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**The ends of slavery in Barotseland, Western Zambia
(c.1800-1925)**

Jack Hogan

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Abstract

This thesis is primarily an attempt at an economic history of slavery in Barotseland, the Lozi kingdom that once dominated the Upper Zambezi floodplain, in what is now Zambia's Western Province. Slavery is a word that resonates in the minds of many when they think of Africa in the nineteenth century, but for the most part in association with the brutalities of the international slave trades. In the popular imagination and academia, the functions and significance of slavery in Central Africa have received scant attention. Moreover, Central African bondage, in the form of 'lineage' or 'domestic' slavery, has long been considered more benign than that practised elsewhere on the continent. For too long have these assumptions, rooted in both colonial and functionalist misunderstandings, clouded our understanding of the realities of slavery in pre-colonial Central Africa. One of the central purposes of this thesis therefore is to demonstrate not only the inapplicability of this outmoded paradigm to Barotseland, but of its blanket application to Central Africa as a whole.

The thesis is presented in three substantive parts. In the first, following the introduction, a methodological chapter reflects on the challenges involved in researching slavery. That is followed by a historiographical survey, which locates the thesis within a broader intellectual landscape. The second part commences with a study of the ecology of the Upper Zambezi and its floodplain, the heartland of the pre-colonial kingdom, elucidating geology, climate, flora and fauna, before reflecting on the interactions of environment and human agency in the history of the region's peoples. The chapter following traces the evolution of the Lozi state and the political history of the kingdom up to the 1870s, developing the argument that slavery was central to the turbulent nineteenth-century in the floodplain. The subsequent chapter, on the place of slavery in Lozi society, continues the argument, presenting a new understanding of the meaning of Lozi slavery. The third part of the thesis consists of three consecutive narrative chapters. The first of these opens in 1878. Besides charting a time of intrigue and rebellion and early colonial intrusions, it explores in depth the development of a vast programme of public works with the view to foregrounding both the economic significance of Lozi slavery and its fundamentally exploitative nature. The second narrative chapter begins in 1897, on the eve of the colonial era, and follows the events which led to the formal abolition of slavery in 1906 and the shifting balance of personal, political and economic power which underpinned it. The final chapter charts the slow decline of slavery over the next two decades. The long persistence of Lozi slavery, it is here argued, speaks volumes for its former centrality to both the Lozi economy and to Lozi understandings of their society and themselves.

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Glossary

Plural forms are given where used in the text. In some cases, the language of origin is indicated.

<i>Bo</i>	Respectful salutation in Silozi	<i>mangu</i>	bulrush millet (Luyana)
<i>boma</i>	administrative centre/headquarters (colonial term)	<i>mazulu</i> (sing. <i>lizulu</i>)	Naturally occurring mound
<i>bonamukau</i> (sing. <i>namukau</i>)	state or king's garden	<i>mulena</i>	chief or lord
<i>bulena</i>	the kingship	<i>mulongwanji</i>	the government, the state
<i>damboes</i>	low lying depressions, pools	<i>munanana</i>	sorgum
<i>induna</i> (pl. <i>manduna</i>)	member of 'bureaucratic aristocracy'	<i>mundale</i>	flint maize (Luyana)
<i>kufuhela</i>	'to go down' – to return after the <i>kuomboka</i>	<i>munzi</i>	village
<i>kuomboka</i>	'to get out of the water' – annual transhumance	<i>mushitu</i>	'the bush'
<i>kuta</i>	court/council	<i>mwandi</i>	cassava (Luyana)
<i>likomu za mbuwa</i>	royal herds	<i>mwanja</i>	cassava (Kololo)
<i>likute</i>	akin to politeness, respect	<i>nabi</i> (pl. <i>linabi</i>)	princes
<i>liloko</i>	proverbs (Siluyana)	<i>Nalikwanda</i>	royal barge
<i>lingongi</i>	clapperless bell	<i>namuso</i>	northern kingdom
<i>liñomboti</i>	grave guardian	<i>napu</i>	white sorgum (Luyana)
<i>lishitanguti</i>	wise sayings (Silozi)	<i>natamoyo</i>	second in rank to <i>Ngambela</i>
<i>litunga</i>	Lozi royal title (lit. 'the land')	<i>ngambela</i>	chief councillor

<i>luku</i>	finger millet (Luyana)	<i>ngulu</i>	sweet potato (Luyana)
<i>lupa</i>	cassava (Mbunda)	<i>pombeiros</i>	itinerant traders, (usually of African/mixed descent)
<i>lWambi</i>	southern kingdom	<i>sertanejos</i>	up-country traders
<i>maelepυ</i>	sorghum	<i>sikuswani</i>	Livingstone potatoes
<i>makolo</i>	non-territorial administrative/labour units	<i>silalanda</i>	group of villages
<i>makonga</i>	white sorghum (Kololo)	<i>silalo</i>	territorial unit
<i>makuwa</i>	‘whites’ in Silozi	<i>sitino</i>	royal grave
<i>mambari</i>	Ovimbundu trader	<i>suba</i> (sing. <i>liuba</i>)	man-made mound

Abbreviations

The most frequently used abbreviations are provided here for reference. They are included in parentheses in the text on the first usage.

ANC	Assistant Native Commissioner
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CO	Colonial Office
DPRO	Derbyshire Public Record Office
DC	District Commissioner
HCSA	High Commissioner for South Africa
<i>HIA</i>	<i>History in Africa</i>
<i>IJAHS</i>	<i>International Journal of African Historical Studies</i>
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
<i>JSAS</i>	<i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i>
<i>JRGS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i>
LM	Livingstone Museum, Livingstone
LMS	London Missionary Society
MMS	Methodist Missionary Society
NAUK	National Archives of the United Kingdom, London
NAZ	National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka
NC	Native Commissioner
<i>NfB</i>	<i>News from Barotsi-land</i>
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society
RM	Resident Magistrate
<i>RLJ</i>	<i>Rhodes-Livingstone Journal</i>
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs
<i>S&A</i>	<i>Slavery and Abolition</i>

Part I: Contexts

Introduction

A beginning and the 'Ends of Slavery'

The written history of Bulozí, the land of the Lozi, or Barotseland to use the colonial name, begins with the account of a journey inland from Benguela, on the Angolan coast, in 1795. We do not know the name of the Luvale man who, on the 22nd of September of that year, left the Atlantic coast, leading two foreigners to his country. He may, like the men who followed him and whose names are recorded, have been a trader. As other *sertanejos* had done before them, Alexandre da Silva Teixeira, from Santarem, in Portugal, and José d'Assumpção e Mello, of Bahia, in Brazil, alongside their Luvale guide, ventured into the hinterland and beyond to trade with the peoples of the interior. On his return da Silva Teixeira recounted his journey to Alexandre José Botelho de Vasconcellos, Sargento Mór de Cavallaria and the fifth Governador da Capitania de Benguela.¹ He told of leagues walked, named chiefs and described something of their relationships and the apparently promising prospects for trade. The 'província de Loval', Luvale country, he reported as 60 leagues long and 10 wide. To the west, it was bordered by the 'Sovas', or chiefs, of the 'Quiboque [Chokwe] e Bunda [Mbunda]'. To the south, lay the 'Poderosos Sovas', powerful chiefs, of the 'Amboellas [Mbwela/Nkoya], Bunda [Mbunda], e Canunga [Kanongesha]'. To the north, could be found more chiefs, 'Vassallos do Grande Sova dos Molluas', or vassals of the great chief of the Lunda. This was, presumably, the Mwata Yaamv, though no name is given in the text. Finally, to the east, were the 'Sova do Luy, e Amboellas', the chief of the Luyi, as the Lozi were then known, and a further group identified as Mbwela. Finally, they reported that the Rio de Sena, or Zambezi, appeared to be near.²

¹ The date is given in error as 1794 in Mainga, M., *Bulozí under the Luyana Kings, Political Evolution and State Formation in pre-colonial Zambia* (London, 1973), p. 230. Likewise in Pritchett, J.A., *Friends for Life, Friends for Death: Cohorts and Consciousness among the Lunda-Ndembu* (Charlottesville, 2007), p. 242, n. 9. Botelho de Vasconcellos' appointment to this title may be found in Lopes de Almeida, M., *Notícias históricas de Portugal e Brasil (1751-1800)* (Coimbra, 1964), p. 298.

² Alexandre José Botelho de Vasconcellos' original report of 1799 may be found in 'Breve noticia da Grande Provincia de Loval, e do Caminho da Cidade de Benguella para ella', *Annaes marítimos e coloniaes* (Lisbon), 4 (1844), pp. 159-60. A sparse English synopsis is available in Macqueen, J., 'Journeys of Silva Porto with the Arabs from Benguela to Ibo and Mozambique Through Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London (JRGS)*, 30 (1860), p. 150. A fuller English translation may be found in Burton, R.F. (ed. and trans.), *The Lands of Cazembe* (London, 1873), p. 24, n. §. This translation is, however, incorrect in several places. Such mistakes are replicated in Van Binsbergen, W., *Tears of Rain, Ethnicity and history in central western Zambia* (London, 1992), pp. 16, 21.

No further details are given about the ‘Sova de Luy’, but this account certainly tallies with what we know of the political geography of the region in the later nineteenth century.³ Clearly, then, da Silva Teixeira and Assumpção e Mello’s reasonably accurate description, which could only have been gathered from Africans they met on their journey, suggests that the peoples of the Upper Zambezi were in contact with one another and alive to the comparative might of the region’s groupings and their wider political relationships. For this reason alone, while the account is not directly concerned with the kingdom, it is an eminently suitable point with which to begin this thesis, locating as it does the Lozi in the physical and political landscape of the region. There is, however, another important aspect to this account. It demonstrates that the upper Zambezi region was in contact with the peoples to the west and that it was engaged in trade networks which stretched from the Angolan coast. This connection has been little explored in the standard works on the Lozi kingdom, despite the value of the accounts that such links produced. As we shall see, connections to the west are vitally important to the history of Lozi slavery. In recognition of this importance and because this thesis pursues Lozi slavery from its roots, casting the net back to a history beyond discrete dates, the account of these *sertanejos* provides us with a useful beginning. We cannot, however, move from this point to discuss this thesis’ main objectives and contentions without some initial clarification.

The title of this thesis contains two ambiguous words: ‘ends’, where the ambiguity is deliberate, and ‘slavery’, where the ambiguity is the enforced product of historical circumstances. To deal with the former, it is first necessary to deal with the latter. As Feierman has pointed out, ‘the word slavery is *dangerous* to use, because it means such different things at different times and places’.⁴ It is possible to conceive of slavery both as an institution and a social process. It is a question of both being owned and ownership. It can be both a means of surplus extraction and of investment. The closer one looks, the more one sees, and the more dynamic and fluid one’s conception of slavery must necessarily become. Therefore, this thesis will not seek to provide a single overarching definition of slavery. It will instead proceed from two basic propositions: slavery is first and foremost a property relationship. Secondly, it is a labour regime. To meaningfully go beyond these minima requires a consideration of slavery in a particular locality and time frame, thereby diminishing the general applicability of any further propositions. Miers’ point, that ‘the academic controversy over definitions has been more useful in showing up the difficulties of reaching a consensus [than] in pointing to a

³ See Map. 1.

⁴ Feierman, S., ‘A Century of Ironies in East Africa (c. 1780-1890)’, in P. Curtin, S. Feierman, S. Thompson and J. Vansina (eds.), *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence*, 2nd edn (London, 1995), p. 368. Here, I follow Deutsch, J.G., *Emancipation without Abolition in German East Africa, c.1884-1914* (Oxford, 2006), p. 5, in emphasising the word *dangerous*. Indeed, my thinking on this matter has been much influenced by Deutsch’s work.

solution', is apposite. And so is Miers' remedy to this problem, that is, to 'use the local terms and describe their meaning.'⁵ Chapter 6, which deals in some detail with the place of slavery in Lozi society, does precisely this. But without a clear understanding of the environmental and historical context, neither the terms nor their meanings reveal much at all. It is to developing this understanding that chapters 4 and 5 are devoted. Such a seemingly simplistic approach to the question of definition actually allows for a more complex understanding of the place of slavery in the history of Barotseland and the whole of Central Africa. To make this clear, we must now return to the question of 'ends'.

This thesis is not simply about the end, the termination, of slavery as a social institution. Slavery and its abolition in reality encompassed several ends. First, one must consider the ends to which slaves were put. This includes considering the nature and scale of slavery, the work slaves did and what the Lozi considered the purpose of slavery to be. Second, one must consider both the end, and ends, of slavery from the perspective of the slaves themselves. Whilst the relationship between slave and master could be one of conflict and subversion, it was just as likely to be shaped by negotiation and accommodation, both on a material and ideological level. Masters used slavery as a means of increasing both the quantity of production and their control over it, but often expressed this purpose in social rather than strictly economic terms. Slaves would not have been blind to the direct material ends which underpinned such professed social relations, but might have used the same idiom as their masters for their own ends. At the most basic level this may have simply been to try and ensure their continued survival or protection. They may even have attempted to claim the rights the social relationship would imply, from less onerous work to access to social mobility, for themselves or their descendants. Third, the colonial contact, and the shifting balance of power it entailed, inevitably changed the relationship between slave and master. And the colonists had their own views of the end, and ends, of slavery. The high degree of complexity and contingency this implies means that one must treat slavery as an individual experience, a process from enslavement, via violence, pawnship, birth and a host of other routes through to manumission and beyond, or death. Only then does it become possible to consider the end of slavery, not simply in the legal sense, but as a central and enduring dimension of life in pre-colonial and colonial Barotseland.

These then are the three major 'ends' that this thesis will consider. To this tripartite division corresponds a division in the cast of the historical actors with which this thesis will be concerned. These groups are, speaking in the most general terms, the Lozi aristocracy and slave owners, the slaves themselves and the Europeans. Their loose division into three groups allows for a reflection on their agency in charting the 'ends' of slavery. In due course, each

⁵ Miers, S., 'Slavery: A Question of Definition', *Slavery and Abolition (S&A)*, 24, 2 (2003), p.11.

group will have to be further subdivided. It would, for instance, be grossly simplistic to underrate the differences between missionaries and colonial administrators. It should be immediately apparent that there are direct links between each of these three groups' interests and the three major 'ends' outlined above. Again, these are not absolute or concrete relationships, and were extremely historically contingent. Ends and interests were all related, often very closely so, but certainly not coterminous. The shifting balance of power between these groups and the consequences of this for the history of slavery in Barotseland are at the heart of this thesis.

The outlines of the thesis

The thesis consists of nine chapters, divided into three equal parts. In the first, following this introduction, a methodological chapter reflects on the problems and possibilities of historical research on Barotseland, and on the close interconnections between the past and present in modern-day Western Zambia. The third chapter, a historiographical survey, first deals with the literature on slavery in Africa. The origins and development of this literature, and successive shifts in scholarly approaches to slavery, are traced and critiqued. This chapter then concludes with a survey of the literature on slavery in Barotseland, providing a baseline from which to move into the second part of the thesis.

Chapter 4, which opens the second part, is devoted to the ecology of the Upper Zambezi floodplain and its surroundings. The fundamental thrust of the chapter is to situate the Lozi in their environment and demonstrate the close interconnections between the development of the kingdom and the ecological specificity of the fertile valley which was its heartland. Here evidence is presented to advance the argument that the only place where one needs to look to account for the emergence of a powerful pre-colonial kingdom, possessed of interlocking patterns of production, settlement and transhumance, alongside elaborate political, ritual and tributary structures, is the valley itself. Central to this chapter is a detailed examination of the harnessing of the environment of the floodplain by the Lozi and the ways in which the kingdom was built not only onto, but also into, the landscape. This had clear implications for forms of political organisation and mobilisation, but it also suggests that, from the early nineteenth century, the demands for labour necessary to support this system were already substantial. In order to examine this further, however, it is necessary to turn to the history of the kingdom in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5 does this, building on the foundations laid in earlier chapters to trace the evolution and expansion of the Lozi state and the political history of the kingdom up to the 1870s. The nineteenth century was a turbulent one, a time of succession crises, civil wars and, between c.1840 and 1864, invasion and domination by the Kololo, a group of Sotho invaders

from the south. Opening with an analysis of the institutions through which the Lozi organised and mobilised labour and exerted their sway across the kingdom, it is this chapter that truly begins to develop the argument for the centrality of slavery both to the Lozi economy and the turbulent nineteenth-century history of the kingdom. The reports of two European visitors provide crucial evidence for the period. The first, David Livingstone, requires little introduction, save to say that his accounts provide us with vital evidence for the Kololo interregnum, during which time he visited the valley. But they do more than this, for Livingstone also recorded what he could learn of the history of the time before the coming of the Kololo. The second visitor, António Francisco Ferreira da Silva Porto, was a Portuguese merchant-explorer like da Silva Teixeira and Assumpção e Mello. Although Silva Porto may have been a man on the pattern of such predecessors, from the historian's point of view, he was cut from entirely different cloth. Silva Porto carried out successive journeys to the Upper Zambezi between the 1850s and 1880s, yet his journals have been virtually ignored as a source for the history of the Lozi kingdom. Making full use of these rich sources for the first time, this chapter shines a new light on both the Kololo era and its aftermath. The chapter concludes with an account of the conflicts which once more emerged following the Lozi *reconquista*.

Chapter 6 continues the argument for the centrality of slavery to the economy, and thus the politics, of the Lozi kingdom and further extends it through a detailed consideration of the place of slavery in Lozi society. The chapter is concerned with the origins of slaves, who were both traded and raided for, and also with the treatment meted out to slaves by the Lozi. Drawing on linguistic material, the concluding section of the chapter presents a radically new understanding of the meaning of Lozi slavery, and the ways in which the economic centrality of slavery was justified, and indeed bolstered, by the place of slavery in Lozi society. Having thus established the close interconnections between the ecological specificity of the Lozi heartland and the development and structures of the kingdom, demonstrated the importance of slavery to the political history of the Lozi in the nineteenth century and made plain the place of slaves in the kingdom and the fundamental link between the social and economic dimensions of Lozi slavery, the foundation for the narrative that follows is laid.

The third and final section of the thesis consists of three consecutive narrative chapters that carry forward the history of the kingdom from the point at which it broke off in chapter 5. The first of these deals with the period 1878-1897. This was the time of the first missionary intrusions into the kingdom by both Jesuits and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), and the dynamics of the power relationship between the Lozi king and these newcomers form an important part of this chapter. So too do early colonial intrusions by representatives of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and the series of concessions to the Company signed by the then king, Lubosi Lewanika. But it is in the great programme of public works, launched by the *Litunga*, or Lozi king, in the 1890s that the economic centrality

of slavery, and its fundamentally exploitative nature, can be most clearly seen in the history of Lozi kingdom. To this day, the canals of Barotseland stand as a monument to the power and ambition of the Lozi elite in the late nineteenth century. Chapter 7 takes the history of one canal in particular and, through a close reading of both contemporaneous sources and the present-day remains of the canal, demonstrates the intensity of labour which went into completing but a fraction of these great public works. But even at the time when, as will be argued here, the Lozi kingdom appeared at the peak of its powers, changes occurring beyond its borders and beyond its control would soon intrude evermore into Barotseland.

The second narrative chapter – chapter 8 – begins in 1897, with the coming of the first permanent representatives of the BSAC. Yet this does not mark the watershed one might expect. From the perspective of the slaves at least, little changed. Reflecting on the aims and ambitions of both the Lozi and colonial interlopers, this chapter traces the shifting balance of power between not only the BSAC and Lozi, but also between the latter two parties and the PEMS missionaries. Wider dynamics, such as the Anglo-Portuguese dispute over the illusory border of their respective colonies, also become important in the decade spanning the end of the century. The fundamental story of this chapter, however, is that of the introduction of taxation and the coming of the abolition of slavery in 1906. These events have never before been examined in detail. By tracing the complex web of personal, political and economic power which underpinned the formal abolition of slavery, this chapter reveals that the ambitions which drove the supposed liberation of Lozi slaves were anything but noble. Abolition, in short, had nothing whatsoever to do with the end of slavery.

The final narrative chapter follows the ‘ends’ of slavery from the proclamation of abolition in 1906 to 1925, the year after Northern Rhodesia became a colony under direct Crown Rule. At its heart is one question, the acid test for the arguments made throughout the thesis. Given the economic and social significance of Lozi slavery, one would expect great upheavals to follow its abolition. Yet this did not occur. What, then, happened to all the slaves? The chapter opens with the immediate aftermath of abolition, before charting the ends of Lozi slavery over two decades. Here, it will be argued that for the better part of this period the Lozi elite not only continued to hold slaves, initially at least with the connivance of the colonial state, but also that it sought at times to tighten its grip over its subjects. This long persistence of Lozi slavery, it is here argued, speaks volume of its former centrality to both the Lozi economy and Lozi understandings of their society and themselves.

