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## The Patriotic Front's use popular music in the 2016 Elections in Zambia: A Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reviews recent studies that examine how music has been used for electioneering in in the 2016 general elections in Zambia. After a survey of several papers addressing music and elections in contemporary Zambia, a total of three papers specific to the 2016 elections are examined, these are: "Music and its Role in the Electoral Process of Zambia" by Namuyamba et al (2018); "The Discursive Role of Music in African Elections: A Perspective from Zambia" by Mambwe (2019); and "Singing Dununa Reverse: Interrogating the Symbolic, Political, Cultural and Patriotic Perspectives in a Zambian Political Campaign Song" by Lumbwe (2017). From the three papers examined, there is an acknowledgement of the power that music has in communicating key messages in elections. Music has become an important element in Zambian electioneering as parties have recognized how effective they can reach masses. Further, in the electioneering context, music can be used and examined differently. The papers analyzed demonstrate that there exists latitude in what music can achieve for political communication.

Keywords: Music, Electioneering, Zambia, Patriotic Front, Music Messaging

### 1. Introduction

Music remains one of the most important cultural products used to convey political ideas. Even though this is not always the motivation for its production, it is undeniable that music has been effective in communicating the political in different ways and in different contexts. According to Allen (2004, p. 2) music offers a glimpse into people's experience and many people are influenced by messages in songs "because so many people articulate their ideas, beliefs, and feelings through its creation, performance, or consumption." Music performs different functions in cultures." Ibekwe (2013, p. 160) argues that music is more than entertainment but rather can be a "a moral censor, a mobiliser, an educator, promoter of social and cultural values." The use of music in political processes is widespread in many countries and political contexts (Street, 2010; Onyebadi, 2019).

In Zambia, music has been used in political contexts for various reasons, but perhaps increasingly more so in electioneering, which according to Monica Bell (2019) referred to the processes of "actively advocating for or opposing a political candidate or party in an election". While there exists a great body of knowledge on how music has been used in recent elections by political actors to communicate key messages in Zambia, much of the work has focused in one particular election cycle, the 2011 General Election that ushered in the Patriotic Front (PF) party in office with its populist leader, Michael Sata as President (Willems 2019; Cheeseman, Ford & Simutanyi, 2014; Bwalya & Maharaj, 2018; etc).

### 2. Background

Zambia is a landlocked republic located in Southern Africa. The country gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1964 with Dr Kenneth Kaunda as its president. Since then, the country has gone from being a democracy (1964 to 1972), to a one party-state (1972-1990) under Kaunda, and back to a democracy from 1990 to the present. A constitutional change in 1990 ushered in the current democratic dispensation and multiparty elections have been held every five years since 1991, except for 2006 and 2008 when presidential by-elections were held following the demise of sitting heads of state (Sichone

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& Chikulo, 1996; Rakner, 2003; Phiri, 2005).

The current ruling party, the Patriotic Front (PF) was founded in 2001 by Michael Chilufya Sata. Sata had been a part of Zambia's ruling elite for several years. He had served as a governor of Lusaka Province under the Kaunda regime and served as a high-ranking cabinet member in Frederick T. J. Chiluba's Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) government that ushered in the democratic turn in 1991. Sata resigned from the MMD following a failed attempt by Chiluba to stand for a controversial and unconstitutional third term of office in the country's 2001 elections. Sata supported Chiluba's third term bid, only to quit the party when Chiluba instead appointed Levy Patrick Mwanawasa as his successor. Sata established the PF and contested the 2001 election but lost to Mwanawasa and the MMD. Sata and the PF also contested elections in 2006 and 2008 but were unsuccessful but steadily gained popularity. Sata gained prominence with his populist tendencies and is credited to have sparked a populist turn in Zambian politics. Sata and the PF finally came into office in 2011 (Bunnell, 2001; Rakner, 2003; Lamar & Fraser, 2007; Simutanyi, 2010; Cheeseman, Ford & Simutanyi, 2014; Bwalya & Maharaj, 2018).

PF's use of music in the 2016 elections was not an event in isolation. The party had in the previous three presidential elections utilized music to communicate its messages and garner popular support. In 2006, Sata appropriated Nathan Nyirenda's hit gospel song "*Mwe Makufi*" (You, My Knees) but was condemned for using it without permission (Nchindila, 2008). Sata's use of the song was daring and immediately helped people associate him to an already popular song. In the 2008 presidential bye-election following the death of President Mwanawasa, the PF used a song called "*Ifintu Fintu Mu Mwene*" (What matters is what you have seen). The song spoke of Sata's leadership track record (Mambwe, 2019).

