents, who patronised Lusaka's first commercial art gallery, the Mpapa gallery, which opened in 1979. So long as he was engaged in full-time work at the Ministry of Agriculture his output was in any case relatively small, and he could function only as a weekend painter.

DISCOVERY

It was only after his return to work at the provincial headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture at Mongu in 1982 that Kappata was 'discovered' by Anna-Lise Noppen Clausen who began to encourage and promote his work. A Danish woman she was employed by NORAD (Norweigian Aid) to work on the establishment of the Nayuma Museum at Mongu. She started a craft shop at the museum and began to sell Kappata's paintings there. She helped with the supply of paints and materials, which had become increasingly difficult to obtain with the collapse of the Zambian economy in the mid 1970's. She also arranged for the sale of small numbers of his paintings at the Zintu craft shop at the Ridgeway Hotel in Lusaka from about 1984 onwards.[2]

Anna-Lise Noppen Clausen was also responsible, together with the directors of the gallery, for the sponsorship of Kappata's first one-man exhibition of 35 paintings at the Mpapa Gallery in August 1986. This exhibition was a sensation and marked Kappata's first real recognition as a Zambian artist. The exhibition coincided with his retirement from full-time employment, and his emergence as a professional painter. Since then his work has been seen quite frequently at the Mpapa Gallery, with further one man shows in August 1987, April 1991, July 1992, and May 1994. His work was first shown overseas in 1989 at the Third Havana Biennial in Cuba. It was shown in London in 1990 at the Focus on Zambia exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute, and at the Frontline

Africa exhibition, as well as at the Glasgow Mayfest exhibition in the same year. There was much favourable comment on his work in press reviews of these exhibitions. Although usually described as 'naive' his work was frequently given more attention, and favourable critical comment, than better established and more academic painters from Zambia and the region. Further recognition came with the offer by John Gill, Artistic Projects Director of the Festival Hall, London, of a one-man exhibition at the Riverside Gallery in May 1991. Norad provided sponsorship which enabled Kappata to paint for a year without financial worry and to produce the forty paintings which were sent to London. The exhibition was very well received and over two thirds of the exhibits were sold at prices ranging between £100 and £300 each. Norad also enabled him to travel to London and to be present at the opening of the exhibition. Since then his work has been shown in Gaborone, Beijing, Nairobi and Paris. An exhibition in Finland is now planned.

KAPPATA'S WORK

It remains to provide some explanation of the context, content and style of Kappata's work. In the contemporary Zambian art scene he appears as a unique and original exponent of a style that is all his own. His work does not relate at all closely to that of the small number of recognised professional painters in the country, some of whom are, or have been, critical of what they see as his technical shortcomings. Nor does his work relate very closely to

the work of artisanal painters in Zambia, many of whom are of Zairean origin. These are the 'pavement' artists who produce stereotyped village scenes, and wildlife paintings, for the casual passing trade. But his work does not emerge from a cultural, or artistic, vacuum. Kappata is a rural intellectual who sees himself, and should be seen, as a social historian, teacher, and social critic. He uses paint, canvas, images, words and humour, to make acute comments on the country's past and present. He has translated into paint many of the functions of the oral historian, the story teller, and the composer of songs, all of whom were in the past, and to some extent still are, licensed critics of the social scene. He appears to be unique in Zambia but there is evidence that just across the border in Lubumbashi on the Zairean side of the Copperbelt, and in Kinshasa, Zaire's capital, there have been a number of artists of similar social background who have chosen to concentrate on traditional, colonial and contemporary social themes. Starting with a local market they had by the 1970's an intellectual expatriate following. Some of these painters appear to have shared in Kappata's partly bitter, and partly nostalgic, view of the colonial period, and his often severe, though humorous, criticisms of the greed and hypocrisy of the new post-colonial ruling class. They have been seen by Bogumil Jewsiewicki as representing in the Zairean context the views of the original colonial intelligentsia, whose position was eroded in the post-independence period as they were displaced by the new political elite, and the more highly educated products of the expanded school and university system.[3]

In the last eight years - that is between 1986 and 1994- Kappata has exhibited close to 300 pictures in a series of seven or eight one-man exhibitions held mainly at the Mpapa Gallery in Lusaka, but also at the Festival Hall in London, and at the Odeon Gallery in Paris. He has also contributed paintings to joint exhibitions in Lusaka and abroad, and has sold paintings privately, or through the Mpapa Gallery without exhibition. The paintings exhibited at one-man shows must represent at least half his total output in the eight year period. A rough analysis of the titles of these pictures indicates that rather more than one third of them were devoted to 'traditional' and colonial scenes while rather more than half his work was devoted to contemporary scenes. It is not the intention of this paper to provide a comprehensive analysis of his output but it is the intention to focus on those aspects of his work which would justify the description of him as a historian and social critic.