The fundamental argument

This thesis' first objective is to reflect on the purpose of Lozi slavery and the ends to which slaves were put by the Lozi. Also central to its agenda are missionary and colonial understandings of the purposes and consequences of this slavery. Similarly, it reveals the complexities of abolition for masters, slaves and European interlopers. In charting the 'ends' of Lozi slavery, it draws together a highly contingent and multifocal history of conflicting conceptions, intents and events. No sustained study has ever been made of the history of slavery in the Lozi kingdom. The fundamental argument of this thesis is that slavery in the Lozi kingdom was more economically, socially and politically central than has hitherto been assumed. Stemming from this central contention are a number of related arguments. Some of these contingent arguments may, in time and with further research, be overturned. But the fundamental and most important point will remain.

It is by demonstrating the centrality of Lozi slavery that this thesis makes a substantive contribution, not only to the history of western Zambia or central Africa, but also to the broader history of slavery in Africa. Exposing the fundamental flaws involved in reading Lozi slavery through the prism of ostensibly benign and incorporative domestic/linage slavery, this thesis poses a challenge to the blanket application of this model to Central Africa as a whole. For too long has this been the default scholarly position. For too long have scholars believed the histories of slavery and abolition in Central Africa to have been unproblematic, and thus barely worthy of sustained investigation. Put simply, this thesis demonstrates that the history of Lozi slavery in the pre-colonial and early colonial era cannot be separated from the history of the kingdom itself. In reconstructing these interwoven histories, this thesis transforms our understanding of Lozi history and, it is hoped, reveals something of the lives of those who scholars, if not their sources, have largely discounted, generally ignored or in some cases simply silenced.

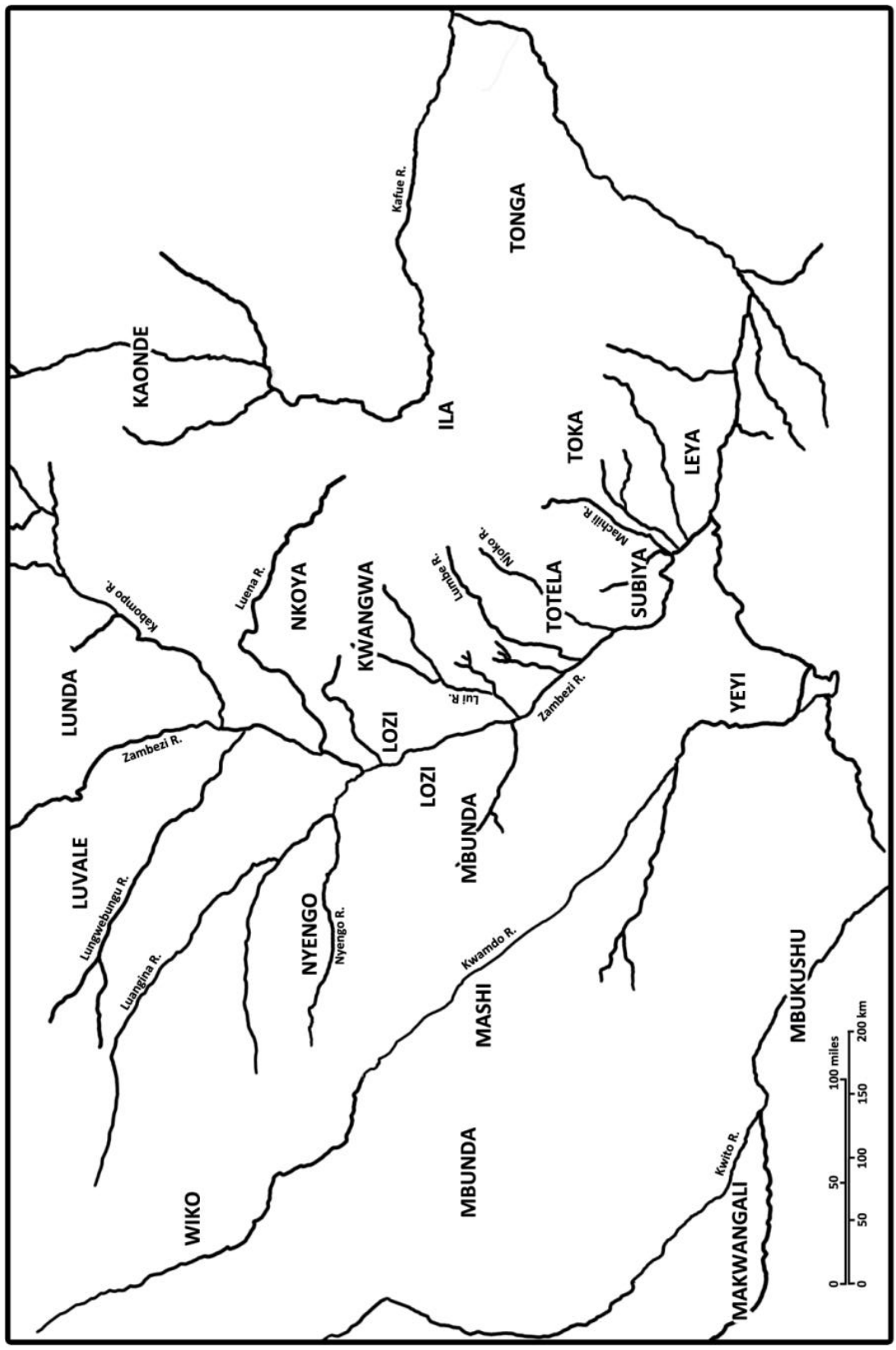
No argument can exist in a vacuum, and while this thesis is a study of slavery, it has inevitably been shaped by wider intellectual currents. In spanning the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, often caesura in social and economic histories, this thesis also attacks the foreshortening of Africa's past, which, as Richard Reid has recently argued, has done much to marginalise the study of pre-colonial Africa.⁶ Once at the very heart of the field, the study of the pre-colonial political history of Africa has fallen victim to both a growing recognition

⁶ Reid, R., 'Past and Presentism: The 'Precolonial' and the foreshortening of African History', *Journal of African History (JAH)*, 52, 2 (2011), pp. 135-155.

of the limitations and dangers of the reliance on oral sources, and the economic and political decay of the continent.⁷ But it is not only political history which has barely weathered the combined assault of historical scepticism and ‘presentist’ disenchantment. Half a decade ago, A.G. Hopkins wondered ‘What has happened to the study of Africa’s economic history?’⁸ As he rightly observed, as a field, pre-colonial African economic history is now largely extinct. This can come as no surprise. Given that our sources, be they oral traditions or published and archival sources, already tending to give primacy to the political, are thought to hold little water, then what chance for the less visible, less recorded and thus less recoverable economic dimension of the pre-colonial history of African societies? But the pre-colonial history of Africa has suffered from another equally damaging trend. As academics find themselves in an environment of mounting pressure to churn out publications and demonstrate ‘impact’, and increasingly in competition for posts and funding, approaches grow increasingly narrow and research shallow. The rise of a relativism that justifies the commercialisation of the academy and the erosion of scholarly freedoms, under the guise of increasing specialisation, has played its part in undermining a field which requires precisely the opposite approach. To write the history of pre-colonial African societies, one must cast the net wide, rejecting the compartmentalisation of knowledge into discreet disciplines, and of history into the pre-colonial and colonial, the social, cultural, political and economic. A narrow approach is bound to fall short. It is hoped that this thesis demonstrates that there is yet hope for the economic history of pre-colonial Africa, for it takes as fundamental the premise that there can be no understanding of the past without an understanding of the material reality of that past. Only from this can the rest follow.

⁷ Macola, G., *The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-Eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950* (Hamburg, 2002), pp. xx-xxi.

⁸ Hopkins, A.G., ‘The New Economic History of Africa’, *JAH*, 50, 2 (2009), p. 155. Hopkins here does, however, make the point that while historians have largely ignored this area, economists have laudably not followed suit.



Map 1. The peoples of the Upper Zambezi, c. 1900.

Sources and Methodology

This chapter discusses a number of methodological points, some of which have been touched upon in the introduction. For the most part, methodological considerations come at the relevant point in the thesis. A few essential introductory remarks, however, must be spelled out at this stage. First, a series of observations will be made about the various published sources and categories of archival material drawn upon in the writing of this thesis, and the problems and possibilities posed by these. In particular, this chapter reflects on the potential hazards of colonial archives for the twenty-first century historian working on the early colonial period. The point, however, will also be stressed that, in these same archives, the tensions generated between coloniser and colonised, and between colonisers themselves, give valuable glimpses of the otherwise silent voices of African actors. It is here argued that these moments constitute some of the richest streams to pan for the historian in search of the social history of Africa in this period. The chapter will then turn to the field, and address the manner in which the fieldwork supporting this thesis was undertaken. An argument will be made for the value of spending time living, working and moving through a place in which the past is in many ways so visible, and history so intimately connected with the land itself.

Archival sources

As a region, the Upper Zambezi attracted literate observers from a comparatively early period. Drawn in by the promise of trade, and later the prospects for evangelisation, many of these visitors left behind accounts of great use to the historian. In the introduction, attention has already been drawn to the importance of the journals of António Francisco Ferreira da Silva Porto for the historian of nineteenth-century Barotseland. This source will now be discussed at greater length. The most immediately apparent value of these manuscripts is the span of time they record, in particular, a long series of trips from Angola, made over forty years. At this stage it is worth briefly summarising the dates of the journeys to Barotseland covered by the journals. In 1847-1848, Francisco Monteiro da Fonseca and Joaquim Mariano, two *pombeiros* in Silva Porto's employ, made the journey to Barotseland. Their account Silva Porto attempted to pass off as his own. Silva Porto himself then made the journey in 1853 and 1858, then in successive years between 1864 and 1868, before a final journey in 1883-1884. Thus the journals bear witness to momentous decades in Lozi history, and the fact that they have been almost entirely neglected by English-speaking historians is rather extraordinary. This may, in part, be the result of their comparative inaccessibility, and the unusual publication history of these journals has probably further served to obscure their value. Livingstone, who

Silva Porto met in 1853, recorded that the following year Silva Porto had ‘preceded me to Loanda, and was publishing his Journal when I arrived at that city.’¹ This journal only appeared in 1886, as did some excerpts of his writing in Portuguese journals.² Nothing else was published during his lifetime.³ In 1942, an edition which covered the 1853 and 1858 journals was published in Portugal.⁴ Then, in 1986, the first volume of a projected series, encompassing the journals as a whole, was edited and published by Maria Emilia Madeira Santos. This first volume covered the records of the *pombeiros* journey in 1847-1848.⁵ Yet no more of the projected volumes ever appeared.⁶ The location of the manuscript volumes themselves is also somewhat confusing, for it appears that there is either a division of the originals between two repositories, the *Biblioteca da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* and the *Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto*, or that duplicates, or edited versions, of the earlier journals (volumes 1 and 2, covering the period 1846-1853 and 1860-1862 respectively) are held in Lisbon.⁷ Be this as it may, I was able to obtain digital reproductions of three of the original volumes held at Porto. These cover Silva Porto’s travels in the 1860s, an absolutely crucial period in the history of the Lozi kingdom. As will be argued in chapter 5, the material they contain allows us to understand this period in a new light.⁸

The other principal sources for the second half of the nineteenth century, the published accounts of explorers and missionaries, are dealt with in the next section. From the late 1890s,

¹ Livingstone, D., *Missionary travels and researches in South Africa* (London, 1857), p. 217, n.

² This journal was the diary of a journey from Angola to Mozambique completed by Domingos Cakahanga, a *pombeiro* in his employ. This was published as da Silva Porto, A.F.F., *Diario : Do Bihé a Moçambique travessia de Costa a Contra-Costa em 1852 ; pelo Portuense* (Porto, 1886). Other fragments of his writings and journal articles were collected and published in the twentieth century by the Portuguese Ministry for the Colonies as da Silva Porto, A.F.F. (ed. de Sousa Dias, G.), *Silva Pôrto e a travessia do continente africano* (Lisbon 1938).

³ Silva Porto did, however, write a manuscript entitled ‘Apontamentos sôbre a obra do Ex. mo Sr. D. José de Lacerda “Exame das viagens do Dr. David Livingstone” por um portuense’ [Notes upon the work of the Most Excellent Senhor Dr. José de Lacerda “An examination of the journeys of Dr. David Livingstone” by a person from Oporto] in 1868. This was published posthumously in 1891 as da Silva Porto, A.F.F., *Silva Porto e Livingstone, manuscripto de Silva Porto encontrado no seu espolio* [Silva Porto and Livingstone, a manuscript by Silva Porto found in his estate] (Porto, 1891). A number of other works appeared immediately following Silva Porto’s death in 1890. Cordeiro, L., *Silva Porto* (Lisbon, 1890); da Silva Porto, A.F.F., *Os ultimos dias de Silva Porto: extracto do seu diario* (Lisbon, 1891); Patricio, F.J., *A banderia do Sertanejo. Mortalha e Tropheo* (Porto, 1891).

⁴ Silva Porto, A.F., *Viagens e apontamentos de um Português em África* (Lisbon, 1942). This was followed by three short studies of his life: Monteiro de Castro Soromenho, F., *A aventura e a morte no sertão; Silva Pôrto e a viagem de Angola a Moçambique* (Lisbon, 1943); Parreira, C., *O Sertanejo do Bié, Silva Pôrto* (Lisbon, 1945) and de Sousa Dias, G., *Silva Pôrto. Crónicas angolanas* (Vila Nova de Famalicão, 1948).

⁵ Madeira Santos, M.E., (ed.), *Viagens e Apontamentos de um Portuense em Africa* (Coimbra, 1986). See this edition’s bibliography for further works.

⁶ I have been unable to discover the reason for this.

⁷ See bibliography for full details.

⁸ I hope to be able to produce, following a complete investigation of the journals as they relate to Barotseland, a scholarly edition or series of articles making this material generally available for the first time.

the historian can supplement these with the archives of the BSAC, the chartered company to which the administration of Northern Rhodesia was first delegated, and the letters and published accounts of a number of its administrators. The correspondence and dispatches of the Company, and its communication with the British Government, are also extant and provide insights into the political and administrative history of its rule, up to 1924, when Barotseland came under the direct administration of the Imperial government.⁹ Of particular interest for the study of the economic and social history of the early twentieth century are the records of the BSAC held at the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), in Lusaka.¹⁰ Colonial administrators often made historical or ethnographic enquiries in the course of their work, investigating the history of chiefly titles in the case of succession disputes, seeking to demarcate the boundaries of villages and districts and so on. Frequently, they were required to act as both administrative and judicial officials. In the case of Barotseland, the peaceful incorporation of a pre-colonial kingdom into the colonial structures of North-Western Rhodesia, a process that is further discussed in chapter 7, amounted to an interweaving, a meshing, of two bodies each jealous of their own power and feeling their authority to be justifiably paramount. This was not an even contest, for at least on paper the Company held the upper hand. But there was much, particularly in the beginning, that was beyond its knowledge or reach.

Of course, it is hardly novel to remark on the close connections between colonisation, knowledge and power, but trite as the point may be, it certainly holds true in the present case. The colonial administration was very much concerned with gathering knowledge, if only to the point of practical application, about their notional allies. In turn, the Lozi kept much away from the eyes of the British, and indeed the missionaries. Here the Lozi were at a distinct advantage. Europeans were few in number and widely spread, islands in the valley or clusters

⁹ The BSAC archives are not held centrally, but are scattered across several institutions. The National Archives of Zambia have substantial holdings, as does the Archives of the Livingstone Museum (ALM), Livingstone, Zambia. The National Archives of the UK (NAUK) hold a great deal of the communication between the Colonial Office, Foreign Office and other government department and the Company. These communications passed through the High Commissioner for South Africa, and are for the most part available in DO 119. A number of unusual documents were discovered amongst the Gell papers held at the Derbyshire Public Record Office (DPRO). The Rhodes House Library, Oxford, holds several manuscripts and copies of items by early Company Administrators in Barotseland. Relevant published works by BSAC administrators are: Harding, C., *In remotest Barotseland* (London, 1905); Harding, C., *Far Bugles* (London, 1933); Stirke, D.W., *Barotseland: eight years among the Barotse* (London, 1922).

¹⁰ These are divided, for the period before 1911 and the amalgamation of Northern Rhodesia, into classmarks BS1 (which contains the papers of the North-Eastern Rhodesia administration) and BS2 (containing those of North-Western Rhodesia.) From 1911 onwards, records continue under BS3, although some later material may also be found in both BS1 and BS2. There are also, alongside these series, the provincial and districts records, which include District Notebooks, letters, court cases and so on. For Barotseland, the most important of these are the KDE files. See bibliography for more information.

on the margins, largely blind and deaf beyond their isolated salients. Even on tour in their districts, officials were bound by the terrain and their line of march, moving slower than word could pass of their approach. The same limitation may also, to a lesser extent, be true of the Lozi elite. Just how far their eyes and ears spread is difficult to gauge. What is clear, however, is that they were both better placed to see and hear what was said and done, and alive to the potential power this gave them over the British. Even with all of this in mind, however, it would be wrong to characterise this period as solely one of conflicts and deceptions. For all that the colonial and Lozi states were engaged in a struggle, they were also engaged in cooperation. From cooperation springs the possibility for accommodation and negotiation, for mutual discretion as much as concealment. All of this poses a problem, and at the same time provides a solution. There may be much that is simply not in the colonial sources available to us, much that is left unsaid or unreported. Yet pessimism is unwarranted, for within those same records it is possible to hear African voices too. This is particularly so wherever the Lozi and colonial states crossed purposes and structures. Whether this resulted in cooperation and negotiation, or friction and conflict, it is these intersections that are the most revealing, for they generated moments where the previously unspoken was articulated and the intangible are given form. Thus it is the records of cases tried in colonial courts, and those reflecting conflicts and cooperation over legitimate jurisdiction and authority, that have proved the most fruitful in revealing the history of Lozi slavery in the early decades of the twentieth century.

My almost exclusive reliance on archival material held in Zambia stems from two further considerations. First, this material is frequently far richer than that which may be found elsewhere, filtered as it has been through official channels en route to its destination. In the case of the documents at the Livingstone Museum, particularly the collection of original ethno-historical manuscripts, no other copies exist. Moreover, the museum holds some records of the PEMS, including letters and station reports of great value to the historian. But there is also a principle involved here. Material held in Zambia will be available for Zambian scholars to consult. It seems only right that a work of Zambian history be guided by the principle that it should be of value for the people most concerned by its subject. For the same reason, wherever I have been aware of material existing in duplicate in different repositories, I have made reference to the Zambian holdings. The journals of Silva Porto are the one major, and unavoidable, exception to this rule, although there are a number of others.

Published sources

The published sources for the historian of late pre-colonial Barotseland, in contrast to the often fragmentary material available to scholars working on other Central African societies, present an *embarras de richesses*. One has the accounts, letters and journals, not only of Livingstone and other explorers and traders, but also of three major pioneering missionaries: Frederick Stanley Arnot, Adolphe Jalla and François Coillard.¹¹ As Reid has observed, these accounts pose serious challenges for the historian, but they ignore them at their peril. Postmodern, postcolonial critiques have tended to render such works as signifying only the eurocentricism of their authors, yet these critiques are in reality as distorted and misapprehended as some of the accounts they seek to discredit. What is in fact required to make fruitful use of these sources is a ‘careful, integrated and holistic’ reading, for by this we can discover much of value, particularly insofar as socio-economic matters are concerned.¹² To this sizeable material one can add the correspondence and publications of the PEMS missionaries, in the form of two journals: *News from Barotsi-land* and *Nouvelles du Zambèze*, the English and French organs, respectively, of that society.¹³ One also has the accounts of unsuccessful Jesuit

¹¹ Of Livingstone’s many published accounts and letters, the most relevant for our purposes are: Livingstone, *Missionary travels* and Livingstone, D., and Livingstone, C., *Narrative of an expedition to the Zambesi and its tributaries* (London, 1865); Livingstone, D. (ed. I. Schapera), *Private Journals 1851-1853* (London, 1960); Livingstone, D. ‘Explorations into the Interior of Africa’, *JRGS*, 24 (1854), pp. 291-306; Livingstone, D., ‘Extract from Despatches of Dr. David Livingstone 1858-1861’, *JRGS*, 3 (1861), pp. 18-24.. The published volumes of the other above named missionaries pertaining to Barotseland are: Arnot, F.S., *Garenganze, or Seven Years’ Pioneer Mission Work in Central Africa* (London, 1889); Jalla, A. *Pionniers parmi les Marotse* (Florence, 1903); Coillard, F. *On the Threshold of Central Africa, a record of twenty years pioneering among the Barotsi of the Upper Zambezi* (London, 1897). To these we may add the accounts of a series of explorers and traders: Bertrand, A., ‘From Machili to Lialui’, *Geographical Journal*, 9 (Feb. 1897), pp. 145-149; Bertrand A. (trans. A.B. Miall), *The Kingdom of the Barotsi of Upper Zambezia* (London, 1899); Chapman, J., *Travels in the interior of South Africa, 1849-1863*, 2 vols. (London, 1868); Gibbons, A. St H., ‘A journey into the Marotse and Mashikolumbe countries’, *Geographical Journal*, 9 (Feb. 1897), pp. 121-145.; Holub, E., *Seven years in South Africa*, 2 vols. (London, 1881); Holub, E., ‘A journey through central South Africa from the diamond fields to the Upper Zambezi’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 13 (1880), pp. 162-182; Selous, F.C., *Travel and Adventure in South East Africa* (London, 1893); Serpa Pinto, A., (trans. de, Elwese, A.) *How I crossed Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean*, 2 vols. (London, 1881); Westbeeche, G., Tabler, E.C., (ed.) *Trade and Travel in early Barotseland* (London, 1963).