In the 2011 general elections, the party used the song, "*Donchi Kubeba*" (Don't Tell Them) recorded by Dandy Krazy, whose real name is Wesley Chibambo. The song was a commentary on the hardships of life among citizens. The song highlighted the challenges Zambians faced including unemployment, lack of opportunities, poor salaries and unfulfilled promises. The PF used the song to argue that Zambians should give them the vote if they want change. Sata and the PF would tell voters that they should enjoy all the campaign favours from the incumbent MMD but to remember to keep their vote secret, hence the song (Paget, 2014; Bwalya & Maharaj, 2018; Mambwe, 2019).

The Sata won that presidential election with 42% of the vote, and the PF took the majority of seats in the National Assembly after winning 60 seats (ECZ, 2011). However, Sata's term came to an abrupt end when he died in 2014. A bye-election was held in early 2015 and the PF returned to power with Edgar Chagwa Lungu as president. In 2016, Lungu was returned as the PF's candidate. Lungu was geared to obtain a new mandate of his own, as opposed to completing Sata's term from 2015. The main opposition party at the time, the United Party for National Development (UPND), fielded its president Hakainde Hichilema as its candidate (Goldring & Wahman, 2016; Sanchez, 2016; Siachiwena, 2017; Frazer, 2017).

Established in 1998 by Anderson Mazoka, the UPND has steadily risen to prominence over the years. Mazoka contested the 2001 elections and won 27 percent of the vote, just two percent shy of Mwanawasa. The party became the second largest party after those elections. Hichilema became party president in 2006 after Mazoka died, few months before the general elections (Phiri, 2005; Rakner & Svásand, 2005). The UPND under Hichilema fell behind in those elections and in the subsequent 2008 presidential by-elections, finishing third in both. In the 2011 elections that ushered the PF into power, the UPND finished third again with 18% of the vote. However, by 2015, the Hichilema had gained significant ground around the country. In that year's bye-election, following Sata's demise, Hichilema lost the election by 1% to the PF's Edgar Lungu. Lungu was elected president with 48% of the total valid votes, while Hichilema got 47% (ECZ, 2016). Going into the 2016 elections, the UPND were aware of the power of music, having witnessed the popularity of Donchi Kubeba and other PF songs from before. The party was also determined to use music to reach out to voters, however their music did not gain mass popularity.

Both parties leveraged on the power of celebrity to draw crowds. Celebrity influence plays an important role in political and social life in Zambia (Mambwe, 2014). At political rallies, performers are hired because they can give music political meaning and are already popular with the public outside the politics.

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### 3. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to review recent studies whose interest is how music has been used in electioneering in Zambia. It specifically reviews studies that examined how the ruling Patriotic Front (PF) party in Zambia used music to communicate party messages in the 2016 general elections. In addition to making observations on how music was used to promote the party candidates, the paper also seeks to highlight some of the implications of using music in political messaging.

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### 4. Methodology and Rationale

While this paper may not qualify for a systematic review, care was adopted to ensure that the objectives of the paper are met. A research question in line with the aim of this was adopted: What has been published about how was music used by the PF in the 2016 general elections in Zambia? From there, a comprehensive literature review of papers that examine the PFs' use of music in electioneering generally and more specifically in their 2016 victory was conducted. The review is cognizant of the multidisciplinary nature of the articles.

The articles were obtained through searches on Semantic Scholar, Research Gate and Google Scholar. The three search platforms were purposefully selected considering their popularity in the academic community. From this search, I was able to identify three articles that help meet the aim of this paper. The first is a 2018 study titled "*Music and its Role in the Electoral Process of Zambia*" by Namuyamba et al. The second one is a 2019 Chapter by Mambwe titled "*The Discursive Role of Music in African Elections: A Perspective from Zambia*". The third paper, by Lumbwe (2017), is titled "*Singing Dununa Reverse: Interrogating the Symbolic, Political, Cultural and Patriotic Perspectives in a Zambian Political Campaign Song*."

The 2016 elections in Zambia continue to spark a lot of interest from scholars. These elections have generated a myriad of research papers from an array of disciplines in the social sciences, arts and humanities. However, few have engaged with how music was used by political parties in their messaging. This paper surveys the field by collating and reviewing some of the existing scholarly and analytical literature on how the music was used in the 2016 elections. This review seeks to contribute to bridging the research gap in this growing area academic inquiry. This analysis was useful in mapping some of the perspectives on how music was used in the election.