TRADITION

While some of his paintings of dances and ceremonies are timeless representations of traditional practice, others show tradition in a modern context and show an awareness that tradition is neither static nor unproblematical. A recent painting, for instance, of the Nayuma Museum Dance Troupe is of a very definitely modern troupe, without ethnic identification, performing traditional dances as entertainment outside of a village context. Other pictures show performances carried out in the presence of

expatriate or tourist spectators. A painting of the latter type, of which there have been several versions, is entitled: 'A country without her own traditonal culture is dead indeed'. As with Kappata's other recurring themes no two pictures are exactly the same, but a typical version illustrates the profound ambiguity of the post-colonial state, and elite, towards traditional culture. On the right hand side Zambia's former President Kaunda in a smart safari suit, with his characteristic white handkerchief in hand, backed by serried ranks of even smarter suited politicians, and civil servants, and a uniformed police officer, watch as a couple of traditionally costumed Makishi dancers, labelled 'Mwanapwebo' (a man dressed as a woman) and 'Chileya', perform. On the left hand side there is a lone male drummer and a group of clapping village women, dressed in chitenges, provide musical accompaniment. Behind them an informally dressed white man, in shirt and shorts, with his wife at his side, films the scene. As is often the case with Kappata's pictures the inscription above the painting is much more than a title. It provides a challenging and thought-provoking commentary. It seems to ask: 'Whose tradition? and for whom?'. It calls into question the political motivation behind the apparent encouragement by government in the 1980's of a proliferation of new, invented, or revived 'traditional' ceremonies.

It was Godfrey Wilson, the social anthropologist, who did research in Kabwe(formerly Broken Hill) over 50 years ago who first pointed to the Zambian interest in clothes. The people of Northern Rhodesia were, he said, not a cattle people but a 'dressed' people.

In this, and many other pictures, Kappata's minutely observed and intensely detailed portrayal of the clothes people wear, is highly significant. It amounts at times to a kind of class analysis. There are in this picture, for instance, four distinct types of costume in addition to the President's safari suit in view: the beaded costumes of the traditional dancers, the suits and uniforms of the new ruling class, the informal clothes of the expatriate spectators, and the chitenges(wrap-around printed cloths), usually in Kappata's work signifying poverty, of the clapping women. The class analysis is to be seen in the wealth of the ruling class and the poverty of the performers as demonstrated by their clothes. In this context the encouragement of tradition can be seen as the patronising promotion of entertainment for the masses, and as a substitute for the prosperity which the country's rulers have been able to deliver only to themselves. The informal clothes of the expatriate spectators place them outside the class hierarchy, and their position in the picture puts them visibly on the side of the poor.

VILLAGE LIFE

Another group of pictures which fall roughly under the traditional heading are those which portray village life. The most frequently painted of these is a straightforward village scene entitled: 'A typical home life in the village'. Variants are entitled 'Village life is also enjoyable' or 'They are happy for the typical home life they are living'. Other related pictures show

village crafts such as pottery making, basket making, wood carving, or a black-smith at work, and domestic work such as the shelling or pounding of maize, and the winnowing of rice. These pictures can be seen as timeless, nostalgic, and as presenting an idyllic view of rural life. And yet other pictures point to rural poverty and to the decline of traditional values.

A recent picture, painted after the 1991 multi-party elections which brought the MMD(Movement for Multi-party Democracy) to power, is entitled a little paradoxically: 'There is no change to us. Things are now worse'. The title is complemented by a sub-title along the bottom of the picture: 'We can't afford to buy anything in the shops'. An old man and woman, poorly dressed, sit on stools with a fire between them. There are thatched village houses and a grain-store, as would appear in an idyllic village scene, in the background. Two chickens, their scarcity signifiying poverty, are the only animals in sight.

Another recent picture is entitled 'Young ones are disobedient to their parents' with the biblical text, II Timothy 3, 1-5. In the left background a yellow painted UBZ(United Bus Company of Zambia) bus has arrived at a rural destination and is being unloaded. In the right background there is a pink-painted bus station. In the foreground four people are walking away from the station on a path leading from left to right. In the lead is a smart young man in a suit with his only visible hand in his pocket. He is followed by an old man in village attire, bare-footed

and in printed loin cloth, and shirt, with a yoke over his shoulder and a box hanging from each end. A village woman, evidently his wife, walks behind with a large bundle wrapped in a chitenge on her head. The last person in the procession is a smartly dressed young woman in a white dress and shoes with raised heels, who walks quite unencumbered. The contrast in clothes, and the apparent lack of any contact between the villagers and the urbanites, disguises for a moment what the apocalyptic biblical text makes clear. The smartly dressed and unburdened young man and woman are the disobedient children who allow their elderly parents to carry their baggage. Urbanisation is seen to have resulted in the total breakdown of traditional respect of the young for the old, and of children for their parents. An emphasis on traditional values, and a rejection of the inequality among Zambians which has resulted from the post-independence acceleration of class formation is, as we shall see, an important element in the social criticism which informs much of Kappata's contemporary work.