¹² This is in line with the general thrust of Reid’s argument. See Reid, R.J., ‘Violence and Its Sources: European Witnesses to the Military Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Africa’, in Landau, P.S., (ed.), *The Power of Doubt: Essays in Honor of David Henige* (Madison, 2011), pp. 41-59.

¹³ *News from Barotsi-land (NfB)* was published in English by and for the PEMS’s sponsors and supporters in Britain from 1898 to 1916, and contains published edited letters from the Zambezi missionaries. *Nouvelles du Zambèze* is its French equivalent. Full series of both are held at the Bibliotheque du DEFAP, Paris. The holding of *News from Barotsi-land* at the British Library proved sufficient for the purposes of the thesis.

missionaries,¹⁴ those of the Methodist Missionary Society,¹⁵ and of a rather unusual missionary-cum-hyper-critical tourist.¹⁶

Several missionaries also published dictionaries and studies of Silozi, the language of the Lozi, and assorted ethnographic and or historical accounts of the people of Barotseland.¹⁷ These linguistic, ethnographic and historical publications are a particularly valuable source. To these we may also add a substantial number of ethno-historical publications in the vernacular published in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁸ But these latter publications pose two problems. First, they are sources to be used with great care in their own right and as a corpus. Second, these works have, to varying degrees, been circulated in Barotseland, and are certainly familiar to many people, particularly the older generations. The first problem demands that close attention be paid to the contexts in which such texts were created, and the ways in which they have also altered that context.¹⁹ The second problem has major consequences for the conduct of field research in Barotseland, particularly on the subject of slavery. Lozi historical consciousness and investment in the past are strong currents in present-day Western Zambia. In order to demonstrate the implications of this, it is necessary to consider the intrusions of both the colonial and pre-colonial pasts into the present in Barotseland. The following sections deal with these in turn. The logic for dividing questions relating to the field and the place of the past in it is simple. In Barotseland, there is on the face of it a sharp contrast between the valley and surrounding land. One looks down from the hill out over the plain and on to the horizon. One has the feeling of seeing a great deal. Down in the plain, the sky is wide but the horizon close, and it is easy to lose your bearings in the apparent immensity of the place. But

¹⁴ Roberts, R.S. (ed.), Wakerley, V. (trans.), *Journeys Beyond Gubuluwayo, to the Gaza, Tonga and Lozi, Letters of The Jesuits' Zambesi Mission, 1880-1883* (Harare, 2009). This is a recent translation of an earlier Belgian edition of the same letters.

¹⁵ Baldwin, A., *Journal and Letters*, Box 1, Central Africa, Methodist Missionary Society Papers (MMS), held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) library, London.

¹⁶ Johnston, J., *Reality versus Romance in South Central Africa* (London, 1893).

¹⁷ Jacottet, E., *Études sur les langues du Haut Zembèze*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1896-1901); Jalla, A.D., *Litaba tsa Sechaba sa Marotse* (Florence, 1910); Jalla, A.D., *Litaba za Sichaba sa ma-Lozi*, 2nd edn. (Dundee, South Africa, 1922); Jalla, A.D., *Litaba za Sicaba sa Malozi* – (Sefula, 3rd edn. 1934, 4th edn. 1939); Jalla, A.D., *Dictionary of the Lozi Language. Vol. I: Lozi – English* (London, 1936). On the long publication history of Jalla's *Litaba* and for a fuller list of editions, see Hogan, J., and Macola, G., 'From Royalism to E-secessionism: Lozi Histories and Ethnic Politics from the Early Twentieth Century', in Johnson, D. and Davis, C., (eds.), *The Book in Africa: Critical Debates* (New York, forthcoming).

¹⁸ Among the most important are Ikacana, N.S., *Litaba za Makwangwa* (London, 1952); Mupatu, Y.W., *Bulozi Sapili* (Cape Town, 1959); Mupatu, Y.W., *Mulambwa Santulu u Amuhela bo Mwene* (London, 1954) and Nalilungwe, M., *Makololo ki ba!* (Cape Town, 1958). I have generally preferred the manuscripts held at the Livingstone Museum over published editions as they are often the author's own English translation. On ethno-historical publications in Northern Rhodesia more generally, see Macola, G., 'Historical and Ethnographical Publications in the Vernaculars of Colonial Zambia: Missionary Contribution to the "Creation of Tribalism"', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 33, 4 (2003), pp. 343-364.

¹⁹ Further detail on the evolution of Lozi ethno-history and the political contexts of its creation may be found in Hogan and Macola, 'From Royalism to E-secessionism'.

the contrast is deceptive, for without one there could not be the other. And both must be understood singly and together. The longer you are there, the more you move from one to the other, the more you realise that appearances mislead you, for you see less from the hill than you do in the valley.

The field I: the short view from the hill

Mongu, the capital of what is now Zambia's Western Province, rests behind a bluff overlooking the Zambezi floodplain to the west. On a clear day, one can see out as far as Lealui, the traditional capital of the Lozi kingdom. On a hazy day, or when the grass is being burnt in the valley, one sees far less. The town itself spreads a short way to the north and south, along the margin which marks the limit of the waters in years of high flood, and back east along the Lusaka-Mongu Road. Mongu was the centre of the colonial administration in Barotseland, and reminders of the once close connection with Britain are everywhere. Old Land Rovers, including one boasting a painted Union Jack, were for decades the primary means of transport here and remain ubiquitous, kept running by virtue of mechanical simplicity and impressive ingenuity. But it is not only in the physical remains of the colonial past - the memorial to both World Wars at the *boma*, the court house or the former residences of Colonial officers - that this history intrudes into the present. The following brief account of the events that took place over a three-day-long period in late 2011 is given here as a telling demonstration of how unexpectedly these intrusions can come about.

The 11th of November fell on the Friday that year. Although a few poppies were in evidence, the major event of the day was the *fête* in honour of the birthday of the wife of the late Godwin Mbikusita Lewanika, a former Lozi *Litunga*, and her twin sister. Following the thanksgiving service, Mubita Lubasi, an old man who had been in attendance, granted me an interview. Perhaps taking the opportunity of a conversation with a British visitor, likely to be receptive to his views, or simply attempting to play to his audience, he stressed that, from the first, the 'children of the Lozi' knew that 'these *makuwa* [whites] they are people who we can live with well.' Bad changes, he felt, were the result of the introduction of politics to Barotseland; 'what came and brought a lot of change, making changes, changing things a lot, like I was saying it, is the politics, from 1964.'²⁰ Things had been better, he claimed, under the British. The following day, I was granted an interview with Hastings Noyoo, a former *Ngambela*, or chief councillor, to *Litunga* Mwanawina III KBE.²¹ Finally, on the Sunday, I

²⁰ Mubita Lubasi, Individual Interview, Mongu, 11 November 2011. Given the tenor of the interview, I suspect that Bo Lubasi had no interest whatsoever in my own research, but much he wished to say about the post-independence politics of Zambia.

²¹ Hastings Noyoo had not only been *Ngambela*, but an independence era politician, Member of Parliament and political detainee. Born in 1915, in the reign of Lubosi Lewanika, his life had thus spanned not only the colonial and post-colonial periods, but all three of Zambia's republics.

was invited by the Cultural Officer of the Provincial Administration to attend a Remembrance Sunday parade at Mongu *boma* (see Illustration 1). All those who attended felt it had come off without a hitch. The red-coated band had, given the care-worn appearance of their instruments, played only a little out of tune. The honour guard's drill was crisp, and the speech by the padre a good one, and mercifully short given the heat. The service rendered by men from Barotseland in both World Wars was honoured, respects paid and wreaths laid on the memorial and drinks served afterwards at the Officer's Mess with the District Commissioner (DC) making an appearance. Were it not for the Zambian flag flying over the memorial, one could be forgiven for thinking these events might have taken place half a century earlier.

The interweaving of Lozi, Zambian and colonial pasts in Zambia's Western Province is pronounced. At the time in which this, the first of two field trips in successive years, was conducted, this interweaving was given particular relevance by recent political events. Riots in Mongu in January 2011 had resulted in damage to property and a number of deaths. Indeed, the son of Mubita Lubasi, the man I interviewed on the Friday, was detained in Mongu jail in connection with this unrest. I have discussed the trajectory of Lozi politics, in particular Lozi secessionism, elsewhere.²² Here, it suffices to say that a major consequence of the post-colonial disenchantment of the Western Province has been the deep investment of many Lozi, of whatever political stripe, in the colonial and pre-colonial past. The consequences of this for the historian of slavery are, as we shall see in the next section, complex. I found this to be the case in Mongu more than anywhere else, where it was not unusual to hear views expressed by informants, often of a similar age, in line with those of Bo Lubasi. This tendency to idealise the past acts as a block to the would-be historian, and makes it even more difficult than usual to gather genuine data about slavery. But to see this in operation, and how one can seek to surmount it, one must move down from Mongu hill and into the valley.

The field II: the long view in the valley

The problem of feedback, that is to say the assimilation of written and published materials into oral history and traditions, and its tendency to construct orthodoxies, is nearly ubiquitous.²³ But the recognition of the problem of such publications themselves shaping the past into an

²² Hogan, J., '“What then happened to our Eden?”: The long history of Lozi secessionism, 1890-2013', *JSAS* (forthcoming, 2014).

²³ See Chrétien, J.-P., 'Confronting the Unequal Exchange of the Oral and the Written', in Jewsiewicki, B., and Newbury, D., (eds.), *African Historiographies, What History for Which Africa?* (Beverly Hills, 1986), pp. 75-90., and Henige, D., 'Truth yet Unborn? Oral Tradition as a Casualty of Culture Contact', *JAH*, 23, 3 (1982), pp. 395-412.

authorised narrative is hardly new.²⁴ In a short paper entitled ‘Some dangers in accepting African Oral tradition’, presumably written during his tenure as the Director of the Livingstone Museum between 1961 and 1964, Gervas Clay observed that

No attempt has been made to collect modern traditions about Livingstone because they would not be of any particular value, since every African schoolboy today learns something about the great man’s life and any oral traditions collected would be coloured by written evidence in schoolboy textbook.²⁵

In the fifty of so years since Clay wrote his cautionary tale, the pre-colonial and indeed colonial past have become increasingly remote, from the standpoint of lived experience at least, and published ethno-histories have had several decades in which to permeate the warp and weft of oral history and tradition. When carrying out interviews, particularly when one seeks to discuss the pre-colonial period, one comes time and again against works of ethno-history. The existence of what amounts to a classic canon of Lozi ethno-history thus renders any investigation of Lozi history in the nineteenth century virtually impossible. The problem is compounded by the fact that, unlike, for instance, the James Stuart archive, we have no collection of Lozi oral testimonies, as distinct from formal political traditions.²⁶ The one partial exception to this, discussed in chapter 6, are the linguistic works of the PEMS missionary Jacottet. It is, sadly, far too late in the day to hope for the opportunity once enjoyed by Africanist historians of encountering informants who might provide their own accounts of life in the nineteenth century. Much was done by an earlier generation of scholars, but much has been lost.

Still, given the tendency of formal oral tradition to privilege the political domain, the social and the personal have, if only in fragmentary form, escaped the tyranny of orthodoxy. Thus the pursuit of research in the field is not an entirely fruitless task. But people’s historical consciousness is shaped by less tangible forces as well. Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu, one of the foremost Lozi ethno-historians, began one of his major works of Lozi history with the observation that it was ‘quite hard to write a book, however it is the habitual custom of a reader

²⁴ For a recent example, which traces and decodes this process, see Macola, G., ‘Literate Ethnohistory in Colonial Zambia: The Case of “Ifikolwe Fyandi na Bantu Bandi”’, *History in Africa (HIA)*, 28 (2001), pp. 187-201.

²⁵ Clay, G., ‘Some dangers in accepting African oral tradition’, ALM, LM2/4/93/19. Clay was a former colonial administrator, and author of a part biographical study of Lubosi Lewanika, part history of his kingdom: *Your Friend Lewanika, Litunga of Barotseland, 1842-1916* (London, 1968).

²⁶ Wright, J., and de B. Webb, C., (eds.), *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples* (5 vols, Durban, 1976-2001).

at all times to criticise an author, more especially if he has written history of his country.’²⁷ This is surely a view many an historian can subscribe to. But Mupatu, in what follows, strikes to the heart of the thorny problem faced by the ethno-historian.

He is blamed that he has left out some events, finally he is regarded as an ignorant person. If not accused of ignorance he is adversely criticised that he had deeply brought to light private things pertaining his country of origin. He is at other times called a betrayer.²⁸

The responsibility Mupatu felt was a great one, though he clearly chafed against it. At the heart of this is the tension between, on the one hand, the choices the author makes in selecting, discarding, presenting or obscuring facets of his culture and history, and, on the other, the permissible and impermissible. Say too little and one is discredited; yet cross the line and say too much, and one is left equally damned. This is precisely the same dilemma that confronts potential informants in the field, all the more so when asked about things which, like slavery, carry an inherently negative connotation in the present. As Klein has observed, oral traditions are largely silent on slavery and slaves produce few traditions of their own. Moreover, historical memory is by its very nature mutable.²⁹ The memory and politics of slavery and slave heritage remain sensitive and contested ground across Africa, and where one might expect major social change to be remembered outside of the archive, this is not always the case.³⁰ This is compounded in Barotseland by the post-colonial nostalgia driven by dissatisfaction with the fruits of independence. For the idea, as advanced by Bo Lubasi and others, that things were better in the past is itself capable of generating its own orthodoxies. And these brook no discussion of subjects which might tarnish that past, and thereby undermine the personal, emotional and political visions of its advocates. All the more so when the person asking the questions is an outsider, and a *mukuwa* at that, who wouldn’t understand anyway. The potential distrust of the informant for the outsider is, in part, something that can only be overcome with time, if at all. Some informants, for example, eventually gave the impression of being rather candid about what they knew of slavery. Such moments, however, were few and far between, and tended only to suggest that one was on the right track rather

²⁷ Mupatu, Y.W., ‘Barotseland in days past, by Y.W. Mupatu’, typescript (n.d.), ALM, LM 2/4/93/87, p. 1. The original appeared in the vernacular as *Bulozi Sapili* [Bulozii in the Early Days] (Cape Town, 1959).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Klein, M., ‘Studying the History of Those Who Would Rather Forget: Oral History and the Experience of Slavery’, *HIA*, 16 (1989) p. 210-211.

³⁰ Roberts, R., ‘Reversible Social Processes, Historical Memory, and the Production of History’, *HIA*, 17 (1990), p. 341. A notable example of how slave heritage can emerge, rather than recede, from popular consciousness is the Western Cape of South Africa. See Worden, N., ‘The Changing Politics of Slave Heritage in the Western Cape, South Africa’, *JAH*, 50, 1 (2009), pp. 23-40.

than illuminating the question to any great extent. Several informants, for example, claimed that it was well known to them which families had once been slaves, for they had been told not to mix with their children in their youth. Disclosure such as these were, without exception, made either following a request for the recording of the interview to be broken off, or on the promise of anonymity. All of this means that, without any means of corroborating this information, one can really go no further, though silence can often be as telling as words.³¹ It is for precisely this reason that nineteenth century travelogues are of such value, for they hold out not only data where in their absence we would have none, but can corroborate what we may learn through other means.

There is, in particular, one alternative way to pursue the past in Barotseland, a place where one can learn as much with one's eyes as with one's ears. The key is to look for the traces the past has left on the ground. In the Barotse valley, physical reminders of the past are everywhere. Lealui stands in the plain. From there one can see the *sitino*, or grave, of Lubosi Lewanika. One can pick out trees and mounds associated with the peoples and events which are the stuff of history: the tree where the rebel Numwa was run to ground or the depression where the Mambari traders made camp.³² The cults of dead *Litunga* are maintained at their graves. Reminders of a kingdom at the height of its powers are scored into the landscape by a network of canals. It was with this in mind that, as detailed in chapter 7, I attempted to reconstruct the history of one small fragment of the vast public works programme of the late nineteenth century. For much as the landscape intrudes into and shapes the Lozi historical consciousness, it can also prove to be the measure of the past. To see the short view from the hill and the long view in the valley is to begin to understand the place and its history.

This is all the more important, given the ways in which slavery in Barotseland has the tendency to disappear and reappear time and again in our sources. But these fluctuations are not reflective of a going in and out of the tide of Lozi slavery, but only of slavery becoming more or less visible. Much of this has to do, as was argued above, with successive moments of friction, times when our sources were, for one reason or another, brought face to face with slavery. The best way to follow this story, linking the successive appearances of slavery is a narrative exposition. This is the logic of the third part of the thesis. Mirroring the fluctuating visibility of slavery in the historical record are the ways in which people today in Barotseland remember slavery. This ranges from the assertion that while the Lozi held slaves, it was really no slavery at all, to stating that a slave had no rights, but a duty to obey. This is, in part, a

³¹ Moore, D., and Roberts, R., 'Listening for Silences', *HIA*, 17 (1990), pp. 319-325.

³² Known as '*casa ka mambali*', or the pool of the Mambari, it lies a short distance west of Lealui. See Illus. 2. On Numwa, see chapter 7.

consequence of the same process that shaped our sources, a tension between what is open and what is hidden. But there is another side to all of this, for if slavery recedes, only to become visible once more, bordering what must be concealed or might be revealed, then this alone is evidence for the enduring importance and legacy of slavery in Barotseland.



Illus. 1. The short view from the hill (Mongu *boma*).
Author's photograph, Nov. 2011.



Illus. 2. The long view in the valley (Lealui seen from *casa ka mambali*.)
Author's photograph, Sept. 2012.

The Historiographical Landscape

Slavery is a word that resonates in the minds of many when they think of Africa in the nineteenth century, but most associate the word with the trans-Atlantic trade, and count the human cost. In the popular imagination, and in academia, the functions and significance of slavery in Central Africa receive scant attention. This is, perhaps, unsurprising, as it is the Atlantic trade which first received, and continues to be, a focus of sustained scholarly investigation. This era has been described as a ‘shameful period’, but one which paradoxically ‘also displayed human resilience at its most courageous.’ For Illife, it was a time when the ‘splendour of Africa lay in its suffering.’¹ Yet the history of slavery in Africa, and indeed the world, is a far longer one. We can say with certainty that humans have enslaved each other for at least as long as we have recorded our history, and we have not ceased to do so. Many of man’s greatest monuments were built by slaves, or those whose labour was extracted by force. This, then, is not to argue with Professor Illife, but to make the further point that the splendour of a great many peoples has rested not simply in, but upon, suffering.

The problem of defining what is meant by slavery, freedom, ownership, labour and myriad other terms has exercised scholars for decades. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a focused survey of the literature relating to the history of slavery in Africa, to give a sense of the shape of the field, and to position this thesis within that literature. The body of this chapter will move from the more developed general literature, both historical and anthropological, on slavery to more specific and recent work on abolition. It will trace the development of the study of slavery from its origins in functionalist and functionalist-inspired anthropological and historical works, via the growth of related Marxist and Marxian approaches, to the dialectic outcome of these two competing perspectives: the attempts at synthesis from which studies of abolition sprung. For the most part, both functionalist and Marxist approaches are treated in a critical fashion for, as will be demonstrated in the concluding section on the literature on slavery in Barotseland, their legacy has, with one notable exception, served mainly to obscure the reality of slavery in the kingdom.