## 5. Results: Review of Papers

### 5.1 Namuyamba et al (2018): Music and its Role in the Electoral Process of Zambia

In their study, Namuyamba et al. sought to assess the role that music plays in the electoral process in Zambia. The study had three clear objectives: to assess the influence of music on Zambian voters; to establish why politicians use musicians in campaigns; and to find out the motivations for language choices in political songs. Though their study considers elections held between 2006 to 2016, it is provided interesting insights on the reasons for the use of music by political parties in the elections that this paper considers. Results from surveys and focus groups that represent a total of 160 respondents, including 20 political party representatives and 10 musicians, demonstrate a clear understanding on the role that music can play in elections.

The study revealed that that political parties used music as a campaign tool to pull masses and communicate messages that aligned with party objectives in that election. The study showed that the use of music was deliberate and part of the campaign plan. For example, one of the respondents in the study, a political party official, (2018, p. 43), "We ensured that we had the best songs which infused our manifesto as a party for our presidential campaigns." Further the study also found that musicians believe they were engaged by parties because they had ability to reach to would-be voters. This is in line with Mambwe's argument about the use celebrities in Zambia for political influence (2014). Namuyamba et al. argued that the use of musicians that were sympathetic to a particular political party crucial to the success of this process.

Lastly, Namuyamba et al. found that Bemba, Nyanja and English were the most used languages in the campaign songs. According to the study, Bemba and Nyanja "were the most widely used" because when one of the two languages is used to a stranger, communication will take place most likely" because the majority Zambians speaks and understands the two. The dominant use of Bemba and Nyanja corresponded to data from the Zambia Statistics Agency, formerly Central Statistics Office (CSO), which found that the most widely spoken languages in Zambia were Bemba (spoken by 42% of the population) and Nyanja, by 37% (CSO 2010). Tonga and Lozi only accounted for (9%) and Lozi (6%), and English, being the official language was spoken by over 90 % of the population.

Overall, the study concludes that in Zambian elections, including the 2016 cycle, political music had a significant influence on the candidate people voted for and this was the result of the messaging in the songs. The music was not only important in carrying messages but in attracting people to political rallies. Further, the parties engaged popular musicians to write, record and perform the songs because "the popularity of the musicians used adds value to the politicians on stage" (Namuyamba et al., 2018: 45). For instance, The PF employed the services of Jordan 'JK' Katemula, one of Zambia's highest selling musicians in the last two decades, to record a campaign song. Katemula, worked with another artist, Wilson Lungu (Wile), Kayombo Machai (Kayombo), Felix Phiri (Felix), and Martin Kapesha (Shenky) to record *Dununa Reverse*, which became a major success for the party.

### 5.2 Mambwe (2019): The Discursive Role of Music in African Elections: A Perspective from Zambia."

Beginning with the 2006 elections, Mambwe details how Sata and the PF has used music for electioneering. According to Mambwe, the PF campaign used various songs in the 2016 general elections. One of the main songs was "*Dununa Reverse*", a recorded by popular Zambian artists JK (Jordan Katemula), Willie (Wilson Lungu), Felix Phiri, Kayombo (Happy Kayombo Machai), and Shenky (Martin Kapesha). According to Mambwe (2019: 175), "*Dununa Reverse*, loosely translated as "kicking in reverse," was a catchy dance beat that for the large part hailed Lungu and mocked Hichilema as a failure." Further, the song does not have any overtly social and economic themes but is merely a cheer song that borrows from several cheer songs, locally called 'booste' songs, common in sporting events to boost a team.

As Mambwe does for most of his paper, he breaks down the song, loosely applying discourse analysis. *Dununa Reverse* seeks to hype up the PF and intimidate the opposition. For example, part of the chorus of the song says:

*Aba bambi balimuchibe*, [These others are sweating]  
*Aba bambi bola naikosa*, [For these others, the (football) game is hard]  
*Aba bambi balimuchibe*, [These others are sweating]  
*Aba bambi bola naikosa*. [For these others, the (football) game is hard]

Mambwe argues here that the reference to a football game in the phrase "bola naikosa," meaning "the (football) game is hard or difficult" is intended to taunt Hichilema and the UPND. The phrase implies that the game of politics is not for the "fainthearted" and will make those that are not strong feel the heat and sweat. In keeping us with this theme of intimidation and strength, Hakainde is further referred to as an "under-five" in politics, borrowing directly from a comment Michael Sata made about Hichilema's political inexperience (The Post, 2010).