COLONIAL THEMES

In his colonial paintings, and in his representations of the struggle for independence from colonial rule, Kappata clearly draws on his own experience. He draws also on a deep reservoir of black representations of white invaders. The pre-occupation with the symbols of colonial authority, flags, helmets, uniforms, guns, truncheons, and whips, can be traced back over centuries to art works produced at the time of the earliest European contacts with

Africa. Officers in helmets with guns, officials carried in hammocks by retinues of carriers, and slave caravans, have been represented, mainly in wood carvings, for a very long time and were analysed and illustrated by the German Jewish anthropologist, Julius Lips, in a book -The Native Hits Back- which was published nearly 60 years ago. A fascination with colonial uniforms was a feature of the Mbeni dance societies (Mbeni comes from the English word 'band') of east Africa from early in the 20th century and has been documented by Terence Ranger in his book Dance and Society in East Africa. Ranger has also written of the importance of the symbols of imperial power as instruments of control in colonial Zambia. He has stressed the importance of symbolism as explaining the ability of a minute police force and thinly stretched colonial administration to hold down a population spread over a vast area. Many of these symbols, such as helmets, hammocks, and guns, occur in the carved walking sticks which have been produced by the Luvale, Luchazi, and Chokwe peoples of north-western Zambia and Angola for very many years. It is reasonable to presume that Kappata's great interest in these themes may have been derived from such sources as well as from his own experience. He himself remembers the caravans of porters, with wives and children carried in hammocks, which were a feature of the District Commissioner's tax-collecting tours until the introduction of four-wheel drive Landrovers revolutionised transport in Barotseland in the years after the Second World War.

Such caravans are features of a theme which Kappata painted

frequently in the mid 1980's: 'A yoke which was placed on the Natives of Africa by the British'. A typical version of this picture shows the District Commissioner, in solar topee or sun helmet, riding a red horse at the head of a column of porters with yokes or head loads. His wife, who is also helmeted, is carried by porters in a machila or hammock. She is conspicuously reading a book and a dog is seated in the machila at her feet. Uniformed District Messengers, in fezzes, but with bare feet, escort the caravan. Two carry guns while one carries a water bag on a pole. In all of Kappata's pictures shoes, or the lack of them, are as important as clothes as signifiers of status or class.

Kappata has painted a number of pictures which deal with the most obviously oppressive and deeply resented aspect of colonial rule, the collection of poll tax. A recent painting on this theme is entitled: 'Defaulters gathered outside the District Commissioner's office'. In the left foreground seven ragged supplicants, the tax defaulters, sit, crouch or kneel. A uniformed District Messenger stands between them and the District Commissioner. The latter stands in a stereotypical pose, pipe in mouth, hand in pocket, with paunch protruding , in shirt, shorts and minutely observed stockings and shoes, looking somewhat disdainfully at the men on the ground. His stern-faced wife stands behind him and to the right of the picture. In the background there is a typical district headquarters, or Boma, of a stock pattern 1950's design with a few District Messengers and District Officers pacing its verandah. A flag, the Union Jack, painted in yellow and

brown, flutters from a pole in front of the building.

While colonial taxation was intended both to raise revenue and to force people out of the rural areas on to the regional labour market, another oppressive aspect of colonial rule was the system of controls on movement which were, somewhat paradoxically, intended to prevent proletarianisation and the permanent settlement of people in towns. Another of Kappata's pictures, entitled 'Inspection of loafers and single women', provides a graphic representation of this system. In the right background of this scene there is a red-painted police station with the usual Union Jack flying from a pole in front of it. In the left background there is a distant but extensive compound of 1930's style white brick-built rondavels, with thatched roofs, indicating an urban environment. In the right foreground there is a white police officer with a vicious-looking dog straining at a short chain. The bulk of the foreground is taken up by a procession of nine people in single file. The leaders of this procession are two moderately smart women, wearing dresses rather than chitenges, with shoes on their feet and doeks on their heads. The first of them points apprehensively at the vicious dog. These are the single women whose presence in town was seen by the Colonial government, and its creation under the policy of Indirect Rule - the Native Authorities - in rural areas, as undesirable. Their clothes are smart by comparison with the four ragged, bare-footed, and hand-cuffed men who follow them. These are the 'loafers'- the unemployed work-seekers who were thought to have no right to stay in town. The

better-off appearance of the single women tends to confirm the colonial suspicion that they could only survive in town by prostitution. In the rear of this procession are two black constables with batons drawn escorting a fifth 'loafer'.