It is possible to divide the literature on slavery into two periods, largely determined by changing theoretical approaches to the subject. The first, from the 1960s to the late 1970s or early 1980s, was informed by anthropological approaches and tended to understand slavery as an institution. The second period, from the 1980s to the present day, is characterised by an

¹ Illife, J., *Africans, the History of a Continent* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 131.

alternative understanding of slavery, one that treats slavery as an ‘embedded social process.’² The difference, in effect, is that whereas the former approach conceives of slavery as a social status, discrete if transient, the latter takes it to be an individual and collective condition, more plastic and contingent. It is a fine distinction, but an important one.

The pioneers: Functionalists & Marxists

The point has already been made that many of what we consider to be our greatest monuments were built by slaves. The great classical civilisations were slave societies. It has often been said that all roads lead to Rome. In relation to much of the early work on slavery, the direction of travel ought to be reversed. All roads lead from Rome, or rather from the work of classicist and ancient historian, M.I. Finley. There is his ‘famous article’ on slavery in ancient Greece,³ his definition of slavery in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*,⁴ and his equally influential books: *The Ancient Economy* and *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*.⁵ It is perhaps no coincidence that, at a time when African history was seeking to establish itself as a credible academic field and there was a growing scholarly interest in slavery, particularly among Africanist historians based in the United States,⁶ the work of such a prominent and prolific scholar should become influential.⁷ Finley’s ideas on the uses and functions of oral traditions, and their inherent problems, would have struck a further chord with some of the key concerns of emerging African historians.⁸ In many ways, Finley was dealing with a similar set of problems. The material he had at hand was much the same as that available to the Africanists - often overtly concerned with the political, privileging the role of elites, if not actually created by them, and highly fragmented. He was also dealing with societies in which slavery had played a major role. The parallels were numerous, and the use made of his work by Africanists has been sustained and fruitful. More than anything, Finley was seeking a

² Deutsch, *Emancipation without Abolition*, p. 5.

³ Finley, M.I., ‘Between slavery and freedom’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 6, 3 (1964), pp. 233-249. The quoted expression comes from Twaddle, M. ‘The Ending of Slavery in Buganda’, in S. Miers and R. Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1988), p. 145.

⁴ Finley, M. I., ‘Slavery’, in D. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1968), pp. 307-13.

⁵ Finley, M. I., *The Ancient Economy* (London, 1973); Finley, M. I., *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London, 1980).

⁶ Influenced, in no small part, by the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of academic interest in the history of slavery in the Americas.

⁷ One of the most influential, and successful, works on slavery in Africa, now in its third edition, is Lovejoy, P. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 1983; 2ndedn, 2000; 3rdedn, 2012). In each edition, the first footnote, and acknowledgement of intellectual influence, is entirely given over to the works by Finley. The 2012 edition is the one referred to throughout this thesis.

⁸ His chapter, ‘Myth, Memory and History’ in Finley, M.I., *The Use and Abuse of History* (London, 1975) deals with Herodotus and Thucydides, but is equally relevant to the use of African oral traditions.

universal, cross-cultural definition of slavery. Again, this chimed closely with the aims of many Africanists, particularly those of a socio-anthropological bent.

Finley's shadow is therefore a long one, stretching from the shores of the Aegean across Africa and even darkening the sands of Buluzi. The most recent monograph on Barotseland, Prins' *Hidden Hippopotamus*, much-lauded joint recipient of the 1981 Herskovits Prize, describes Finley's work, alongside an article by Strickland (which itself owes an intellectual debt to Finley), as 'the benchmarks' for his choice of nomenclature, and by extension, conceptualisation of slavery in Barotseland.⁹ What, one might ask, is the purpose of beginning a consideration of the literature dealing with slavery in Africa with this encomium? Partly, the answer lies in the sheer number of scholars who have used Finley's work, in particular his definition of slavery, as a launch pad for their own analyses. The second, and more important answer, lies in the manner in which Finley approached the question himself.

This approach was first and foremost functionalist. Functionalism had been the orthodoxy in the 'social sciences' since the 1930s. Many of the pioneers of social anthropology - Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard and others - and what came to be known as the 'Manchester School' - founded by Max Gluckman and his students there and at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Northern Rhodesia - all pursued its methods. While this is not the place for an excursus on the theoretical underpinnings of functionalism, two basic tenets of this approach are pertinent. The first, or 'weak', tenet, not unique to functionalism, is that 'there exists a close interrelation among the parts or aspects of all patterns of social interaction', in particular of groups and societies. The second, 'strong', tenet is that these 'interrelations must be understood in terms of the systemic nature of social interaction and organization.' Societies possess boundaries and boundary-making mechanisms. Therefore patterns of behaviour and, in a wider sense, institutions must be 'analysed in terms of their contribution to the maintenance of the systemic boundaries of societies.'¹⁰ Functionalist analyses frequently focused upon ritual and ceremony, foregrounding a further key aspect of the approach: 'the emphasis on common symbols (and to some extent values) as a major integrative mechanism of societies.'¹¹ Put in the simplest possible terms, all aspects of a

⁹ Prins, G. *The Hidden Hippopotamus. Reappraisal in African history: the early colonial experience in western Zambia*, (Cambridge, 1980), p. 71. Prins quotes Finley's definition of slavery in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, and Strickland, D.A., 'Kinship and Slavery in African Thought: A Conceptual Analysis', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 18, 3 (1976), pp. 371-394.

¹⁰ Here, I am drawing heavily on Eisenstadt, S.N., 'Functional Analysis in Anthropology and Sociology: An Interpretative Essay', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19 (1990), pp. 243-44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

society are not only interrelated, but also serve the cohesion of the society as a whole. A direct consequence of this approach, unsurprisingly, was a tendency to stress the integrative function of slavery as an institution. Finley distinguished between societies that possessed slaves and what he considered slave societies proper, that is, those in which slavery was a central institution. Slavery, he argued,

is transformed as an institution when slaves play an essential role in the economy...That both slaves and free men did identical work was irrelevant; what mattered was the condition of work, or rather, on whose behalf and under what (and whose) controls it was carried on. In slave societies hired labor was rare and slave labor the rule whenever an enterprise was too big for a family to conduct unaided. That rule extended from agriculture to manufacture and mining, and sometimes even to commerce and finance.¹²

Finley's essential proposition was that in all slave societies the slave is an alien, brought forcibly into a society and socially marginalised. 'The slave is an outsider: that alone permits not only his uprooting but also his reduction from a person to a thing that can be owned.'¹³ He stressed, however, that this was not an absolute condition, as no known slave society had ever been able to permanently reduce slaves to simple commodities. It was, he argued, necessary for slave owners to recognise the humanity of their slaves if they wished to obtain their labour power.¹⁴

This thesis was taken up by a number of scholars, in particular by Miers and Kopytoff, who sought to understand the function of slavery as an institution in African societies.¹⁵ The underlying premise of their analyses was that power in pre-colonial African societies came from, and was directed at, controlling people.¹⁶ It was not enough to state that slavery varied according to the structure of the society in which it was embedded, or to establish where, on a spectrum between rightlessness and freedom, a person's 'bundle of rights' might be located.¹⁷ It was not enough to simply describe slavery. Instead, Miers and Kopytoff sought

¹² Finley, 'Slavery', p. 310.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 307-308.

¹⁴ Ibid. This has often been stressed by scholars: Illife, J. *Honour in African History* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 137; Cooper, F. L., *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven, 1977), p. 212; Klein, M., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 14.

¹⁵ Kopytoff, I., and Miers, S., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (London, 1977). Indeed, the title of the introduction to this highly influential book acknowledges the influence of Finley and other functionalists' work on their own; Kopytoff, I., and Miers, S., 'African "Slavery" as an Institution of Marginality', in Kopytoff and Miers, *Slavery in Africa*, pp. 3-84.

¹⁶ This argument is similar to that of Goody, who pointed out that land abundance made direct control over people the only way to obtain labour. He attributed the rise of slavery, as opposed to serfdom, in Africa to this fact. Goody, J. *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (Cambridge, 1971).

¹⁷ Finley, 'Slavery', pp. 307-8. See also Finley, *Ancient Slavery*.

to portray it as a means of absorbing people into societies and, in particular, into kinship groups, using what Cooper has termed the ‘absorptionist analysis’.¹⁸ This notion of slavery as an ‘institution of marginality’ placed newly acquired slaves at one end of a slavery-kinship continuum, along which they would progress towards integration proper. Miers and Kopytoff put it thus: ‘African societies were receptive to all opportunities for bringing outsiders into their midst as dependents and retainers’.¹⁹ This approach, which produced a number of excellent studies, several of which form chapters of *Slavery in Africa*, dominated the field in the 1970s and early 1980s.²⁰

As subtle as many of these analyses were, they were all characterised by ‘a peculiar anxiety about the subject of slavery itself.’²¹ As Cooper has smartly suggested, by placing ‘slavery’ in inverted commas, Miers and Kopytoff deliberately tried to ‘quarantine’ African slavery from its American plantation, chain-gang counterpart, with all of its exploitative connotations. While Glassman has disputed this, arguing that Miers and Kopytoff’s intention was simply to highlight that ‘many different specific social institutions’ were subsumed under the category of ‘slavery’ in their work, both arguments point to the central problem with the idea of slavery as an ‘institution of marginality’, and with functionalist analyses as a whole.²² In Cooper’s formulation, ‘Kopytoff and Miers ... jumped from the particular to the universal, making absorptiveness into a general characteristic of Africa.’²³ The marginality thesis certainly could not account for slave revolts, or for societies which witnessed little integration, such as, for example, those which practiced a plantation economy. Pushing this critique a step further, Glassman considered that the ‘most disturbing aspect’ of the marginality thesis was the assumption

that in a given society institutions are patterned to a single, coherent ideology...Such all-encompassing descriptions of cultures preclude the possibility that slaves or masters might think ‘dysfunctionally’ ... Conflict between multiple visions of society lies at the

¹⁸ Cooper, F. L., ‘The Problem of Slavery in African Studies’, *JAH*, 20, 1 (1979), p. 104.

¹⁹ Kopytoff and Miers, ‘African ‘Slavery’’, p. 14. For the ‘slavery-to-kinship continuum’, see pp. 22-24.

²⁰ For instance, Bohannon, B., and Curtin, P., *Africa and Africans* (New York, 1971), and Grace, G., *Domestic Slavery in West Africa* (New York, 1975). Cf. Cooper, ‘The Problem of Slavery’, p. 104. For a general account of the fortunes of functionalism as a discipline, see Eisenstadt, ‘Functional Analysis’, p. 243.

²¹ Cooper, ‘The Problem of Slavery’, p. 103.

²² Glassman, J., ‘The Bondsman’s New Clothes: The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast’, *JAH*, 32, 2 (1991), p. 279, fn. 9.

²³ Cooper, ‘The Problem of Slavery’, p. 104.

heart of the historical dynamics of slavery, as indeed of any social system, and yet functionalism cannot account for it.²⁴

In consequence - and this is a crucial point - there was an essential sterility to the functionalist approach, for if the purpose of slavery as an institution was to incorporate outsiders from initially marginal positions into the kinship and wider social structures of their masters, then this was also the meaning of the institution. There was, therefore, little for slaves to do but be absorbed, and their 'common aspiration was, quite realistically, to move further into the host society'²⁵. As a result, such analyses were particularly unreceptive to change, presupposing linear development along a slavery-kinship continuum. They were often excellent at describing cultural and ideological aspects of a society, but not able to properly explain them. In short, they were largely a-historical, more concerned with, and suited to, synchronic comparisons. As is clear from the contributions to *Slavery in Africa*, this led to studies which were limited to the consideration of particular ethnic groups. They 'portrayed African cultures as uniform, homeostatic norms of behaviour, defined by each society's dominant ideology.'²⁶ In reality, this was 'only an elegant reconstruction of the ideologies of the dominators.'²⁷

The second approach characteristic of the earlier period was that of Marxist, or Marxian, scholars. This group was heavily influenced by the works of two French anthropologists: Meillassoux and Terry and, through them, Althusser.²⁸ Again, while this is not the place for a lengthy theoretical excursus, this approach shared the first, or 'weak', tenet of the functionalist approach: that all parts or aspects of social interaction were closely interrelated. But rather than the cohesiveness of a society, what the Marxists sought to understand were issues of production, power and control. These analyses did not reject the importance attributed to kinship in African societies by functionalists, but rather argued that notions of incorporative kinship were a means of using slaves to strengthen lineages or, where

²⁴ Glassman, 'The Bondsman's New Clothes', pp. 279-80.

²⁵ Kopytoff and Miers, 'African 'Slavery'', p. 83.

²⁶ Glassman, 'The Bondsman's New Clothes', p. 279.

²⁷ Glassman, 'The Bondsman's New Clothes', p. 279.

²⁸ Terray, E. (trans. M. Klopffer) *Marxism and "primitive" societies: two studies* (New York, 1972); Meillassoux, C., "'The Economy'" in *Agricultural Self-Sustaining Societies: A Preliminary Analysis*, in D. Seddon (ed.), *Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London, 1978), p. 128. Althusser, L., and Balibar, E., *Reading Capital* (New York, 1970). Indeed, the 1970s witnessed an explosion of interest in the applicability of Marxist analyses to anthropology: Marx, K., *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* (London, 1978), especially Hobsbawm's 'Introduction' to this volume; Bloch, M., (ed.) *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology* (London and New York, 1984); Hindess, B., and Hurst, P., *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London, 1975); Amin, S. (trans. B. Pearce), *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism* (London, 1976). For a review of this debate in relation to Africa, see Law, R., 'In search of a Marxist perspective on pre-colonial Tropical Africa', *JAH*, 19, 3, (1978), pp. 441-452.

ruling classes used slaves, they were an independent source of labour and capital, a means of undermining reliance on these same lineages. That fictive and actual kinship could coexist, and be expressed in the same terms, did not make them identical.²⁹ Crucially, these anthropologists sought to address the issue of social reproduction, without which ‘there is no historical continuity, only an instance of production’.³⁰ In essence, they sought to understand how these societies persisted and developed, and, more importantly, how they were able to contain conflict between slaves and slave-owners.³¹ Questions of class, power and domination form the core of these studies.

As the foregoing ought to make clear, the difference between functionalist and Marxist understandings of kinship is a simple one. For functionalists, kinship was a means of reinforcing and reproducing a social group or society, and slavery was one mechanism used to achieve this. For Marxists, kinship was a means of ensuring production and the reproduction of the social group or society, and a way of controlling this process for those in power, often the elders or a ruling class. While they foregrounded matters of production and dominance, Marxist analysts continued to view African slavery as fundamentally incorporative, even though incorporation was now understood as a tool for reproducing dominance. Even if violence was what first subjugated a slave, it was in the long term unsustainable. Incorporation, in particular intergenerational incorporation, was a way of preventing the emergence of a self-conscious slave class, which would pose an unacceptable threat to the existing social order. In practical terms, this meant that, as societies were often unable to muster sufficient coercive power to completely dominate their slaves, the use of coercion would be counterproductive.

Attempted syntheses: Hopkins, Cooper and Lovejoy

This benign vision of ‘domestic’, or ‘lineage’, slavery, stressing the importance of kinship mechanisms, was not universally accepted. One such challenge came from what was at the time one of the growing and seemingly most vital fields in African studies: economic history.³² For A.G. Hopkins, one of its foremost proponents, the use of slaves was a matter of rational

²⁹ Meillassoux, C. (trans. A. Dasnois), *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 9-15. Originally published as Meillassoux, C., *Anthropologie de l’esclavage: le ventre de fer et d’argent* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986). Cf. Miller, J.C., ‘Lineages, ideology, and the history of slavery in western central Africa’, in Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (London, 1981), pp. 40-71.

³⁰ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, p. 10.

³¹ Meillassoux, C., ‘From reproduction to production’, *Economy and Society*, 1 (1972), pp. 92-105.

³² For a penetrating critique of, and something of a lament for, this field during its subsequent decline, see Hopkins, A.G., ‘From Hayter to Parker: African Economic History at Birmingham University, 1964-86’, *African Affairs*, 86, 342 (1987), pp. 93-102. Cf. Hopkins ‘New Economic History’.

choices in the face of economic expediency.³³ Hopkins sought to insert the market mechanism into the history of West Africa to explain the rise of more intensive forms of production and the eventual transition to free labour in the twentieth century. He argued that there had long been an ‘established labour market in Africa’, albeit one supplied by coercion, and that the fact that slavery was the dominant mode of labour ‘was the result of deliberate choice’.³⁴ Put simply, it was cheaper to acquire and maintain slaves than to hire labour. There are two key reasons for Hopkins to have argued as he did. First, the ‘absorptionist analysis’ was clearly incapable of explaining the historical changes in West Africa that he had set out to study: the interaction with the frontiers of merchant capital and participation in the Atlantic slave trade, the process of state formation and concomitant rise of military aristocracies and the undermining of these power structures by the growth of smallholder production for internal and external markets. These processes ran contrary to the vision of African societies projected by functionalists. Second, he was applying what we might call conventional economic theory, in pursuit of what was, to his mind, a more empirical account. As he explained it, the organising principle ‘broad enough to cover the totality of economic activity over many centuries, yet specific enough to provide a coherent theme for the book as a whole’ was the market.³⁵ In the same vein, he explained that he described African slave-raiding and trading ‘in terms of universalist or formalist assumptions’ because ‘African economic behaviour in the export sector is recognizable as approximating to that of Western economic man.’³⁶

This, then, posits that West African ‘economic activity over many centuries’ was essentially that of the *homo economicus*. Within each subsistence farmer, slave raider and king lay a proto-capitalist. Hopkins did, nevertheless, draw a similar conclusion to Kopytoff and Miers: that the transition from slave to free labour in the twentieth century was relatively unproblematic.³⁷ This approach reified the market and is as mechanistic as the curiously hollowed out presentation of that most human of relationships, kinship, presented by both the functionalists and Marxists. In the words of Cooper, both represented the ‘same tendency to mystify the interests and actions of particular classes by reference to the operations of universal laws, be they the laws of the market or the rules of social structure.’³⁸ Hopkins had

³³ Hopkins, A.G., *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1973), pp. 23-77. This work builds upon the earlier insights of Fage, J.D., ‘Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History’, *JAH*, 10, 3 (1969), pp. 393-404.

³⁴ Hopkins, *Economic History*, p. 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 227; Kopytoff and Miers, ‘African ‘Slavery’’, pp. 71-76.

³⁸ Cooper, ‘The Problem of Slavery’, p. 104.

clearly recognised that treating slavery as a fixed institution was inadequate, but had not moved greatly beyond it.

In his 1979 article 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies' Cooper, having roundly criticised both the functionalists and Marxists, suggested a different approach. He called for greater attention to process and for an end to the search for 'an essence of African slavery', naming Meillassoux, Kopytoff and Miers as particularly culpable.³⁹ This approach was widely taken up by scholars at the time, and subsequently, and is at the heart of both of his monographs on slavery in East Africa.⁴⁰ Whilst Cooper's article cannot be said to have led to any sea change in work on slavery, it does mark something of a tideline in its evolution. Indeed, four years after the appearance of Cooper's article, Lovejoy was in a position to assert that 'the study of African history, and more specifically the analysis of slavery in Africa, has suffered from the opposite problem to that of oversynthesis. The numerous local studies that exist are uneven in quality and frequently are presented in a quasi-historical setting that is fraught with enormous methodological difficulties.'⁴¹ He then set out to rectify this, and to do so with an explicit focus on process and difference.

In the preface to the first edition of his seminal *Transformations in Slavery*, Lovejoy claimed that his 1981 book, *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, was an attempt on his part to provide a 'forum for discussion between those who have been most strongly influenced by the French Marxists and those who are most influenced by Miers and Kopytoff'.⁴² Whilst accepting the initial premise of kinship or integrative slavery, as per Miers and Kopytoff, Lovejoy explored how this was transformed into plantation slavery in many parts of the continent. More importantly, he argued forcefully that slaves struggled constantly against their bonds and that conflict was a defining characteristic of African slave societies.⁴³ The fact that this book is now in its third edition is suggestive of the extent to which it set the agenda for

³⁹ Ibid., p. 110. See also Cooper, *Plantation Slavery* and Cooper, F.L., *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labour and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925* (New Haven, 1980).

⁴⁰ Lovejoy, *Transformations*; Klein, M. (ed.), *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison, 1993); Wright, M., *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life-Stories from East Central Africa* (London, 1993); Glassman, J., *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (London, 1995); Palmie, S. (ed.), *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, (Knoxville, 1995); Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*.

