Participating Observers
Historiography on the Luapula: Ian Cunnison’s ‘fishing area’, Mweru-Luapula, 1948–1959

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Introduction

As a member of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) in Northern Rhodesia, Ian G. Cunnison was sent to study a ‘typical fishing area’ in 1948, for which the Luapula valley was chosen. Lyn Schumaker notes that Cunnison was selected for the Luapula assignment ahead of his more senior colleague, Elizabeth Colson, even though she already had experience studying fishing communities in North America, because the RLI director, Max Gluckman, felt the border region was too dangerous for a female researcher. Cunnison initially lived among fishers on the southeastern corner of Lake Mweru at Mulwe before settling for most of his

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