COLONIAL UNIFORMS

Paintings such as these which portray the oppression and humiliation implicit in colonial rule, and others which show violence meted out by white employers to black workers, can not be described as nostalgic, though their humorous touches soften the depiction of oppression. But many of the colonial paintings do show what can only be described as a nostalgic fascination with the colonial hierarchy, with status, and rank as displayed in uniforms, or the lack of them. They seem to show some regret for the passing of a colonial order in which people knew their place, and were subject to discipline. Some pictures such as those of the 'District Messengers Parade 1960' or 'Police recruits on parade at Lilayi 1958' are simply vehicles for the detailed and loving depiction of uniforms, and the relationship between officers and other ranks. Other paintings are concerned with dating changes in the style of police and District Messengers uniforms.

STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

A less nostalgic display of uniforms is, however, provided in a number of pictures which Kappata has produced of scenes from the

anti-colonial independence struggle, in the latter stages of which he himself participated as a grass-roots UNIP leader in Barotseland. In a 1986 variant on this theme entitled 'The Mau Mau and Chachacha struggle for independence' - a title which curiously links rather different movements in Kenya and Zambia - a white policeman directs a black policeman with a gun. A black body lies on the ground. There is a black policeman with club raised in the foreground, and black men are seen running away in the background.

A more elaborate version of this theme appeared in 1987 under the title 'African Proletarians and the Colonial Capitalism Riot'. The possibly surprising title is taken from that of an academic book on the history of the trade union movement in Zambia which was published in the previous year by the historian and UNIP cabinet minister, Henry Meebelo. It was entitled African Proletarians and Colonial Capitalism. In the foreground of the later picture two white police officers with truncheons are assaulting unarmed black men. A bare-footed black man lies on the ground with blood pouring from his mouth. A third white police officer is getting the worst of combat with a black militant and he falls dramatically backwards, with his cap suspended in mid air, and a dazed expression on his face. It is a good example of Kappata's almost photographic ability to capture in paint split-second moments of time. In the middle-ground nine or ten fights are in progress involving for the most part black constables and unarmed militants. While one man sprints off picture to the left a stream of reinforcements armed with sticks appears in the background from

behind a government office with a Union Jack(this one is painted in yellow red and white) fluttering in front of it. In the distant left background another stream of people emerges from behind the older style of urban compound. They appear to be stoning a police vehicle. Another police vehicle appears from the left. A contrast is drawn between the rows of round houses in the poorer compound, and three rectangular houses suggesting the more modern accommodation of higher paid workers. Such details of class distinction are always significant in Kappata's work. In this scene there are, as in many of his larger pictures, thirty or forty people clearly in view and many others are suggested.

The violence of the colonial work place is the theme of several pictures. 'How a blackman suffered under the colonial rule!' is the title of one of Kappata's smaller pictures painted on card which shows a white foreman dressed in shirt, shorts and stockings, kicking the backside of a black worker dressed in a loin cloth and with shovel in hand. He gasps in pain. Another worker, also with shovel in hand, looks over his shoulder at the scene. In the distance a number of ant-like labourers are seen at work with picks, shovels and wheel-barrows. This picture draws on Kappata's experience of underground work on the South African mines as does a picture entitled 'Underground mineworkers were regarded as primitive'. Mining has, of course, been the backbone of the Zambian economy for over sixty years, but mining in Zambia is not a part of Kappata's personal experience. A number of other pictures show scenes of violence inflicted by farmers on their labour. A recent

picture on this theme is entitled: 'A dog was treated better than the farmworkers during the colonial government'. This picture shows a white-painted(and white-occupied) farm-house in the right background and the huts of the workers' compound on the left. A distant herd of cattle is being driven between them. In the left foreground a white farmer, in khaki shorts and shirt with hat, kicks a worker. A vanette is parked to the right. The farmer's wife sits in the driving seat with, in an echo of the earlier picture of the 'Yoke placed on the Natives', a dog in the passenger seat. A number of farm workers sit in the back of the vanette. Another picture on this theme is entitled: 'Farmworkers were overworked and underpaid by their colonial masters'.

Kappata has painted more tranquil scenes of colonial labour drawing on his early experiences at the Zambezi Saw-mills and at the Pioneer Brick-works at Lusaka. He has also indicated the profits which could be made from migrant labour to the South African mines, drawing on his experiences as a WENELA recruit. The UNIP government's banning of recruitment from Barotseland to the South African mines in 1966 led to its rejection by the people of the province in the elections of 1968, and is a lasting grievance. 'Makumacha coming home from Johannesburg' shows two villagers, one in loin cloth with an axe in one hand and the other in rolled-up trousers with a spear in hand, struggling under head loads. On top of one box is a three-legged cast-iron cooking pot of a type much sought after in rural Zambia. Makumacha in full miner's uniform, with boots and helmet, contentedly smoking a pipe, walks behind

them. In the background another miner with men and loads walks on a distant path.