⁴¹ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, p. xiii.

⁴² Lovejoy, P., 'Preface' [to the First Edition], in *ibid.*, p. xv.

⁴³ Lovejoy, P., 'Fugitive slaves: resistance to slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate', in G. Okihiro (ed.), *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean and Afro-American History* (Amherst, 1986), pp. 71-95; Lovejoy, P., 'Problems of slave control in the Sokoto Caliphate', in P. Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage* (Madison, 1986), pp. 235-72; Lovejoy, P., 'Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate', in P. Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (London, 1981), pp. 201-240. This position, of course, is most clearly articulated in Lovejoy, *Transformations*.

subsequent work. He highlighted several issues which required further study, including the relationship between domestic and trade slavery, the impact of Islam, the importance of the Atlantic slave trade and its abolition, and the impact of manumission and emancipation. However, Lovejoy was still primarily interested in slavery as an institution. His fundamental argument was that the growth and encroachment of the trans-Atlantic slave trade from the sixteenth century led to an expansion and hardening of the institution of slavery in Africa. The transformations he set out to describe, Lovejoy argued, gave rise to a 'slave mode of production', which he considered to exist 'when the social and economic structures of a particular society included an integrated system of enslavement, slave trade, and the domestic use of slaves. Slaves had to be employed in production, and hence the kind of transformation identified by Finley must have occurred.'⁴⁴

Thus we are, *nolens volens*, brought back to the work of Finley, who by this stage made his own statement about the use of his work by Africanists, in particular Miers and Kopytoff.

First, a host of, let us say, African statuses and status-terms are translated as 'slaves'; second, it is observed that at essential points these so-called slaves are extremely unlike the slaves of classical antiquity or of the Americas; third, instead of reconsidering their appellation 'slaves' to their own subjects, these anthropologists angrily protest the 'ethnocentrism' of 'western' historians and sociologists and demand that the latter redefine and reclassify slaves in order to provide a place for their own pseudo-slaves.⁴⁵

That the slaves described by the anthropologists appeared to Finley to be 'pseudo-slaves' is a consequence of the 'peculiar anxiety' highlighted by Cooper. In part, the African slaves described by anthropologists appeared so unlike those of classical antiquity and the Americas because these scholars wished it so. But more than this, Finley's point speaks directly to the first ambiguity in the title of this thesis. The problem of translating 'African statuses and status-terms as "slaves"' has proved largely an unanswerable one. But the real issue lies not so much with the choice of the word 'slave' as with the concept of 'statuses and status-terms'. Finley's imprecation to conceive of each person's bundle of rights is of limited use in an African context. Conceiving of slavery as a status in societies where, unlike in ancient Greece and Rome, there were no discrete demarcations, nor necessarily any clear processes for manumission, is inherently flawed. People certainly could move between more or less define

⁴⁴ Lovejoy, *Transformations*, p. 9. For a more recent deployment of this, see Heywood, L.M., 'Slavery and its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800', *JAH*, 50, 1. (2009), pp. 1-22.

⁴⁵ Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, pp. 137-138.

statuses, but these are not always clear cut, nor do the rights people may enjoy correspond to their notional status in a society. Even Finley's rather more useful concept of a spectrum between absolute rightlessness and absolute freedom is restrictive, being punctuated by demarcations between statuses, regardless of the quantity of 'shading and overlapping'.⁴⁶ It may well be that Finley was reaching towards the idea of slavery as a process, but he was hampered by notions of status. In one sense, this was inevitable. In Rome a runaway slave was precisely that, a slave. Property that is lost is still property, subject to certain limitations. This was not necessarily the case in Africa, where, particularly during the pre-colonial period, property and freedom as ideas were not necessarily meaningful in the western sense of the words.

It should by this stage have become abundantly clear, much as it had as the 1980s wore on, that this sort of critique could no longer be ignored. This growing recognition of complexity was not, however, a solution to the problems highlighted by Finley. Clearly, Africanists would need to fundamentally alter the manner in which they wrote and thought about slavery. Only considering one half of the problem was not enough. To fully understand slavery one had to understand, not simply its origin and form, but also its end. The consideration of the second half of the picture of slavery, abolition, represents the attempts of scholars to circumvent the problem posed by critiques like Finley's. Scholars would redeem their subjects from pseudo-slavery by demonstrating how complex and contested their subjects' own redemption was. This would entail a decisive shift from the anthropological toward the historical and a much closer attention to process and change.

The end of slavery in Africa

The most appropriate work to open this section with is the one which provides its title: Miers and Roberts' anthology, *The End of Slavery in Africa*. It was promoted as a sequel to *Slavery in Africa*, so devastatingly critiqued by Finley. Its genesis, according to Miers' preface, lay in

the key question, posed in an unpublished paper, by Patrick Manning: how was it that slavery and the slave trade in Africa, which had featured so large in the rhetoric of the colonial powers during the partition of the continent, apparently faded out without repercussions significant enough to be given much place in the histories of colonial rule.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Finley, 'Slavery', p. 308.

⁴⁷ Miers, S. 'Preface', in Miers and Roberts, *The End of Slavery*, p. xvii.

Aside from providing a synthesis of the field up to the 1980s, far more detailed than that presented here, the collection proposed a new theoretical and comparative framework for exploring several key issues relating to the end of slavery. It stressed that scholars ought to focus on the role of the colonial powers, not simply in terms of international abolitionism but on the ground, on differing modes of liberation and the fundamental ambiguities of freedom and the consequences of emancipation on African societies.⁴⁸ It also presented a much more nuanced picture of slavery, and the possible range of servile statuses. This, presumably, was not a direct response to Finley's scathing remarks, but it certainly reflected the growing tendency to reject the overly schematic analyses which had characterised earlier work.

Five years later, Lovejoy and Hogendorn published the product of some two decades of collaborative research: *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936*.⁴⁹ They sought to understand the dynamics of abolition in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, the world's largest twentieth-century slave society. In essence, this is a study of Britain's colonial policy in the region, not only towards slavery but also to wider social and economic issues such as land tenure and production. The authors charted the place of slavery in the British conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate, the problems caused by fugitive slaves in the early period of colonial rule, through the evolution of anti-slavery laws, and they concluded with the major decline of slavery in the 1930s. Central to the book is an analysis of the delicate balance pursued by Lord Lugard, 'one of the most conservative abolitionists in the long fight against slavery',⁵⁰ and other administrators, who sought to achieve, without drawing on the limited revenue of the colonial state, a solution which would appease both the abolitionist movement and their local allies. In consequence, the course of abolition in Sokoto was a long one, not least because British policy sought to remove the legal status of slavery without disrupting the social and economic relationships which underpinned this system. As a result of the sources at hand, this is a close study of abolition from the perspective of the colonial administration, focusing on those slaves most obviously exploited for their labour for the same reason. The most striking findings of the study, beyond the sheer scale of slavery in the Protectorate in the twentieth century, are the machinations of both the colonial state and its allies, and the persistence of slavery as a consequence. This picture, as we shall see, finds deep echoes in the history of Barotseland.

⁴⁸ The two essential chapters are Roberts, R. 'The End of Slavery in Africa', pp. 3-70, and Kopytoff, I., 'The Cultural Context of African Abolition', pp. 485-506.

⁴⁹ Lovejoy, P., and Hogendorn, J.S., *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁵⁰ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery*, p. 286.

Like Lovejoy and Hogendorn's study of Northern Nigeria, Klein's *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* deals with the abolition of slavery in the context of Islamic West Africa. However, Klein also considers the earlier impact of the rise and decline of the Atlantic slave trade and deals in greater detail with the role of Islam and its influence on slavery in the region. Moving from a study of slavery in the western Sudan, it links the Atlantic trade to the conflicts and state building that characterised the Western Savannah in the nineteenth century. The rise of competing elites and consequent expansion of slavery is shown to only to have been circumscribed by the consolidation of French rule at the end of the nineteenth century. It was only then that 'masters lost the ability to call on the coercive power of the state.'⁵¹ Prior to this the French, like the British in Northern Nigeria, had to strike a balance between economic and political pragmatism and the need to pursue, if only for appearances' sake, the process of abolition. Finally, in 1905, the French refused to recognise the legal status of slavery. This launched a vast migration from the Sudan in 1906-11, as slaves, contrary to the intentions of the French, fled their masters and attempted to return to their former homes. In Klein's book, the demise of slavery is thus a direct result of the agency of up to a million slaves.

The centrality of slave agency has since become a major feature of research on the subject. Our picture of slavery and its end has become increasingly detailed, and there has also been a growing recognition of not only the complexities of abolition, but its fundamental ambiguities. *Slavery and Abolition* has been central in shaping this agenda, and several of its special editions have subsequently appeared as published volumes. *After Slavery: Emancipation and its discontents*, *Slavery and resistance in Africa and Asia* and *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, three fairly recent examples, give a sense of the direction of recent scholarship.⁵² All three, broadly speaking, deal with the problems of emancipation, be they ideological, economic or social. They consider resistance and marronage, or fugitive slaves forming bands or communities beyond the reach or outside of the law, and reveal the range and complexity of statuses encompassed by our ideas of slavery and unfree-labour.

As a field, the study of slavery in Africa has moved from considering static models to a general concern with change, particularly on the coasts, and the interconnected nature of the rise of 'legitimate trade' and plantation slaves. Thus the integrationist orthodoxy of the earlier period has been overturned by subsequent work. As the above survey makes clear, and as

⁵¹ Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p. 18.

⁵² Campbell, G. (ed.), *Abolition and its Aftermath in the Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia* (London, 2005); Alpers, E. A (ed.), *Slavery and Resistance in Africa and Asia* (London, 2005); Temperley, H. (ed.), *After Slavery: Emancipation and its Discontents* (London, 2000).

Miers pointed out a decade ago, our knowledge of emancipation in sub-Saharan Africa is uneven in the extreme, some areas having been heavily researched, and others virtually ignored. As she rightly pointed out, the ‘immensity of the subject is daunting.’⁵³ One major consequence of the lacunae which characterise our knowledge of the subject is that, for many areas, the orthodoxy of domestic/lineage slavery and its essentially benign character still stands. Scholars have, for the most part, focused on areas and societies where the transition from slavery to other forms of labour was likely to be a highly contested one. For Central Africa, this process has been assumed to have been largely unproblematic, and the region has consequently received little of the treatment so lavishly extended to both the east and west coasts.

Before moving on to a consideration of the literature specifically related to slavery in Barotseland, a final example, and a notable exception to the above trend, is worth discussing. This is Deutsch’s *Emancipation without Abolition*. Deutsch took as his subject what he terms the ‘silent revolution’ in German East Africa. The Germans never abolished slavery in East Africa; yet, by the end of the German occupation following the First World War, 250,000 slaves had emancipated themselves. What is more interesting, for our purposes, is Deutsch’s approach to the question of slavery. He chose to define slavery, following Cooper and others, ‘as a locally made social process’, which he saw as ‘a helpful way of overcoming the historical sterility of simplistic universal, legal or economic definitions.’⁵⁴ Deutsch is in one sense correct, but he is better able than most to do this given the fact that German colonial authorities made no attempt to abolish slavery. Thus, elegant as this solution may be, it is unhelpful for the study of places where colonial administrations did attempt abolition. It may be the case that in ‘many African colonies, local administrative officers ignored the practices they were supposed to suppress, circumvented them, or neglected to inform slaves of their legal rights.’⁵⁵ Such actions were certainly the result of locally made social processes, but this does not negate the fact that slavery could also be legally abolished, and that this was not simply a consequence of such processes.

This thesis is an attempt to move beyond the limitations inherent in this and other approaches. It is entirely possible to consider the material conditions of life, the structures of a given society and change within and across that society. These are not mutually exclusive categories. One must consider slavery both as an institution and a social process. Particularly for the earlier periods that this thesis will consider, a great deal is perhaps unknowable and,

⁵³ Miers, S., ‘Slavery to Freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa: Expectations and Reality’, *S&A*, 21, 2 (2000), p. 237.

⁵⁴ Deutsch, *Emancipation without Abolition*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

more than likely, unrecoverable. Therefore, slavery as a process must be subsumed in, and represented by, the discussion of slavery as an institution. This does not, however, mean that one cannot grasp the meaning of Lozi slavery, and the ends to which slaves were put. As recent work on the archaeology of slavery has demonstrated, our understanding of the history of slavery need not be bound only to the historical record.⁵⁶ For the later period, when we begin to deal with the end of slavery, it is far easier to demonstrate the workings of slavery as a social process, occasionally down to the level of individual slaves. But this has to be considered in a more general way, or else the argument simply becomes an accumulation of unarticulated events. In other words, while on some level one can grasp the ends of slavery fairly clearly, the end of slavery was a complex and confused thing, and it is only through considering it as both a process and an institution that one can hope to untangle the matter at all.

Slavery in Barotseland

This section restricts itself to a consideration of the literature on Barotseland as it relates specifically to the slavery in the kingdom. Many of the works reviewed here are to varying degrees concerned with the changing nature of slavery, and so further, detailed criticism of this literature will be made at relevant points throughout the thesis. This section is merely intended to give an overview of the approaches scholars have taken to slavery in the region, and trace the development of, and relationships between, the major works on the Lozi. In keeping with the general format of this chapter, the following survey will proceed in a roughly chronological manner.

In the 1940s Barotseland was visited by a subsequently renowned anthropologist, Max Gluckman. Whilst he never published a single synthesised volume of his findings, his works cover a wide range of the political, social and economic aspects of the Lozi social formation as he witnessed it during his fieldwork.⁵⁷ Gluckman admitted that the Lozi were slave owners and that, during periods of their history, they traded in slaves, but he also argued that the slave trade could not have been very important to the Lozi economy, as it had reached Buluzi late, when the external demand for slaves ‘was lessening markedly.’⁵⁸ His view was that slavery, or what he called serfdom, was fairly benign as an institution and that the worst features of it

⁵⁶ Lane, P.J. and MacDonald, K.C., *Slavery in Africa, Archaeology and Memory* (Oxford, 2011).

⁵⁷ Gluckman, M., *The Economy of the Central Barotse Plain* (Livingstone, 1941); Gluckman, M., *Essays on Lozi land and royal property* (Manchester, 1943); Gluckman, M., ‘The Lozi of Barotseland in north-western Rhodesia’, in Colson, E. and Gluckman, M. *Seven tribes of British Central Africa* (London, 1951); Gluckman, M., *The Judicial Process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester, 1955); Gluckman, M., *The Ideas in Barotse Jurisprudence* (New Haven, 1965).

⁵⁸ Gluckman, *Economy*, p. 75.

were a consequence of the Kololo interregnum, when the slave trade was at its peak. As he put it, ‘Lozi themselves were never slaves after the Kololo had been expelled. What there was of slaving concentrated in this region in the hands of the Kololo, and later Lozi; for they were the dominant tribes with whom the slavers had to deal; and within the dominant tribes, the king controlled the trade.’⁵⁹

Central to Gluckman’s view of the Lozi economy was the idea that surplus accumulation was rendered impossible by low technological levels, and so any surplus was redistributed to attract dependants to increase one’s following relative to one’s peers. Therefore, whilst the Lozi ‘had many serfs[,]... serf and master lived at approximately the same standard. Serfs were described as “my children”, and though they were bound to particular people as freemen were not, relationships with them were otherwise assimilated to those of kinship.’⁶⁰ Gluckman also argued that the Lozi conception of social relations militated against both exploitation and outright slavery. The Lozi – he maintained – understood society as a web of reciprocal obligations.

The parent is lord over his child and owns him; the husband is lord over his wife and owns her; the king is parent of his followers and owns them. But the Lozi also think of these relationships as reversible. The child is lord over his parent and the wife is ‘another kind of lord’ to her husband. The king is not only the child of the nation but he is also its *mutanga*, its serf, its servitor. ‘Chieftainship is slavery’, say the Lozi.⁶¹

Elsewhere, he translated *mutanga* as ‘underling’,⁶² and he also gave further translations of terms for people of servile status: ‘*mahapiwa* (persons seized in raids in the outer provinces) and *batanga* (prisoners-of-war from foreign tribes).’⁶³ He described chiefly children brought to ‘Loziland by the chiefs. They were called *maketo* (honoured by choice of the king).’⁶⁴ In the same passage he mentioned *mahapiwa* again, and whilst saying the *batanga* were prisoners of war, he parenthesised the term as ‘serfs’, because ‘they were bound to a master in a village but could not be sold to another as “slaves”.’⁶⁵ *Batanga* is the plural of *mutanga*, and so Gluckman in actuality gives us three possible ways in which to understand their place in Lozi society. The essential point to be made here is that Gluckman’s work drapes slavery in the

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 76 - 77.

⁶⁰ Gluckman, ‘The Lozi’, p. 13.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 43.

⁶² Ibid., p. 43.

⁶³ Gluckman, *Ideas*, p. 85.

⁶⁴ Gluckman, ‘The Lozi’, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 6, fn. 1.

classic functionalist garb of a benign, incorporative institution, and does this in an often fragmentary and contradictory manner.

Caplan's study, *The Elites of Barotseland*, had very little to say on the subject.⁶⁶ We might term Caplan a nationalist historian, in the sense that he had a tendency to portray the pre-colonial past as generally more peaceful and prosperous than it appeared at the time, at least to European observers. To this category we might add Mainga's *Bulozi under the Luyana Kings*. Mainga's work is rather more sensitive to the complexities of Lozi history, as one would expect from a work written by a Lozi. And while both Caplan and Mainga made use of oral tradition, Mainga collected rather more material. Mainga's work is effectively a study of the elite, as is Caplan's, although the latter's title makes this rather more obvious. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the continual emphasis placed upon political history in the field at the time and the tendency of formal oral tradition to lean heavily towards the political.

Mainga was certainly more alert than her predecessors to the role of slavery in the economy of Bulozi and, indeed, linked the expansion of the Lozi state to the desire for slaves, among other things.⁶⁷ She also mentions two institutions which were used to fulfil the state's requirement for labour, above and beyond the work of captured slaves. The first, *maketiso*, she parenthesised as 'the recruiting of labour' and described as a system which forced subject people to periodically send large numbers of young men and women to the flood plain to work for the Lozi.⁶⁸ This, clearly, is a rather different description from that of Gluckman's *maketo*, from which the word *maketiso* is derived. The institution that Gluckman had termed *maketo* is instead referred to by Mainga as *lifunga*. In her account, at

regular intervals the king with an entourage, or his representatives, went through the country choosing bright and promising children...As they grew older they were trusted with different duties, until the most promising grew and rose to the highest positions in government⁶⁹

A footnote states that *lifunga* lasted into the late nineteenth century, but 'had by then changed in character and become a means of recruiting not only office holders but also labour among the Lozi. The result was that people were terrified and tried to hide their children'.⁷⁰ Mainga generally conveys a picture of Lozi slavery as an economic institution, but like Gluckman

⁶⁶ Caplan, G.L., *The Elites of Barotseland, 1878-1969: A Political History of Zambia's Western Province* (London, 1970).

⁶⁷ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 148.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39, fn. 51.

tends to portray it as basically incorporative, whilst accepting that at certain moments in Lozi history the conditions of life for slaves could worsen.⁷¹

The next major study of Barotseland, Eugene Hermitte's PhD thesis, complicated this fairly straightforward picture. While Mainga had argued that the *lifunga* had only morphed into a means of labour recruitment in the late nineteenth century, Hermitte placed this change approximately 40-50 years earlier. '[I]mpressment', he wrote, 'was a changing institution'. In the early nineteenth century 'it seemed to be used less for the honorific selection of court servants than as a means of acquiring general labor for the king.'⁷² On the other hand, Hermitte's understanding of *maketiso* is closer to Mainga's than Gluckman's.