Mambwe also acknowledges the ambiguity in certain parts of *Dununa Reverse*, arguing that the songs is a difficult read that is open to interpretation. He also documents how the UPND took advantage used this vagueness to claim that Zambia needed to move forward and not in reverse as the PF sung. They even came up with a song called *Dununa Forward*, recorded by a group called Organized Family. The song echoed the UPNDs slogan, "Zambia

Forward” and called on people to vote for the party to move the country forward.

While *Dununa Reverse* was certainly the most popular of the PF’s songs, it did not properly communicate this party’s message in that election cycle. This was left to a few other songs. The party’s campaign slogan was *Sonta epo Wabomba*. According to Mambwe, (2019, p. 176):

“[t]he PF declared: *Sonta epo wabomba, nga wafilwa sela tubombeko*” meaning “point at where you have worked (or what you’ve done), if you can’t, leave us to work.” In all versions of the *Sonta* songs, Lungu and the PF’s successes were highlighted while mocking other candidates, who according to the songs, had nothing to show.”

Several songs taking the campaign theme as the title were recorded. Mambwe examines three of them. In the first one, by Chester (Moses Ngandwe) and Mampi (Mukape), Mambwe argues that the songs highlighted Edgar Lungu’s work in his one year as president (after the 2015 by-elections) and how Lungu and the PF have ‘spoilt’ (pampered) the people with their good deeds, and how no vote should be made for another candidate. The second song he discusses is by Rich Bizzy (Richard Sigwidi). It takes a similar approach and but challenges the opposition to show how they have helped the people. The third song, whose artist is not identified, also emphasizes Lungu’s achievements and even likens Lungu’s coming to power to that of a messianic figure.

Mambwe also suggests that through the theme of *Sonta ep Wabomba*, the PF was challenging Hakainde directly to show what he had done for Zambians. In keeping up with their populist, social democratic voice (Siachiwena, 2017), the songs echoed the idea that Hichilema, a billionaire and alleged beneficiary of the country’s highly problematic privatisation process (Phiri, 2015), had not done anything for the people but had amassed wealth for himself.

By the end of that election cycle, the Patriotic Front won yet again. Lungu retained to office with a slender margin of 50.35% of the vote against Hichilema’s 47.63%. They had met the 50% + 1 requirement of the law (ECZ, 2016).

From his examination, Mambwe (2019) makes three critical conclusions about music in relation to how it has been used as a tool for political messaging during elections in Zambia. Firstly, music is a potent tool for mass mobilization and advertising; secondly, election music is as much a musical product like any other and will possibly take a life of its own beyond the elections; and thirdly, election music is a useful tool in socially reacquainting candidates to would-be voters so that they get to know the candidate better and in a more relatable way.

##### 5 *Lumbwe (2016): Singing Dununa Reverse: Interrogating the Symbolic, Political, Cultural and Patriotic Perspectives in a Zambian Political Campaign Song*

Lumbwe’s primary goal in her paper is to examine the themes in the song the campaign song “*Dununa Reverse*” Lumbwe argues that the campaign song ‘*Dununa Reverse*’ demonstrates that musical arts - singing, dancing and dramatisation – are a key part of Zambian life and are useful in the portrayal, preservation and transmission of “ethnic, socioeconomic, musical arts, cultural and political identities” (Lumbwe, 2017, p. 1). The intention in this examination is to explore “the role and significance of musical arts in shaping Zambia’s social, political, cultural and landscape” (Lumbwe, 2017, p. 1). Lumbwe’s study is part of a social ethnomusicological study carried out in Lusaka and the Copperbelt Provinces of Zambia.

Her analysis of the song is comprehensive. She interestingly warns that translations of African songs should be handled with care perhaps to argue that the direct translation into English is not always the intention of the songwriter. This warning is key in relation to *Dununa Reverse* and perhaps explains Mambwe’s conclusion that it is a difficult song to read.

Additionally, Lumbwe cautions those who want to understand the song to be aware of the growing use language variants in Zambia. For instance, Lumbwe (2016, p. 5) explains that in the case of Bemba, which is used in the song, one must understand the inherent meaning while being mindful to the variants such as *ichikopabeluti*, a common Bemba variant used most especially in the urban areas of the Copperbelt Province initially, and widespread in other urban areas. This variant is different from the indigenous Bemba language spoken by Bembas, also referred to as *Ichibemba nkonko* (undiluted Bemba). Another term used in recent times is *Kopala Bemba* (where *kopala* is derived from Copper in Copperbelt).