Kappata's bitter-sweet recollections of the colonial period are matched by a more tranquil, and now nostalgic, reminiscence of the anti-colonial struggle. This is provided by a recent painting entitled: 'The past is not forgotten'. In this picture a young Kenneth Kaunda, dressed in the cloth reputedly given to him by Kwame Nkrumah, speaks into a microphone on a dais labelled 'UNIP is Power Power Power Power'. A crowd, in which men and women sit separately, listens attentively to the left. A white policeman, his colour indicating that this is a colonial scene, though the legality of the rally shows that it must have been shortly before independence, stands to the right. A tape-recorder on the ground is clearly labelled 'Uher'- the brand name of the most expensive German recorder - a detail which is reminiscent of Kappata's period as an Audio-Visual assistant. In a typical piece of ambiguity it is not quite clear whether Kaunda's speech is being recorded at this date for posterity or for the benefit of the colonial Police Special Branch, but the latter interpretation is more probable, and a man seated close to the recorder appears to be a plain clothes detective.

CONTEMPORARY SCENES

Kappata's traditional and colonial scenes demonstrate his talents as a social historian. The majority of his pictures are,

however, of contemporary topics and demonstrate his abilities not only as a chronicler of the ever-changing Zambian scene, but also as a social critic. His chosen themes range over most aspects of contemporary life. In a country which has been racked over the last twenty years by the economic decline which began with the oil price crisis of 1973, and the subsequent fall in the price of copper, it is hardly surprising that the topic in this sample on which there are the largest number of paintings is the economy. Health and the related issue of the use and abuse of alcohol are frequently recurring subjects as are conservation, rural development, and the difficulties of rural transport. There are also a number of pictures which comment on the growing inequality between rich and poor in Zambian society, and on its consequence, the pressing problem of crime. More difficult to categorise is the group of paintings which express, often through the medium of proverbs, Kappata's own philosophy of life. Related to these are a number of pictures which express his views on both race relations and gender relations. While it would be a mistake to press the comparison too far there is some similarity between Kappata's choice of topics, and the concerns which underly them, and those of Kapelwa Musonda, the pen name of a writer who has contributed a weekly column to The Times of Zambia since soon after independence. Kappata has acknowledged him as an influence. They share a sardonic interest in the changing fashions and foibles of Zambian life and a broadly democratic and egalitarian viewpoint. While Kapelwa Musonda has reached a much wider audience than Kappata they have both functioned as licensed critics of the post-independence social

scene.

THE ECONOMY

The aspects of the economy which are of greatest interest to Kappata are those which are of concern to most Zambians - trade, distribution and exchange. A 1987 picture deals with the 'Shortage of essential commodities'. The ending of price controls and the liberalisation of the economy which has come with 'structural adjustment' has put an end to that particular problem, though it has not ended the problems of high prices and unemployment. A recent picture is entitled: 'Courageous women protesting at the high price of mealie meal'. In the left background there is a large colonial-style office building painted in white. There is a wall in front and cars parked within it. A notice proclaims: 'Office of the Deputy Minister'. There are guards at a closed gate marked 'In'. On the other side there is a gate labelled 'Out'. In the right foreground there are eleven large and determined-looking women painted in close-up with two very clearly in the lead. Their dresses and shoes are painted in typical detail. There are over twenty women behind them who are not painted in detail but are suggested by heads and doeks. It is hardly necessary to point out the picture's emphasis on the remoteness and inaccessibility of the elected representatives of the people.

The conspicuous involvement of women in trade is emphasised by a number of pictures on the theme: 'Most marketeers in town are

women'. A recent version of this is entitled: 'Most of the marketeers are women countrywide'. In this rural scene seven women, whose dresses, shoes, hairstyles and doeks are minutely observed, walk with loads on their heads on a path which curves around towards the right foreground. In the background seven more women, some of whom are partly obscured by the women in the front, walk on the same path curving from left to right. The whole picture conveys a sense of sweeping movement.

There are also a number of pictures which deal with informal street selling which is sometimes seen as the preserve of young men and boys. One picture suggests, however, that 'Mishanga selling is not for boys only but even old men and women are doing it'. The connection between unemployment and street selling, and disapproval of the official harrassment of such activities, is indicated in a picture entitled: '"Give us jobs" protested the street vendors'. The occasional exploitation of men by women is suggested by variants on the theme: 'They make their living by carrying vegetable bags from Soweto market to town centre'. This picture shows ragged men staggering under enormous head loads as they carry the purchases of smartly dressed Lusaka house-wives. Kappata's response to topical issues is shown by his painting in 1992 of at least one picture on the theme of the then burgeoning, and controversial, second-hand clothing, or salauala, market. This trade was much debated in the press at the time as it was seen, on the one hand, to be a source of cheap clothes and, on the other hand, to be putting Zambian manufacturers out of business and their

employees out of work.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Another economic concern of Kappata has been the post-independence growth of inequality within the Zambian population. A frequently painted theme has been: 'A big gap between the rich and the poor!' One version shows in the background three different types of housing: the white rondavels of a poor compound, a rectangular house representing the better kind of compound, and a three storied house behind the high walls which have become typical of Lusaka's richer suburbs. Gates are closed behind a departing car. On the road in the foreground a car and a van pass. A tired man sits on a hump beside the road with loads on a pole beside him. A woman with a baby on her back and a large head-load stands looking at the big house with a man who carries a suitcase in one hand and a large bundle in the other. Some versions of this theme emphasise the contrast between rich and poor with a divided canvas and separate scenes. Another picture asks 'Equality is it there in the world?'