Gluckman uses the terms *maketo* (chosen by the king) and *mahapiwa* (seized in the razzias in the outer provinces) for *lifunga*. However, my informants state that these three terms as well as *liketiso* all refer to the same basic institution. Distinctions suggested but never described by Gluckman were not very clear in the minds of the Barotse.⁷³

Whilst Hermitte agreed with Mainga that the conditions of life for slaves were contingent on wider political and economic factors, he analysed in greater depth the reasons for this and seems to view slavery as more exploitative and insecure. The limited range and quantity of durable goods, he argued, 'made it difficult for the freeman to raise his standard of living above his slave's in time of plenty [but] much easier for the slave's standard to drop below his master's during hard times.'⁷⁴ Hermitte also argued that by the turn of the nineteenth century growing divisions of wealth and general economic conditions meant that the 'king, royal family, and senior indunas prospered at the expense of commoners, the Lozi moved ahead of the subject peoples, and slaves appeared to be relatively worse off.'⁷⁵ Van Horn's study of the agricultural history of Barotseland came to a similar conclusion, although slavery is not discussed in any great detail. Echoing Gluckman, he called them serfs, rather than slaves.⁷⁶ The importance of slave labour to the Lozi economy is considered, but mainly in relation to changing economic conditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Slavery is simply an accepted part of the makeup of the pre-colonial Lozi economy; nowhere is it analysed in depth.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷² Hermitte, E. 'An economic history of Barotseland, 1800-1900', unpublished PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1973, p. 128, fn. 87.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 116; cf. p. 110.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁶ Van Horn, L., 'The agricultural history of Barotseland, 1840-1964', in Palmer, R., and Parsons, N. (eds.), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London, 1977), p. 145.

Above all, the foregoing has been intended to contextualise two key works. The first is Clarence-Smith's article: 'Slaves, Commoners and Landlords in Bulozhi, c. 1875 to 1906'.⁷⁷ This essay is in many ways the foundation stone of this thesis, or at least the progenitor of one of the central arguments that underpins it. Written in 1979, the article echoes the pessimism of African historiography at the time. Rather than celebrating the pre-colonial past, it stresses the exploitative nature of slavery in the Lozi social formation. It also applied an explicitly Marxist analysis to the class structure and economy of the floodplain. Refuting Gluckman, Clarence-Smith argued that the term serf was misleading, as slaves were chattels that could be sold or transferred between owners. On the other hand, he conceded that slaves in Bulozhi, who benefited from a 'royal guarantee of access to arable land...were much closer to mediaeval European serfs than to American plantation slaves.'⁷⁸ This is very much in line with contemporary scholarship, which, as already argued, took pains to stress the differences between slavery in Africa and the Americas. Clarence-Smith also took issue with Gluckman's view that technological development in pre-colonial Bulozhi prevented the elite from appropriating surplus. Clarence-Smith's well-taken point was that 'productive investment is possible under all technologies, even the most "primitive", for otherwise the history of the greater part of the world would remain incomprehensible.'⁷⁹ Having established that the accumulation of surplus was not an impossibility, he demonstrated how this surplus was used to increase leisure time, engage in conspicuous consumption, invest in large scale works, such as the digging of canals, and for the 'upkeep of repressive political and ideological apparatuses, which were essential ... for the reproduction of the exploitative nexus.'⁸⁰ He was largely in agreement with other authors as to the sources of Lozi slaves, but made little distinction between types of slavery. As Hermitte had already demonstrated, such distinctions were of little significance.

The second work is Prins' 1980 book, *The Hidden Hippopotamus*, which to this day remains a highly regarded piece of scholarship. His PhD thesis in published form, it was the culmination of several years spent by Prins in the field, with considerable resources at his disposal.⁸¹ As both the most recent and certainly most comprehensive work on pre-colonial Barotseland, Prins' work will inevitably both be drawn upon and, in turn, face sustained criticism throughout this thesis. For the purposes of the present historiographical survey, only a few preliminary observations will be made with a view to placing Prins' book in relation to

⁷⁷ Clarence-Smith, W.G. 'Slaves, Commoners and Landlords in Bulozhi, c. 1875 to 1906', *JAH*, 20, 2 (1979), pp. 219-234.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁸¹ The book is virtually identical to Prins, G.I.T., 'Bulozhi During the Period of Primary European Contact, 1876-1896.', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1978.

the works which preceded it. Prins' book is explicitly anti-Marxist or, rather, pro-Empiricist, although in this case it seems to amount to much the same. Like Gluckman, but using the cloak of more recent anthropological work, Prins posited the existence of a form of 'moral economy' that made the uneven accumulation of surplus impossible.⁸² Prins devoted a single subsection of a chapter to the role of slaves in Lozi society. In this he described the work of Clarence-Smith as 'fundamentally vitiated from the title onwards by, among other things, an inability to define basic concepts with any defensible claim to relevance in the Lozi context.'⁸³ The rejoinder from Clarence-Smith is worth quoting at length, because it offers both a sharp criticism of Prins' methodology and a clear Marxist statement on functionalist understandings of slavery. Clarence-Smith considered that Prins' empiricist approach had led him to present 'Lozi ruling class ideology in the classless and functionalist garb of Lozi "core concepts". Never adequately explained and too often taken at face value, this ideology constantly conceals the deep social divisions in the flood plain.' It was, Clarence-Smith continued, 'sad to see the very real exploitation of the unfree population reduced to vague political science waffle about "powerlessness". Even worse is the uncritical repetition of Lozi ruling class ideology on the treatment of slaves. Statements like "shortage hit all, labourers and non-labourers alike" are flatly and abundantly contradicted in the mission sources and in oral testimony.'⁸⁴

There has been nothing more written on Buluzi of any major relevance since the appearance of Prins' book, and what has appeared has added nothing to our understanding of slavery in the region. Lovejoy included the Lozi in *Transformation in Slavery*, but relied solely on Clarence-Smith's article. Flint's 2004 thesis recognised that the Lozi raided for slaves and also hinted at the place of slaves in the Lozi economy. The exploration of both subjects, however, is shallow. When discussing, for example, the 'breakdown in the ability of Barotseland's system of production to sustain its population' in the second half of the twentieth century, Flint's explanation was that 'this system had been premised on substantial quantities of slave labour, which became anachronistic in terms of the evolving world economy to which Barotseland had become exposed with the arrival of British colonialism'.⁸⁵

⁸² Scott, J.C. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 1976). Scott's later work on 'public' and 'hidden' transcripts bears traces of having been influenced by Prins. See Scott, J.C., *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale, 1985).

⁸³ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 266, n. 76.

⁸⁴ Clarence-Smith, W.G., 'Review of Prins, G. *The Hidden Hippopotamus – Reappraisal in African History: the early colonial experience in western Zambia* (Cambridge, 1980)', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8, 2, (1982), pp. 274-275.

⁸⁵ Flint, L.S., 'Historical constructions of postcolonial citizenship and subjectivity: the case of the Lozi peoples of southern central Africa', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2004, p. 168.

This is, clearly, grossly simplistic. Things do not change simply because they become anachronistic. Things do not just happen on their own. Not only does Flint's approach reify the Lozi economy as much as Hopkins had done in the case of West Africa, but it also attributes no agency whatsoever to the historical actors who lived the ends of slavery in Barotseland. The Lozi kingdom was not simply 'exposed' to the world economy. It was thrust into it, and slavery was at the heart of this story.

All the works considered in this section may be said to fall into the first period of literature relating to slavery in Africa, that is, work which was written before the 1980s. In conclusion, let us reiterate one of the central arguments of this chapter. In the case of Buluzi, and for Central Africa as a whole, the orthodoxy of domestic/lineage slavery, and its essentially benign character, remains the default paradigm. Apparently perceived as an uninteresting, or unrewarding, object of study by scholars of slavery, the histories of both the kingdom and region have not benefitted from the insights of the more recent historiographical approaches outlined in this chapter. In a word, and to paraphrase Clarence-Smith, the historiography of Buluzi remains distorted and unsatisfactory, in spite of abundant sources and a great deal of research.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Clarence-Smith, 'Slaves, Commoners and Landlords', p. 219.

Part II: Ecology, History and Lozi Slavery

Valley of Milk, Lands of Honey: ecology and the evolution of the Lozi kingdom

Having devoted the previous chapter entirely to historiographical and theoretical concerns, this chapter turns to more practical matters. In best Braudelian practice, we begin with a consideration of geography. Here a few initial observations about the place of environmental history within African history seem apt. The general trend has been for Africanists to draw on environmental history in support of other forms of historical investigation, rather than to adopt the interdisciplinary approaches more common to work done in other historical fields. This is something of a shame, as disciplines like archaeology, palaeoclimatology and palaeobotany may well provide fertile ground for historians to research further back in time than is currently possible in many regions of Africa.¹ In part this is a consequence of both the sheer scale and variety of work that remains to be done, but it also has to do with the fact that the specificities of many regions make it very difficult to make use of data for even geographically proximate regions. Historical or palaeoclimatic data for Lake Ngami, approximately 550km from Lealui, may as well be 5,500km away for the insights one might usefully draw from them. In this chapter an attempt has been made to make use of what scant material does exist, but only in a very general manner. The greatest obstacle has been the paucity of data. Time series of rainfall, temperature and a host of other requisites for climate modelling simply do not exist, and attempts to infer these from oral sources have been ‘at best overoptimistic and at worst grossly incompetent.’² The general solution to this problem has been a retreat from close chronologies to greater levels of abstraction.³

Here, just as the limitations of our sources force us to study slavery before the late nineteenth century as institution, they confine us to a somewhat static picture of the geographies – physical, human and economic – of Barotseland. Without implying that this environment was in equilibrium or static, one can still usefully extrapolate from more recent data backwards. Barotseland’s geology, climate and, to some extent, soil type and ecology have been comparatively stable through time, subject of course to the annual inundation, or lack thereof, of the floodplain. What follows provides the landscape, without which ‘le peuple, l’acteur historique, semble marcher en l’air comme dans les peintures chinoises où le sol

¹ There are clear exceptions. For instance, Lake Ngami has been comparatively well investigated, and some tentative steps taken at making connections between oral traditions and the archaeological record. This is not to say that the attempt is convincing, simply demonstrative of possibilities. Robbins, L.H., et. al., ‘Mogapelwa: Archaeology, Palaeoenvironment and oral traditions at Lake Ngami, Botswana’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 64, 189 (2009), pp. 13-32.

² McCann, J. ‘Climate and Causation in African History’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 32, 2/3 (1999), p. 264.

³ A particularly successful example of this solution is Iliffe, *Africans*, esp. chaps. 2 and 8.

manque.⁴ Like these paintings, in sketching this landscape, broader structures and patterns are more immediately visible than individual depth and motion. Again, this is dictated by the limitations of the sources. While motion is implied and the scene suggestive, it is only in subsequent chapters that the historical actors will spring to life.

‘No poet ever sung the praises’: Setting the scene.

The flood plain has many names: Ngulu,, Liondo and Mbunga, to name but three. One might simply call it *libala* (the plain). But it is most commonly known as Bulozhi, the land of the Lozi. This is not always coterminous with Barotseland. ‘Outside Barotseland it means the whole Province. In Sesheke or Mankoya [present day Kaoma] it is the Barotse Plain, but on the Plain itself it is the well-defined region along the river.’⁵ It also carried the connotation of all the land ruled by the Lozi King.⁶ The plain is the centre of the Lozi universe, from which all things flowed. Indeed, the Lozi title for their King, *Litunga*, means ‘the land’. The Lozi take great pride in this land: its people, history and institutions. For them the three are indivisible. As one early literate visitor put it, ‘The Borotse when removed from this valley mourn after it as the Israelites did after Egypt.’⁷

Through the heart of this land runs the Zambezi River. Rising to the north in Mwinilunga district, it moves eastwards across the Angolan border, before carving back southwards through Zambia and on towards the Kalahari Desert. As the river crosses back into Zambia, it forms a series of floodplains, the largest of which is the Barotse. This begins at the confluence of the Zambezi, Kabompo and Lungwebungu rivers, north of Lukulu, and covers an area of approximately 5,500km². At the height of the flood season, the total inundated area is 10,750km².⁸ Downstream, below Senanga, the river turns south-east, and the plain abruptly narrows. It is here that the wooded bluffs of the valley margins come together, holding back the waters of the Zambezi when it is in full spate. Without them, the river to the north would not break its banks each year.⁹

⁴ Michelet, J., ‘Préface de 1869’, in Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1880), p. vi.

⁵ Peters, D.U., *Land Usage in Barotseland*, Rhodes-Livingstone Communication 19 (1960), quoted in Verboom, W.C. and Brunt, M.A., *An Ecological Survey of Western Province, Zambia, with Special Reference to the Fodder Resources, Vol.1 The Environment* (Tolworth, 1970), p. 49.

⁶ Gluckman, *Economy*, p. 4.

⁷ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 210.

⁸ This represents somewhat less than 1% of the vast Zambezi basin.

⁹ One must acknowledge that this is rather similar to the account given in Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 19-20. In turn, his account bears a striking, and unacknowledged, resemblance to Mainga, *Bulozhi*, pp. 1-6.

Livingstone travelled upriver to the plain in 1853. Reflecting on this journey in his journal, he sadly remarked that “No poet ever sung the praises of this beautiful scenery or of the strange scenes which have been enacted on its banks. What a great want is that of writing.”¹⁰ His account is the earliest to give any substantial detail of the valley; in places, it leans to the poetic. It seems fitting that, if not by right of *prima inventione* then style and detail, he should claim the mantle of our guide to Bulozhi. In *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, Livingstone narrated his journey in the following terms.

From the bend up to the north, called Katima-molelo [Katima Mulilo] (I quenched fire), the bed of the river is rocky, and the stream runs fast, forming a succession of rapids and cataracts, which prevent continuous navigation when the water is low...But the falls of Gonye [Ngonye] present a much more serious obstacle. There we were obliged to take the canoes out of the water, and carry them more than a mile by land. The fall is about thirty feet. The main body of water, which comes over the ledge of rock when the river is low, is collected into a space seventy or eighty yards wide before it takes the leap, and, a mass of rock being thrust forward against the roaring torrent, a loud sound is produced...One large village is placed at Gonye, the inhabitants of which are required to assist...canoes past the falls...When we came to about 16° 16' S. latitude, the high wooded banks seemed to leave the river...Viewed from the flat, reedy basin in which the river then flowed, the banks seemed prolonged into ridges, of the same wooded character, two or three hundred feet high, and stretched away to the N.N.E. and N.N.W. until they were twenty or thirty miles apart.

With characteristic precision, Livingstone places at 16° 16' S. latitude the point where the arms of the valley draw in. If the head of the valley lies to the north, above Lukulu, this is the mouth of the valley and the Ngonye falls are its throat. This journey was replicated by most of the missionaries, traders and administrators who later came to the valley, and all give much the same account of the lower course, portage around the falls and voyage upstream into the plains themselves. In this respect, Livingstone's account is not unique. But, as the journey continues, he provides, in less than a page, a most incisive account of the salient features of life in the valley:

The intervening space, nearly one hundred miles in length, with the Leeambye [Zambezi] winding gently near the middle, is the true Barotse valley...The villages of the Barotse are built on mounds, some of which are said to have been raised artificially by Santuru, a former chief of the Barotse, and during the inundation the whole valley

¹⁰ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 197.

assumes the appearance of a large lake with the villages on the mounds like islands...There are but few trees in this valley: those which stand on the mounds were nearly all transplanted by Santuru for shade. The soil is extremely fertile, and the people are never in want of grain, for, by taking advantage of the moisture of the inundation, they can take two crops a year. The Barotse are strongly attached to this fertile valley; they say, "Here hunger is not known." ...It is covered with coarse succulent grasses, which afford ample pasturage for large herds of cattle; these thrive wonderfully, and give copious milk to their owners. When the valley is flooded, the cattle are compelled to leave it and go to the higher land, where they fall off in condition; their return is a time of joy.¹¹

Then, as now, the river dominates the rhythms of life in Bulozhi. It shaped the broader ecology of the plain, patterns of settlement and transhumance, production and (although this is merely hinted at by Livingstone) forms of political organisation and mobilisation. This, then, is the picture of life in the valley in the mid-nineteenth century. But of course people had lived in the plain for much longer than that. Patterns of life closely attuned to the environment allowed the inhabitants to harness the wealth of the land around them. To move towards an understanding of these patterns of life, it is also necessary to describe the place in greater detail. To do so, there is nowhere more elegant to begin than the ground itself. The landscape of Barotseland is one which has, first and foremost, been profoundly shaped by water.

Foundations: rocks, sand, wind and rain

The present geomorphology of the area was formed more than 2.5 million years ago, during the Pliocene epoch.¹² The entire area can be divided into three river terraces: the Mankoya, Mongu-Kalabo and Bulozhi terraces (see Figure 1). The oldest, and highest, is the Mankoya terrace, on the eastern marches of the province beyond the Luampua river. It is on average over 1,000m above sea level, rising in places to between 1,158m and 1,178m. Moving westward, one next reaches the Mongu-Kalabo terrace, by far the most extensive of the three. It stretches from the Luampua river, in the east, to the western border of the province with Angola and beyond. At its eastern edge, from a height of 1,067m, it slopes gently down to the Zambezi, with a gradient of around one foot per mile, and the entire terrace has a gently southward gradient. In the west the Litawa Flats, and the Liuwa and Mbanda plains, all vast

¹¹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, pp. 213-15. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 210. His observations on the wealth of the valley are the more remarkable for having been made in a year of moderate/low flood, during the lean winter months, Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 58.

¹² Verboom, p. 47. See also Walker, J.D., and Geissman, J.W., 'Geological Time Scale: Geological Society of America', *Geological Society of America Bulletin*, 25 (2012), p. 259.

level grasslands, occupy much of the area between the Lungwebungu and Luachi rivers. To the east of the Zambezi, between the Luena in the north and the Lui in the south, the country is pockmarked with circular depression and pans, which Prins memorably described as ‘small apologetic intrusions’ in the scrub forest cover where the water table touches the surface.¹³ The Bulozhi terrace is the smallest and lowest, nowhere rising above 975m, but, for present purposes, it is undoubtedly the most important. It includes the Barotse floodplain, the Sesheke Plain, the Luena flats, the Lui and Lumbe valleys and the Mulonga, Matabele and Siloana plains.

The surface geology of the entire region is composed of deep Kalahari sands primarily aeolian in origin, barring the narrow strip of alluvial soils on the floor of the plain. It is part of the main Zambian dune system, a field of ancient ergs centred on the area of the Mulonga Plain, between the Zambezi and Cuando rivers, and extending to the Namibian border in the south and to the Lungwebungu River in the north. Whilst the dunes do not appear to extend to the east of the Zambezi, several of the smaller streams which drain the eastern tributaries appear to conform to the same general pattern. On this basis, Thomas has argued it is unlikely that the Zambezi flowed as it does now at the time of dune formation, a process dependent on the prevailing easterly winds. These winds may have been stronger than at present, and the area more arid, likely a combination of both. This would also account for the river presenting less of a barrier to wind-borne sand. In its present form, it would have been too great a barrier for the dunes to form as they did.¹⁴ The point here is that the entire landscape has been shaped by the climate and river in a series of different ways and on different scales, with the best and most fertile soils only existing because of alluvial deposits. Likewise, the easterly winds which have deposited Kalahari sand across the Mongu-Kalabo terrace, or rather the weather system of which they are a part, underpinned the creation and persistence of the regional environment.

The longitudinal movement of the Hadley cell, more particularly the wet ascending branches which come together in what is known as the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), combined with the deflection of the Coriolis effect, bring both these easterly winds and the seasons to Barotseland. The sun’s energy drives the circulation of the Hadley cells, and the annual oscillation of the sun’s zenith is tracked by the ITCZ, meaning that for part of the year it, and hence the Central African rainbelt, lie to the north of Zambia. This corresponds to the dry season. The zone’s southwards descent, occasioned by a shift to more northerly winds,

¹³ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 20.

¹⁴ Thomas, D.S.G., ‘Ancient Ergs and the Former Arid Zones of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 9, 1 (1984), p. 80. Thomas was working from early LANDSAT images. Examination of more modern satellite imagery of the region seems to confirm his hypothesis. See Figure 1.

heralds the rains which last while the zone remains over the country.¹⁵ This fundamental dynamic lies at the heart of the geology and ecology of Barotseland. But climatic effects are not uniformly felt. The southward movement of the rainbelt means the rainy season begins in the north a few weeks earlier than in the south. However, as the dry season begins at the same time in both places, the south receives concomitantly less rain. The south is also generally hotter, subject to greater temperature variations and frost is more common. These effects are felt less in the central part of Barotseland, but in all parts there is a constant risk of intermittent dry periods or the abnormal arrival or departure of the rains.¹⁶

The second major climatic factor is the rainfall in the northern catchment area of the Zambezi and its tributaries. It is this rain which determines the timing and level of the flood in the plain. Most rain in the plain is lost to evaporation or transpiration, and nearly all of that which falls beyond it is absorbed by encircling Kalahari sands. It then seeps into river valleys or damboes, the regularity and rate of which is determined by the depth of the water table, the difference in elevation between the sands and valleys and damboes, and the slope of the land leading to them. This effect is most obvious along the eastern margin of the Barotse terrace, where it meets a high scarp with a shallow gradient at the base.¹⁷ It is this rain water combined with the flood which refills the aquifers under the Kalahari sands surrounding the annually inundated area. These feed the tributary rivers and the plain and provide a belt of rich soils in the valleys and at the margins of the plain. Combined with the flooding, this seepage makes the plain and margins the most fertile part of the valley. As it is the rains to the north rather than in Barotseland proper that determine the flood, a dry year in the plain can be followed by a high flood. Thus, it is the northern catchment rainfall, pivotal to the floods and hence the ground water system, which is in reality more important than the immediate climate of the plain in shaping the environment of Barotseland.¹⁸ It is this interaction of geology and climate which is responsible for the existence, in a region of sand, bush, forest and scrub, of an environment as extraordinary as the Barotse valley. It presented, one is tempted to argue, almost perfect conditions for the emergence of a centralised state.