As a linguistic study, Lumbwe demonstrates how the song demonstrates linguistic features such as onomatopoeia, euphony and language borrowing. On Language borrowing, Lumbwe (2016, p. 6) argues:

“With the understanding that composers of the song *Dununa Reverse* are inspired by the cosmopolitan world, social mobility and high degree of conscience; all these factors point to the experience of some foreign words and expressions being infused in the local vocabulary. The words appear so well-integrated into the local language that one can hardly think of them as foreign.”

For example, the song references the word *Kalusa* to mean a person that is ‘loser’. It also used the word *Aikona* from Xhosa/Zulu to mean “do not”.

Lumbwe argues that the song *Dununa Reverse* in fact refers to ‘kicking the ball forward’. This is a different view to that of Mambwe (2019), discussed above. The use of the word reverse is not taken literally but within the context of the Zambia’s colonial past. It was not uncommon that miners in the Copperbelt Province in the 1950s would use music and entertainment to express social and political issues in ways that the colonialists would not understand. The use of reverse to mean forward in a song would be used to demonstrate protest and displeasure at instructions given by colonialist mine operators and administrators. This was done in part to hide coded meaning when something is said but to mean the opposite.

Lumbwe is also interested in the song’s musical interpretation which she says was created by the use of “multiple technologies including both acoustic and electronic musical instruments, as well as digital recording facilities. The inclusion of instrumentation in the analysis is a commentary of contemporary Zambian music production that merges the use of computer software and actual instruments. The new productions are part of the resurgent cultural industries that had seen years of stagnation and collapse (Mwansa, 2019; Mambwe, 2020).

Lumbwe concludes by stating that while *Dununa Reverse* is “catchy rendition”, the song has “latent meanings within its holistic performance structure”

making its not only a “very striking and entertaining piece of artwork” but subject to mixed interpretation due underlying political inclinations (2016, p. 13). It is the mixed interpretations, Lumbwe argues, that make the song one worth studying and the motivation for her own analysis.

## 6. Objective of the Study

This paper reviewed recent studies that discussed how music has been used in electioneering in Zambia. The paper specifically reviewed studies that examined how political parties, including the ruling Patriotic Front party in Zambia used music to communicate party messages in the 2016 general elections. From the three papers examined, there is an acknowledgement of the power that music has in communicating key messages in elections. As a result, the medium has become an important element in Zambian electioneering as parties have recognized how effectively they can reach masses.

What is perhaps intriguing is that all papers have shown that the Patriotic Front in Zambia has been more successful in utilizing music than any other party. This makes for an interesting observation and makes us wonder then, why are the other parties not able to achieve the same success with their songs? In other words, why are PF songs popular? This is perhaps a question for another time but one worth investigating.

Another thought that emerges from the examination is how language seems to play a role in how effective the song will be in messaging. Most of the songs are in the language *Bemba*, a *lingua franca* in some parts of the country but also the language of the Bemba tribe. Other than Bemba, most of the songs are in *Nyanja*, another *lingua franca* used in the capital city, Lusaka, and other centers. The language is not spoken by any tribe per se as it borrows heavily from many languages, especially Chewa, Ngoni, Nsenga and even Bemba. The popularity of the Bemba and Nyanja songs during elections is a reflection of the large number of mostly urban voters that are able to understand these languages and can relate to the messages (Nchindila, 2008). This group of people are a primary target for political party messaging. Both Mambwe (2019) and Namuyamba et al. (2018) make similar observations on language, even though these observations are not highlighted in this paper's analysis.

Lastly, these three papers have shown that music when used in the electioneering context be examined differently. It is clear that there is much to learn from how the medium can be used and how to explain this agency. This is in tandem with Nyamnjoh and Fokwang's (2005, p. 253) argument that there exists a lot more to explore and learn “about the relationship between music and politics, and on how musicians, politicians and political communities all strive to appropriate each other in different ways and contexts.” These papers are just examples of this diversity in perspectives and approaches.

From the papers, we can see that music will most likely be a part of elections in Zambia (and other countries) for years to come and increasingly so. The papers analyzed have demonstrated that there exists latitude in what music can achieve for political communication.

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