CRIME

A consequence of increased inequality is, of course, the rise in the crime rate which is a matter of concern to all classes in modern Zambia. Kappata has on several occasions painted a contrasting pair of pictures which compare 'Crime in the country

before independence' with 'Crime in the world today'. In the pre-independence picture a uniformed black constable in colonial helmet and shorts, with a truncheon, escorts a poorly dressed, bare-footed, and hand-cuffed, suspect. In the post-independence picture a policeman in modern uniform with gun escorts three suspects. They are hand-cuffed but two wear suits, one with a bow tie, one with a straight tie, while the third wears a smart shirt. The pictures refer, of course, to the rise of white-collar crime and seem to imply that theft today is driven not so much by necessity as by greed and is as likely to be carried out by the well-off as the poor.

HEALTH

Kappata's pictures of health topics also display a contrast, if not between colonial and modern, then between traditional and modern. In this sphere the traditional and the modern exist side by side in contemporary Zambia. As one title proclaims: 'People living in the villages believe in traditional healers'. Another picture is entitled: 'Healing system for African traditional herbalists in the villages'. In the background there is a stockaded village on one side and a row of thatched houses on the other. In the foreground to the left four men with large drums between their knees beat out the rhythm, while on the right a group of women, some standing, some kneeling, clap. In the centre a sickly male patient wrapped in a blanket sits close to a fire on which a three-legged pot stands containing, presumably, a herbal remedy. The

herbalist, dressed in a leopard skin with a plumed head-dress, and holding a rattle in each hand, appears to be intoning a chant. In the middle distance a group of villagers sits by another fire. The clothing of some of the villagers indicates that this is a modern scene. The harmony and balance of the composition seem to show approval of the activity in progress. The title of another picture - 'Diviners are dividers of the people in the villages' - indicates disapproval of the herbalist's competitors who smell out witches.

Modern medicine is represented by pictures such as: 'Medical staff urge mothers to Under 5 clinics' and 'Pregnant women going to a Clinic for examination in the developing countries'. In the latter picture a uniformed nurse stands in front of the 'We care for you Clinic'. She points to the first in a line of seven clearly pregnant women. Each of them carries her medical card and they are ranked in order and width according to the stage of their pregnancy. As is usual in Kappata's pictures the dresses, shoes, hairstyles and doeks of the women are painted in minute and contrasting detail.

The most pressing health problem in Zambia since the mid 1980's has been the rapid spread of AIDS. Since 1991 Kappata has painted a number of versions of a picture with the title: 'Stick to one sexual partner. Social institutions are the source of AIDS the killer disease'. The first part of the title is a propaganda slogan which has been widely publicised. A recent version of this picture shows in the left background the 'Mwaziona Bar Restaurant and

Tavern'.(According to the artist 'Mwaziona' means 'Now, see what you have done!') A number of people sit outside the bar and a couple dance in front of it. In the left foreground there are two rondavels with people drinking within them. In the right background there are a number of houses and some barrack-like buildings with a flag on a pole. In the right foreground women queue to enter a house where a funeral vigil is taking place. A number of men sit outside the house as is the custom at Zambian funerals. A lorry marked 'K. Manda Transport' is parked close to them, and a coffin lies on the ground next to it. In another version of the picture there is a clinic between the bar - the 'social institution' of the title - and the funeral house. This picture makes a clear connection between alcohol, promiscuity, disease and death. There are, of course, many other factors in the spread of AIDS, but the generally disruptive effects of alcohol are the theme of many of Kappata's pictures.

ALCOHOL

There is an ambiguous, if not ironic, side to the title of a recent painting on this theme - 'Be Happy, Rejoice Yourself and Don't Worry about these Critical Times'. There are over thirty people drinking in and around an establishment labelled 'No Money No Life Bar and Restaurant 1985 Ltd'. Next to the bar is a white building with the inscription 'Prostitute flat'. A man and a woman enter the room with their backs to the artist. In this and many other of Kappata's drinking scenes there is a distinct echo, though