The true Barotse valley': The origins of settlement

The origins of settlement on the plain are, to put it mildly, incompletely understood. Prior to the Kololo interregnum, the plain was the home of the Luyi, forerunners of the Lozi, who spoke Luyana. In the Western Province, one is commonly told that the Luyi originated in the

¹⁵ It occasionally moves further south causing a short dry interlude.

¹⁶ Hermitte, 'An economic history', p. 74-85. See also p. 149 fn. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 89. Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 20.

Congo as an offshoot of the Lunda empire. As the saying has it, *ka Luyi Mwambwa, ka Lunda Mwambwa*, meaning that the Luyi Mwambwa, a putative first common ancestor, is the same as the Lunda Mwambwa. But Lozi origin myths, particularly those of ancestral migration, do not hold water for a number of reasons. A lengthy discussion of Lozi oral tradition would move us a long way from the point of this chapter, and indeed, from the point of the thesis as a whole. The evidence of the land speaks for itself, and it is to the ecological specificity of the valley we must look for the genesis of the Lozi state. There may be some who doubt that this argument may stand alone. Therefore an appendix has been included in which the two foremost examples of Lozi ethnohistory are examined and their flaws demonstrated.¹⁹ With that said, and without wishing to give credence to ideas of a Lozi origin external to the plain of the sort suggested by these traditions, there is some evidence which suggests that such a process may have occurred, but on a far more local scale. It should be said at the outset that the archaeological record is sparse, and no work has ever been conducted in the floodplain so what follows is rather tentative.

C.G. Trapnell, who conducted an extensive ecological survey of what was then Northern Rhodesia in the early 1930s, suggested that the region's unique system of grassland gardens was developed in the plains to the north-west of Buluzi.²⁰ Of course, agricultural similarities do not automatically represent migrations, but the west of Zambia has had long contact with eastern Angola, especially with what is now Moxico Province, with which it shares a long western border.²¹ The north of this Province and the area across the Zambian border in north-west of Barotseland are dominated by Mbunda speakers. In the early twentieth century, Stirke and Thomas considered that Lozi and Mbunda vocabularies shared 'many similarities which go to prove that the two tribes have been in conjunction both closely and for a long period, while the even more numerous dissimilarities equally prove the two tribes to be of quite separate and distinct origin.'²² Meanwhile, E. Jacottet, an early PEMS missionary in Barotseland and formidable linguist, had contradicted the theory of the head of his mission, François Coillard. Coillard had suggested a southern origin for the Lozi in what was then Mashonaland, but Jacottet considered that '*Le gros des A-Louyi ne peut provenir, en effet, de cette région.*' Jacottet had instead placed the Luyana language, which later intermingled with Sikololo to become Silozi, in a group with those of the west, including

¹⁹ Appendix III.

²⁰ Personal communication between M. Gluckman and C.G. Trapnell, quoted in Gluckman, M. 'The Lozi', p. 4, fn. 2.

²¹ Finally established in 1905. See chapter 8.

²² Stirke, D.E.C., and Thomas, A.W., *A Comparative Vocabulary of Sikololo-Silui-Simbunda* (London 1916), p. 6, as quoted in Mainga, *Buluzi*, p. 15.

Kimbunda.²³ This linguistic connection is bolstered by what limited archaeological evidence exists, which largely rests on analysis of pottery traditions.

Two of these traditions exist in the Western Province of Zambia. The first, the Lungwebungu tradition, is the primary modern pottery tradition of north-western Zambia. While it is found in the west in Angola and northwest in Congo, in Zambia it is found in 'Mwinilunga, Kaoma, Kabompo and Zambezi Districts and extends southwards into the Western Province at least as far as Senanga and the Matabele plain.' It is made by a range of people, including both Old Mbunda, who settled in Barotseland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, if not before, and more recent migrants from Angola. The second, the Linyati tradition, is found in the floodplain and down the Zambezi valley into the eastern Caprivi Strip, and it extends towards Victoria Falls. It is similar to some Sotho and Tswana pottery found to the south and is therefore attributed to Kololo influence in the region, particularly as the distribution of the Linyati tradition matches areas known to have been settled by the Kololo.²⁴ On this basis, Roberts believed that only long stability and relative isolation from the rest of Zambia could account for both such archaeological connections and the linguistic similarities and disparities highlighted above.²⁵ Prins suggested that settlement occurred in three phases. Initially, stone age inhabitants

alone were in evidence; in the second there was a long period of coexistence with Early Iron age immigrants, one stream entering the north and central part of Buluzi, creating a 'Lungwebungan' culture of notable durability, another stream entering the south of the country and showing signs of greater contact with the peoples to their east. In the third phase, for as yet unknown reasons, the transition to the Later Iron Age was relatively rapid although the *degree* of change was different in each stream...the western 'Lungwebungu' stream showed much greater continuity between Early and Later Iron Age traditions than was seen to the east; indeed, it remained stable until the intrusion of the 'Linyati' tradition with the Kololo in the early nineteenth century.²⁶

He rightly considered that this evidence was sufficient to suggest that Lozi migration myths ought not to be read as an explanation of this series of events. He also warned against an attempt to draw together the loose ends of tradition and archaeology, and believed that this would be impossible without further archaeological work. Katanekwa's excavations in the

²³ Jacottet, *Études*, vol. 3, pp. 128-129, fn. 3. Cf. Mainga, *Buluzi*, p. 14.

²⁴ Phillipson, D.W. 'Iron Age History and Archaeology in Zambia', *JAH*, 15, 1 (1974), p. 11.

²⁵ Roberts, A.D., *A History of Zambia* (London, 1976), p. 71.

²⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 27. Emphasis in original.

1970s likewise suggest an Angolan connection, and his work offered some evidence that the origins of the Luyana lay in an area of that name, in the extreme south-west of Sesheke district.²⁷ These linguistic and archaeological data suggest that contacts between the plain and surrounding areas were certainly of long standing. However, the adoption or importation of cultural practices, which may or may not be tied to immigration, is not evidence of the importation of ways of life wholesale. As the next section demonstrates, only the environment of the plain can account for the basic patterns of life of its inhabitants.

‘Villages on the mounds like islands’: patterns of settlement and transhumance

The annual inundation of the plain compels the building of settlements on higher ground, and when the flood reaches its full level, the waters force the inhabitants to move to still higher ground, on the margins of the plain. There is no shortage of the latter sort, but very little of the former. As already stated, the Mongu-Kalabo terrace is extensive, whilst the Buluzi terrace is not. In the plain, villages are built on *mazulu* (sing. *lizulu*), the mounds which at flood time appeared to Livingstone to resemble islands. They are some of the few landmarks in the plain, often vast and always conspicuous, ‘like galleons frozen in motion.’²⁸ Of these mounds, one must make a distinction between the supposedly natural features and those which are entirely man-made, the *suba* (sing. *liuba*). However, the sheer scale of most *mazulu* suggests that they have been added to and maintained over time. The creation of mounds punctuates oral traditions, and almost all significant events are associated with them, if only by proximity. One can generally distinguish those which are, or were previously, inhabited and those which served other purposes. As Livingstone and others have noted, what marks them out are the trees, the ‘sails, dark and leafy against the bright, grassy sea of the plain.’²⁹

In Buluzi, the village, or cluster of villages, was the ‘fundamental unit of ministration and justice.’³⁰ It was also the basic economic unity. Generally, nineteenth-century villages were small, inhabited by a dominant kin group, bilateral affines and slaves. Unlike the people on the periphery, who were at least originally matrilineal, the Lozi heartland was characterised by these small bilateral descent and settlement patterns.³¹ The physical organisation and appearance of the village tended to reflect the relationship and status of the individuals who lived in it.³² Each village had a variety of economic resources, in particular gardens, fishing

²⁷ Katankwa, N, ‘The Iron Age in Zambia: New evidence and interpretations (summary)’, *Azania*, 29-30, 1, (1994).

²⁸ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Mainga, *Buluzi*, p. 36.

³¹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 53-54.

³² See chap. 6.

pools and dams. Some crops were grown on the mound itself, and others in a variety of different sites in the surrounding area, not infrequently at some distance from the settlement itself. Ownership of mounds and their associated land and resources was a basic component of a complex and uneven web of political, social and economic relationships which stretched across the Lozi heartland and beyond. It provided the basis of the kinship system, enabled the organisation of labour, served to reinforced hierarchies and provided the conditions for the continuation of the kingdom as a whole.³³

Even the status of the *bulena* (kingship) was marked with mounds. Broadly speaking, it was believed that, upon his death, a *Litunga* would take on a new form and grow more powerful than he had been while alive. From that point onwards, the royal spirit could influence the fortunes of not only individuals, but the entire kingdom. In order to propitiate the dead *Litunga*, amongst a number of prohibitions and ritual injunctions incumbent on those left behind was the duty to ensure his burial in a mound he had chosen or had built for himself when alive. This was guarded by a number of people chosen for the purpose, who would establish a village near the grave. One of them, the *liñomboti*, or grave guardian, was charged with not only protecting the grave and ensuring the traditions and praises of the *Litunga* were preserved and passed on to his successor, but also with making offerings, divining the deceased's wishes and invoking posthumous interventions into the realm of the living.³⁴ Thus, the landscape was more than clay and loam, and a 'Lozi garden land [was] not just soil: it [was] soil owned by particular social personalities, under definite laws, and used by them for social purposes...Wherever the physical environment affected or was used by the Lozi it became part of their social system.'³⁵ The deep connections between the social, economic, political and ritual aspects of the Lozi in Buluzi were all inscribed into the land. To understand the kingdom and its history, one must understand the political economy of the valley. For a society so intimately connected to the landscape, there is nowhere better to begin than the Lozi calendar, reflecting both the annual cycle of the floods and of production. In doing so, we can also begin to gain a sense of the long range stability of this system.

³³ For a unabashedly Marxist analysis of these dynamics, see Frankenburg, R., 'Economic Anthropology or Political Economy? (I): the Barotse Social Formation – a Case Study' in Clammer, J. (ed.), *The New Economic Anthropology* (London, 1978), pp. 31-60.

³⁴ Mainga, *Buluzi*, p. 31.

³⁵ Gluckman, *Economy*, p. 3.

‘Here hunger is not known.’: production

The Lozi calendar was traditionally divided into thirteen months calculated by lunar cycles, although *sikweti-kweti*, the supplementary lunar month, is now largely in abeyance and the Lozi months are now simply used to refer to their approximate English counterparts. These have been given in brackets to give a sense of the shifting seasons. The calendar occasionally varied during the nineteenth century. As Jalla noted in his dictionary, every ‘second, third or fourth year, people see that a lunar month must be added.’ This was *sikweti-kweti*.³⁶ Variations would inevitably be cyclical, as the Lozi year would always begin at the time when agricultural activities began anew, in *Muiunene* (September). This was in preparation for the arrival of *Litabula*, the rainy season, in *Yenda* (October) or *Njimwana* (November), the wettest months being *Ñulule*, *Sope* and *Yowa* (December to January). The rains generally last until *Liatamanyi* (March), to be followed by *Maliha* (winter). The flood usually rises in the plain in *Ñulule*, reaching its peak in *Liatamanyi* (March) or *Lungu* (April), and it then begins to recede in *Mbuwana* (June). During the time of the flood, the people would *ku omboka* (lit. get out of the water), moving to the upper ground. The return, *ku fuhela* (lit. to go down), saw them move back to their homes in the plain. Then, after *Mbumi*, the dry season, the year began again in *Muiunene*. The timing of the rains was absolutely crucial for crops planted towards the end of the dry season; the seedlings would die if the rains were late. Replanting was a possibility, but the crops had to be harvested before the flood waters rose, or the crop would be lost. Likewise, were the rains to end early, this could have a deleterious effect on not only crops but fodder and livestock. This made the probability of adequate rainfall in *Liatamanyi* (March) and *Lungu* (April) significant.³⁷

Hermitte, using oral sources, attempted an economic history of the period before 1800. The limitations of such sources, and other available material, make much of this tenuous at best. However, as Prins has argued, elements of the agricultural system were stable from the 1850s to the 1880s, and ‘since the introduction and spread of cultivars tend to be structural changes with long wavelengths of historical time, the pattern may have been stable for longer than that.’³⁸ As one can draw on linguistic data to support this, it is possible to gain a sense of what was grown in Bulozhi in the early part of the nineteenth century. Livingstone was impressed by the abundance in the valley in 1853:

There is no want of food in this fertile valley. It yields abundantly Caffre corn of great size and beautiful whiteness, Pumpkins, melons, beans, Maize, and earth nuts, Moanja

³⁶ See Jalla, A.D., *Sikololo-English dictionary* (Torre Pellice, 1917), s.v. *sikweti-kweti*.

³⁷ Hermitte, ‘An economic history’, p. 77.

³⁸ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 59-60.

or Manioc, Sweet potato and another kind of potato called Sekhutsane, Sugar cane, and the Banana further north.³⁹

The Kololo had introduced a number of crops, including two varieties of sorghum, *maelepu* and *munanana*, but the sorghum of ‘beautiful whiteness’ was most certainly *makonga*, white sorghum. Prins suggests that this *makonga* is a Luyana word, whereas Hermitte claims it was known to the Luyi as *napu*. In his *Private Journal*, Livingstone describes ‘LeKoñka’ [*lukonga*, sing. of *makonga*] as the ‘corn of Borotse.’⁴⁰ Cassava, introduced by the Mbunda, had a Luyana name, *mwandi*, distinct from that of the Mbunda, *lupa*, and also from the Kololo name, *mwanja*, Livingstone’s ‘Moanja’. Presumably if Livingstone used the Kololo name for the cassava, he may have used the Kololo for white sorghum, and therefore *napu* may well be the Luyana name. For present purposes, whichever is correct matters less than the fact that this demonstrates that white sorghum was known, and grown, before the 1840s. In similar fashion, it is possible to identify and date other crops. Thus, flint maize was introduced from Angola in the eighteenth century and was known as *mundale* in Luyana (*mbonyi* in Silozi).⁴¹ The sweet potato, *ngulu*, also a name for the floodplain, was another Luyana word, as were *luku* (finger millet) and *mangu* (bulrush millet), the former sown in wet soils, the latter in sandy bush soils.⁴²

As Figure 2 makes clear, there is a wide range of potential and actual arable land in the floodplain. *Mangu* was sometimes planted in dry *litongo* gardens on the steep slopes of the plain, but rapid soil degradation meant that these gardens had to be moved regularly. Moving further towards the river, *mundale* and other crops could be grown continuously in moist *litongo* gardens. Here, groundwater seepage and natural drainage provided the ideal growing environment. Just beyond *mataba*, the seepage zone, were the *sishanjo* gardens, which required artificial drainage. This was done by digging deep narrow trenches, *malomba*, into the plain, in order to plant *mundale* and *ngulu* in winter, to be harvested in the flood season. On the floor of the plain, *sitapa* gardens were made in fertile, annually silted depressions, which could support *mundale* and *napu/makonga*. However, planting in depressions carried a greater flood risk, and the need to plant quickly in the absence of ploughs limited the size of these gardens, which were nevertheless the most common in the plain. In the north of Bulozi, *libala* gardens were also planted in alluvial soils, but their higher elevation meant they were less at risk of flooding. Conversely, because they flooded less, they required

³⁹ Livingstone, *Private Journal*, p. 210.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁴¹ Trapnell, C.G. and Clothier, J.N., *The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of North Western Rhodesia* (Lusaka, 1937), pp. 25-27.

⁴² Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 58-59. Hermitte, ‘An economic history’, p. 26.

manuring to improve the soils. Natural vegetation was burnt annually for the same reasons and gardens were rotated in an attempt to conserve basic fertility.

In an effort to overcome the dangers of flooding or water logged soil, some gardens, as already stated, were grown on *lizulu*. These, with manuring, were quite fertile, and could support *mundale*, *napu/makonga* and other crops continually. This fecundity and comparative safety from flooding made possession of *lizulu* gardens highly desirable, but, as we have seen, mounds were in short supply and closely controlled. A response to this was the creation of *mukomena* gardens, effectively beds and fields banked up by hoeing. They were made in moist areas below the *sishanjo* gardens, near *lizulu* and on damboe grasslands. Commonly around half a metre high and around 2x6m across, they were surrounded by a trench from which the earth had been dug out to form them. This trench helped drain the gardens, and the freshly extracted soil provided fertile conditions. The most commonly grown crops were *ngulu*, *sikuswani*, or Livingstone potatoes (Livingstone's 'Sekhutsane'), and *mangalwe* (peanut-potatoes).

These gardens, and all of those listed here, required substantial amounts of labour to be brought under cultivation, and required it at different times, in places spread across the landscape. The largest and requiring the most labour, the *bonamukau* (sing. *namukau*), belonged to the king and provided the crops to feed his household and distribute among his followers. Alongside this, the plain had the potential to provide fish aplenty and abundant grazing. So, the substantial demand for agricultural labour was coupled with that needed for cattle herding and fishing. The flood meant that grazing and fishing sites had to be moved regularly, often to considerable distances from the gardens which required work at any given moment.⁴³ The division of labour was largely gendered. Men provided animal protein, while women provided vegetable protein and starch. Slaves fell into the second category. This division of labour means they are absent from the consideration of hunting, fishing and herding that follows.

In 1941, a century after the period at hand, Gluckman wrote of the Lozi that

though ultimately they depended on their gardens for plenty and against famine, and appreciated this, they had less continual emotional interest in gardening, since it is an activity whose labour involves day to day routine and whose fruits are reaped months after sowing. Neither it nor cattle keeping, which is also distinguished by a daily routine, commonly involve sudden rewards or shortages. On the other hand, once

⁴³ Hermitte, 'An economic history', pp. 104-109.

traps have been made, fishing gives fluctuating returns whose richness or poverty makes the difference between good and meagre living. Fishing was therefore, because of its uncertainty, one of the most exciting Lozi activities, and certain types of fishing were in themselves thrilling for the Lozi.⁴⁴

The rich technical vocabulary for fishing and long association with the river made fishing a central occupation for the Lozi which had been practiced for centuries. The Lozi, despite all the foregoing detail of mounds, gardens and crops, are a river people before all else. The river system of the plain supported varieties of bream, barbell and tiger fish, all of which have Luyana names.⁴⁵ Most forms of fishing were the work of men, barring the catching of small-fry, or *nakatenge*, in a scoop basket called a *lishiño* (pl. *mashiño*) and the hoeing of matted grass depressions to extract small fish from the mass of grasses, known as *litapi za ñañalwa*.⁴⁶ Men used *miwayo*, fishing spears, the action of which has its own verb, *ku waya ka miwayo* (to spear fish with a fish spear). Fish dams, known as *bwalelo*, fish traps (*makuko* for small traps and *lindjamba* for large ones) and fish fences (*liandi*) were set by men, who also used a variety of nets, and occasionally poisoned fish in small pans.⁴⁷ Fish dams and rights to fish certain areas were associated with particular mounds and were inherited, transferred and disputed in the same way as land was.⁴⁸ With the given exceptions, fishing was the preserve of men, and was one of their key contributions to the wider economy and, more importantly, their own pots.

Hunting, like most forms of fishing, was also the work of men. It was, however, by the nineteenth century contributing a comparatively small proportion of protein to the general diet. Hunting was carried out both individually and communally, and large game in particular were hunted and distributed under a far tighter regime than fishing was subject to.⁴⁹ As part of his attempt to chart the development of the Lozi economy in the seventeenth century, Hermitte suggests that farming was not initially the primary source of food. Putting reservations about the archetype of the skilled hunter ancestor to one side for the moment, the argument runs that the early Lozi diet included 'meat - mainly from game - but also from cattle, fish, and wild fruit. A typical meal would have included porridge, but the porridge would have been more like a thin broth...in early times the relish would have been curdled

⁴⁴ Gluckman, *Economy*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 77.