no doubt an unconscious one, of Hogarth's Rake's Progress. A number of his pictures warn of the danger of producing or drinking kachasu - an illicit spirit - and others warn of the perils of drinking on an empty stomach. Another picture of which there are several versions is entitled 'Please hurry up. I am in trouble'. In this picture a man who is clearly enduring with difficulty the consequences of drinking before eating waits anxiously and impatiently for his long-suffering wife to prepare a plate of nsima - maize porridge - for him. Another painting points to class distinctions in the types of alcohol consumed: 'Chibuku beer(opaque beer) is for poor and elderly people'. A picture with the puzzling title 'Bar Mathematics' links drink with fighting. It carries the legend: 'One fight equals two policemen. Two policemen equal one magistrate. One magistrate equals three months imprisonment. Three months imprisonment equal one lesson'. The scene takes place outside the 'Bwelani-Muone Bar'.(The name translates as 'Come and See') Two smartly dressed women holding beer bottles stand to the left. In the centre one man punches another. His botttle drops. Blood spurts from his nose. A policeman holding handcuffs places his hand on the shoulder of the assailant. A colleague with a truncheon stands behind him. A grey-haired man wearing a suit and bow-tie sits at a table to the right and looks on. This picture demonstrates, as do so many others, Kappata's ability to freeze a moment of time, as with the dropping bottle, and to convey an atmosphere by posture, gesture and facial expression.

PROVERBS

He has painted several paintings on the theme: 'Why was I born in this miserable world?' This is a theme which is also exploited by the artisanal painters of Zaire and he may have acquired it fromthat source. Versions of this picture usually show a man beset by a variety of hazards, and mishaps, sinking canoes, crocodiles, snakes and lions. A recent and rather different version of this picture gives it a generational slant with the title: 'Why was I born early in this miserable world?' The question is answered in small print at the bottom of the picture: 'When I was young the world was not beautiful as today'. An old man, white bearded and bald, sits with his back to a tree looking longingly at two smartly dressed young women. In the background four other elegant women young women walk past. Other proverbial themes include 'The good friends will be seen when you get into hard times', 'There is nothing for nothing' and 'Hard work pays'.

RACE RELATIONS

A number of Kappata's pictures are on the subject of race relations in Zambia while others take up the more topical issue of gender relations. While his colonial topics included many examples of inter-racial violence his post-independence topics emphasise harmony. He has painted a number of versions of a picture suitable for purchase by departing expatriates with the title: 'We had a nice time in Zambia'. This usually shows a decorous multi-racial

drinking scene. A more controversial example on the theme of race relations is: 'There is no room for apartheid and discrimination in the Republic of Zambia'. In this scene a black couple sit on a sofa with an almond eyed, long-haired, presumably Asian, woman sitting between them. On another sofa a black man sits to the left with a white couple next to him. A waiter in the background carrying a tray of beers indicates that the scene is set in a hotel. The picture could be seen as uncomplicated evidence of racial harmony if it were not for a detail which, with subtle economy, calls the whole issue into question. The white man seated next to a black man is very clearly holding his nose. The inclusion of a contradictory detail of this kind is characteristic of Kappata's work which thrives on ambiguity.

GENDER

There is less ambiguity in Kappata's pictures on the theme of gender relations. Most of these seem to stress the virtues of domesticity and the dangers of glamour. A 1986 picture is entitled: 'A beautiful woman is a trouble-maker'. A man with side burns in suit and tie is grabbed by a man in trousers and shirt. A woman, presumably a straying wife or girl friend, in white dress, with conspicuous watch, ear rings and necklace looks on. She drinks from a beer bottle and holds an empty bottle in her other hand. A more recent picture looks at the same theme from a different angle. 'Ugly ones are married leaving the beautiful ones on the shelves' seems to suggest that less attractive women makes the best wives.

In the left foreground in close-up a plainly dressed and rather squat woman stands with a man, her husband, with their backs to the viewer. In the right foreground two smart, but not very smart, young women sit on a bench - the shelf- looking towards the viewer. The woman on the right wears a grey suit, blouse and bow-tie. Her hair is plaited. The woman on the left wears a skirt and blouse and has straightened hair. Both have moderately high-heeled shoes. The theme of domestic violence is taken up and apparently deplored in pictures entitled 'Will domestic violence ever end all over the world?' and 'Hey, uncle, don't kick your wife like that. She is not your servant'. The latter title does, of course, raise the question of whether kicking servants is permissable.

CONCLUSION

Kappata's life and work can be assessed on a number of levels. He can be looked at as a man of his time and generation, as an artist, as a graphic historian, and as a social critic. In Zambia today it is said that half the population is under eighteen years of age. It is now thirty years since independence. People who came to maturity before 1964 must now be over fifty. At nearing sixty Kappata is one of the small proportion of the population whose life has been divided more or less equally between the colonial and post-independence periods. His formative years were spent under colonial rule and his interest in that period, and in tradition, is self-explanatory. I have earlier described him as a rural intellectual and there is some truth in that description. He was

born, was educated, and has lived most of his life in the Western Province of Zambia, the former Barotseland. But he has worked on the line of rail, in South Africa, and in Lusaka. He now lives in a provincial town, Mongu. The process of urbanisation has beeen central to the social history of Zambia in the present century and has touched the lives of most people. An increasing proportion of Zambia's population has never known rural life. The tension between the urban and the rural has been an important part of Kappata's own life and is clearly to be seen in his art.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in assessing Kappata, the artist, is to explain his apparent uniqueness. As we have seen painters of his type are fairly common in Zaire, but he seems to have almost no rivals or competitors in Zambia. While there has been a Zairean influence on his work it would appear that he is largely self-taught, and has developed his repertoire of themes over the years. Clearly his style and technique have evolved over time. It is, unfortunately, difficult to chart these changes because few examples of his work produced before the mid 1980's are to be seen in Lusaka.

He has worked largely on his own and has developed his own techniques. He uses oil paints on canvas, calico, or card. It is, perhaps, a product of his artisanal training that he engages in a kind of mass production. He tends to paint up to half a dozen canvases at a time. He sketches the outlines of landscape and figures first, and then uses different colours on different days.

This has some practical advantages in relation to the slow drying of oil paint. He also uses an assembly line technique in painting parts of the body and clothing. He paints heads, uniforms, dresses, and shoes sequentially in a number of pictures. It is perhaps also a reflection of his artisanal training that he is prepared to paint the same picture a number of times, and frequently accepts repeat orders of pictures after exhibitions. No two pictures are, however, identical in composition. While he has painted many versions of popular themes his repertoire is always changing. Only two titles which appeared in his 1986 exhibition reappeared in 1994. More than half the topics in his latest exhibition are original, and of the 300 or so titles considered in the writing of this article the majority are unique.

Kappata's value as a historian lies in his documentation from his own perspective of aspects of the now distant colonial period and the struggle for independence. He has a marvellous visual memory and an eye for the telling detail. But it lies also in his documentation of traditional culture as it was in the past and is in the present. His work shows an awareness of the complexity of tradition and traditionalism. Significant details indicate that he is aware that tradition is not static or timeless but always changing. He is also aware of the political use which can be made of tradition. His scenes of rural idylls are balanced by an awareness of rural poverty and isolation.

His contemporary pictures provide a topical record of Zambia's

ever changing social scene. He has a reporter's eye for social change and responds quickly not so much to events as to fashions. His contemporary pictures are not overtly political, and dwell only a little on party politics, but they provide, on the one hand, a conservative critique of the decline under urban pressures of aspects of traditional culture such as respect of young people for their parents. They provide, on the other hand, a radical critique of growing class distinctions and inequality. His detailed depictions of clothing and the gradations of urban housing demonstrate a fascination with placing people in terms of class. His work seems to stress the conservative values of order, discipline, and a hierarchy based on ascribed status, while rejecting status based solely on the acquisition of wealth. But it also emphasises the values of moderation, as in condemnation of the consumption of alcohol to excess, or the ostentatious exhibition of clothing. Kappata's is a voice which seems in general to be on the side of the poor and dispossessed and to draw on a fund of traditional values which reject gross inequality of wealth and stress respect of each for all. There is a tension in his work between the traditionalist conservative and the radical. He is reticent about his religion but his membership of a marginalised church regarded by both colonial and post-independence governments, for different reasons, as subversive, may provide a partial explanation for his idiosyncratic view of the world. Kappata is primarily an artist but the words of his titles are an important part of his message and often function as a preacher's text - the topic for a visual discourse. The secret of Kappata's uniqueness

remains, however, something of a mystery. If there is one quality in his work which is more exceptional than his skill in draughtsmanship, in composition and the use of colour, it must be his sense of humour which illuminates and transforms familiar scenes, and is the ultimate source of his popular appeal. His work is, like all real art, full of contradictions. Perhaps the greatest of them is that an artist whose work is a genuine product of popular culture, and provides an egalitarian, if not democratic, critique of Zambia's past and present should be priced by an external or expatriate market beyond the means of the people to whom it was primarily directed.

1.Most of the information on Stephen Kappata's life comes from an extensive interview with him conducted on 26 April 1991 in Lusaka.

2.Interview with Anna-Lise Clausen, Lusaka, 26 November 1986.

3.See Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 'Collective Memory and its Images: Popular Urban Painting in Zaire- a Source of "Present Past"'in M-N Bourguet, L Valensi and N Wachtel(eds.) Between Memory and History(London, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991),pp. 183-94; 'Monstres, violence et histoire: une ecriture iconique du savoir populaire sure les rapports de pouvoir au Zaire actuel' in L Turgen(ed) Le productions symboliques du pouvoir XVIe-XXe siecles(Quebec, Septentrion, 1990), pp. 193-211; 'Questions in the Africa(sic) intellectual histories of the construction of self through the identity of another in Zaire', seminar paper, Harvard University, August, 1990. I am grateful to Luise White and Bogumil Jewsiewicki for these references.