⁴⁶ Gluckman, *Economy*, pp. 63. I am unsure of the precise translation, which Gluckman does not provide, but the root word *ñaña*, means to quarrel, dispute, to wrangle, to hold. From the description of this manner of fishing, it likely relates to the second pair of words in the definition. Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *ñaña*.

⁴⁷ For a similar is more narrow account, see Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 55.

⁴⁸ Gluckman, *Economy*, pp. 52-63.

⁴⁹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 50, 78.

sour milk.’ To this, he adds that even ‘the beer, called *ilya*, reflected this lack of emphasis on grains; it was made from honey and sour milk.’⁵⁰ What substance there is to this is difficult to discern, but Hermitte was right in one thing: the game population was certainly in decline over the long term, and, as the population of large game, particularly lechwe, declined, small game became the more common quarry. For this reason one can place game, particularly small game, and fish into the same category. Both were small forms of protein and were generally harvested rather than hunted, thus posing mainly logistical and technical problems. In general terms, a decline in hunting would increase reliance upon agriculture and, consequently, increase the demands on the labour of women and slaves. But it would also tend to increase the importance of stockholding. Indeed, perhaps the most important consequence of the hunting out of the game population was the virtually unique absence of tsetse-fly in the valley.

From the 1850s, and certainly before that, the floodplain was ‘an island of tsetse-free land, surrounded on almost all sides by more or less dense and continuous belts of fly.’⁵¹ Reduction of the game population would have decreased the number of potential natural hosts for the fly, so deadly to cattle. And cattle, though in one sense simply a source of milk and meat, were of an order totally beyond that of game and fish. In Bulozzi, cattle, although providing less food through meat, were ‘more intimately part of the social fabric, more valued and more thought about.’⁵² The absence of the fly, combined with the wide availability of grazing in the plain, made the accumulation of cattle a central feature of the Lozi economy. As with hunting and fishing, the keeping and use of cattle was the concern of men. Livingstone was impressed by the herds he saw and, with a few minor caveats, thought the valley could be ‘pronounced a good land for cattle.’⁵³ The stock he saw were of two sorts

One called Batoka, because captured from that tribe, is of diminutive size, but very beautiful; and closely resembles the short-horns of our own country...They are very tame, and remarkably playful; they may be seen lying on their sides by fires in the evening; and, when the herd goes out, the herdsman often precedes them, and has only to commence capering to set them all a-gambolling.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Hermitte, ‘An economic history’, p. 32.

⁵¹ Clarence-Smith, W.G. ‘A Note of Tsetse Fly and Rinderpest in Barotseland, 1850s to 1900s’, unpublished seminar paper, University of Zambia, 1977, p. 1.

⁵² Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 77.

⁵³ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 210.

⁵⁴ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, pp. 191-2.

This gives one a sense of the sort of affection in which cattle were held, although one suspects that this was an easier animal to handle than the other kind: the

Barotse ox, [which] is much larger, and comes from the fertile Barotse Valley. They stand high on their legs, often nearly six feet at the withers; and they have large horns. Those of a similar breed that we brought from the lake measured from tip to tip eight and a half feet.⁵⁵

Despite seeming so different, these breeds were both of Sanga stock, Zebu crossbreeds. The ‘Batoka’ were Ila/Tonga shorthorn Sanga, the ‘Barotse’ a cross between Longhorn humpless and cervico-thoracic humpless Zebu.⁵⁶ Beyond this most obvious of visual distinctions, the Lozi had a complex vocabulary with which to describe cattle, with remarkable precision as to both colour and patination. Prins gives 24 such adjectives, but Colyer’s 1914 *Sikololo, notes on the grammar with a vocabulary*, gives 41 explicitly, and it also included one possible, marked with a question mark, and five for which no feminine version is given. This gives us a possible total of 52 words.⁵⁷

The economic importance of cattle ownership cannot be overstated. Cattle, an ideal form of mobile, exchangeable, self-reproducing and easily convertible wealth, were the primary means for accumulating surplus. The *Litunga* possessed his own herds, *likomu za mbuwa*, a great reserve of wealth and source of patronage. The centrality of cattle to Lozi culture, reflected in a rich vocabulary, speaks volumes of the importance of this potential. Beyond this, and their dietary contribution, their dung could enrich poor *litongo* soils and be used on *lizulu* gardens. Even today, a popular Lozi song’s refrain, *Licololo mbonyi ya siloko* (lit. The beautiful girls are like maize after manure) stands testament to the serious economic advantages of access to cattle. They were a key form of property. Some animals were named, had their horns trained into shape, or had their ears ‘cut and slit into various shapes as private marks’.⁵⁸ Cattle played a role in patterns of settlement, because to ensure decent fodder, the population had to live apart on account of their cattle.⁵⁹ They also had to move with them out of the plain to the margins when the floods arrived, to a place with far less grazing. The annual migration was a time of hardship for both cattle and people, as life on the margins was in marked contrast to that of the plains. In some respects, it is these margins which underpinned

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 79.

⁵⁷ Colyer, S., *Sikololo, notes on the grammar with a vocabulary* (London, 1914), p. 31. Colyer was a Medical Officer in Northern Rhodesia at the time of publication.

⁵⁸ Bertrand, *The kingdom of Barotsi*, p. 106.

⁵⁹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 215.

the development of the Lozi state and its expansion. It is upon the contrast between the two zones that one of the central dynamics of this process – trade and exchange – rests.

Higher ground: the bush and plain margins

Walking up out of the plain, through the belt of wet *sishanjo* soils, and on through first moist, then dry *litongo* belts, the soil becomes dry, looser and sandier. Low growing vegetation thins and is replaced by scrub and low forest. This is the *mushitu*, the bush, and it extends across most of the Mongu-Kalabo terrace. While there is no shortage of it, the sandy soil is far poorer than those of the plain, and agriculture was of necessity rotational. But the bush and forest possess things the plain does not. First, and most obvious, is wood. In the plain, trees are few and far between, and those that do exist are of more use alive for shade than as timber. Yet to move on the river, trees, sometimes very large trees, are needed to carve canoes, and canoes must have paddles. There are few stones in the plain, so wooden mortars are needed to pound grain, as are wooden dishes and pails for food, water and milk. Hoes must have handles, and blades, of iron. This too is found in the *mushitu*, particularly in the belt of forest and pools to the east, and its products were an important medium of exchange. It was forged into not only hoes, but knives, axes and spearheads. Grasses and reeds for mats and baskets grow around damboes, and in the trees wild bees produce honey and wax.⁶⁰ The products of the forest were valuable, the more so for being largely unavailable in the plain. But the products of the plain were likewise scarce in the *mushitu*. Fish, maize, cattle and their milk were the things of the plain, the products most valued and in demand outside of it. In general terms, the unique environment of the plain made it a focal point for barter and exchange. Reinforcing this advantage, all river routes, the tributaries of the Zambezi, flow towards the plain. The plain ‘differed from all neighbouring areas more than any two of these area between themselves, and hence to each of these areas some form of economic link to the Plain was more important than any number of associations among themselves.’⁶¹ People and goods, like groundwater and rivers, moved down the gradient. This, as we shall see in the next chapter, was a fundamental factor in the development of the Lozi kingdom.

The trees and mounds of ‘Santuru’: political possibilities

This chapter has endeavoured to place the Lozi kingdom in the unique environment of the floodplain and demonstrate the close connections between the landscape, climate, ecology,

⁶⁰ Hermitte, ‘An economic history’, p. 35.

⁶¹ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 35. This is a point made by all authors, e.g. Langworthy, H.W., *Zambia before 1890* (London, 1972), p.50; Van Horn, ‘The Agricultural history’, p. 145; Gluckman, *Economy*, pp. 90-91.

production and the fundamental impact of this on life in that same landscape. But the foregoing ought not to suggest, as tempting an explanatory short-cut as it is, that this way of life simply arose from ecological structures, or was determined by them in any mechanistic sense. It should by now be clear that the patterns and the economic and social structures of life in the plain were not only built upon, but into the landscape. We have seen how mounds were raised, gardens made and food produced, and we hinted at the consequences of this for political organisation and mobilisation. It is a standard trope of African history that because land was historically plentiful, political power rested on control over people. However, in the case of Buluzi, although the plain is large, it is not infinite. The *Litunga* was, at least in theory, the owner and custodian of all of it. There were traditional rights and obligations which hedged this power, but on a basic level the ability to control land, to monopolise its ownership, created an artificial scarcity. Control of land gave control of people. Further, the ability to effectively create new land through the mobilisation of labour was a key means of enforcing loyalty. Though the population left the plain each year, they returned once again to the same village and gardens in the dry season. It was far easier to control a population of fixed agriculture and settlement patterns than one practicing the shifting patterns of the margins.

Clearly, the economy of the plain was a complex one, and the Lozi had harnessed the environment and attuned their way of life to the ecological specificity of their land. Livingstone thought that ‘If agriculture were a test of civilisation then these are not savages.’⁶² But as this chapter has begun to show, and the next will explain in further detail, alongside their agricultural system, the Lozi possessed a complex state binding people and elite, plain and margin, slave and free together. In doing so it came to dominate the entire Upper Zambezi region. The starting point for the next chapter has been provided by our first guide in this one. In his account, quoted above, Livingstone gives us a single name: ‘Santuru, a former chief of the Barotse’. We are told it was he who caused mounds to be raised up and trees to be planted. Clearly, such works required much labour, above and beyond that already needed to support life in the plain. These mounds were the economic, social, political and ritual framework of the kingdom, and to possess mounds was to possess power. Thus the construction of mounds was not only the expression of individual or collective agency, but also the exercise of political power. Who Santuru was, how he came to have such power to wield and what the consequences of this were will be the focus of the next chapter.

⁶² Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 191.

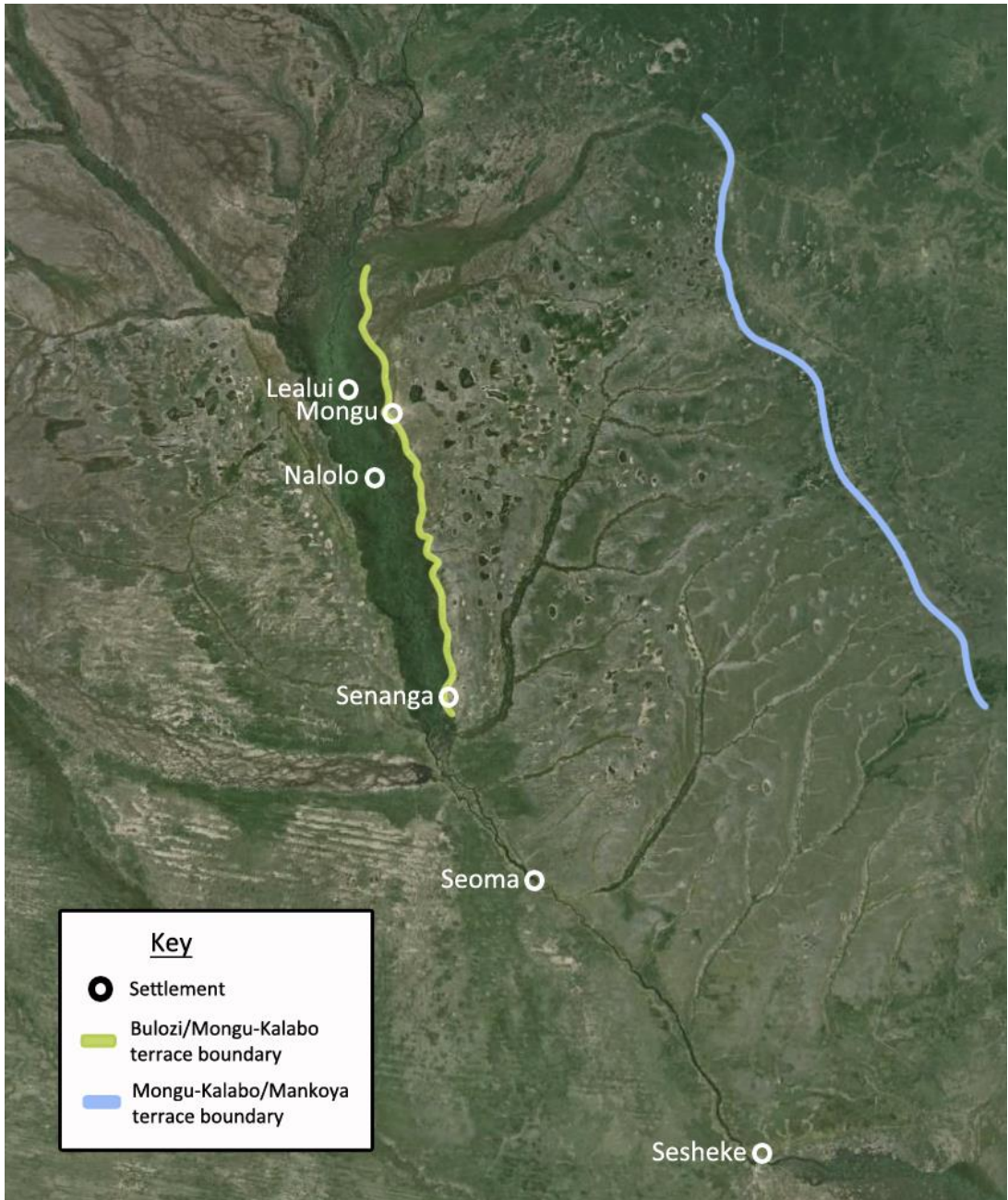


Fig. 1. **Satellite Image of the Upper Zambezi floodplain.** Annotated to demonstrate river systems and geomorphology. Note damboes to East of Zambezi, and to the West of the river the dune ridges, aligned East-West.

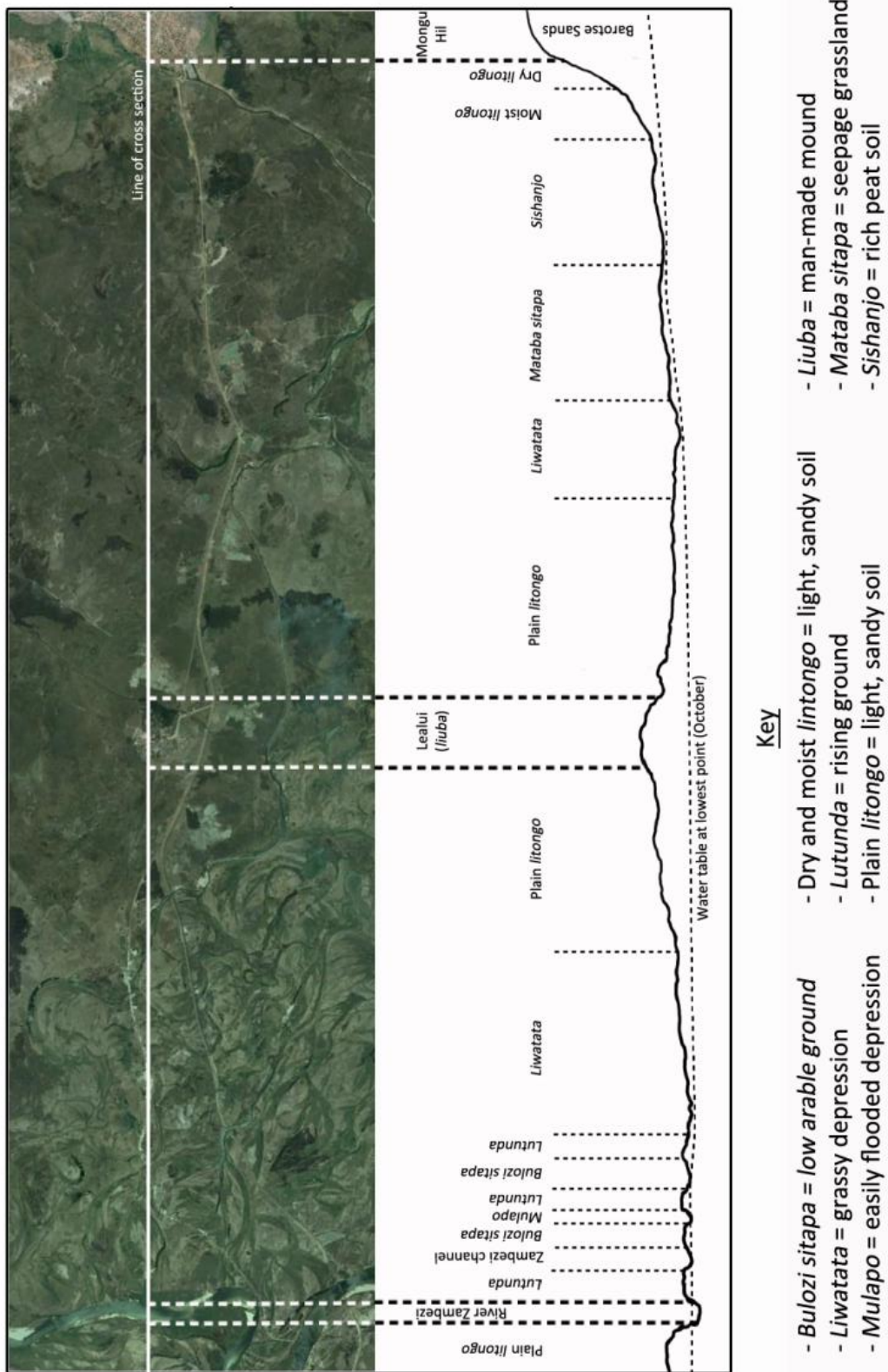


Fig. 2. **Cross-sectional study of the floodplain.** Cross-section along a line from Mongu Hill, via Lealui to the Zambezi. After Verboom and Brunt, *Ecological Survey of Western Province*, vol. I, map. 1.

The children of Mbuywamwambwa: Lozi political history to the late nineteenth century.

This chapter is concerned with the political history of the Lozi kingdom to the late nineteenth century, and more particularly the period from the reign of ‘Santuru’. But the mounds of Santuru did not simply spring from the earth nor his trees from the air. We must first, therefore, know something of the history of the kingdom before his accession to the throne. In general terms, the history of the reigns following that of Mboo, the first Luyana king said to have been firmly established in the valley, is of successive expansions and increasing centralisation of control over the unique environment of the valley. For this period we must perforce rely on Lozi traditions, and the work of other scholars, for our evidence, since we simply do not have, nor have any real hope of recovering, any further sources. Thus, the first part of this chapter delivers an extremely compressed account of Lozi history before the nineteenth century, much of which has been rehearsed elsewhere.¹

By the nineteenth century, the accounts of literate observers do permit us to reflect not only on the internal history of the kingdom but also its wider connections. In particular, we can clearly see for the first time the intimate connections between trade, power and slavery. Later sections of this chapter pursue these connections from the period before the Kololo interregnum to the 1870s. They similarly pursue the development of economic and tributary structures, arguing that much of the turbulence in the history of the nineteenth-century Lozi kingdom revolved around the success, or failure, of successive rulers to harness these same structures. While the concerns of this chapter are explicitly political, slavery remains a constant feature. The history of this period would be unintelligible without it, for it is here for the first time that we see the vital importance of slavery to the economic and political history of Barotseland.

Mubingu, Makolo and Mulongwanji: structures of power and control in the early history of the kingdom

The development of the Lozi polity may best be characterised as driven by two dynamics. The first was the establishment and consolidation of a highly centralised state. The second, part cause and part consequence of the first, was the increasing ability of that state to mobilise and

¹ Mainga’s account, building upon Jalla’s *Litaba*, is likely to remain the apogee of the elaboration of the early history of the kingdom. See, in particular, Mainga, *Bulozi*, chaps. 1-3. Hermitte’s account differs only in detail, as does Flint’s. Hermitte, ‘An economic history’, chap. 2 and Flint, ‘Historical constructions’, chap. 2.

direct the labour of its subjects. These dynamics are best understood through the prism of one institution in particular: the *makolo*. These are said to date from the time of Mboo, who had a number of ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’, the ‘children’ of Mbuywamwambwa, ‘daughter’ of Mwambwa. It is generally said that the ‘siblings’ of Mboo decided that they needed a male leader.² In most versions, this was a consequence of some of Mbuywamwambwa’s ‘children’ having met one Isihmwaha.³ He alone, or with a group, was fishing, and the visitors, again variously named, received a share of the fish, a custom known as *mubingu*.⁴ The dividing of the catch with a share for the chief represents the giving of tribute, and it implies it was from Ishimwaha that the Lozi learned the basis of chieftainship. Mboo conquered the ba-Mulinga, ba-Upangoma, ba-Luiwa, ba-Mwenyi and Mambowe, and fought off the ‘Andonyi’ who harried the western marches of the kingdom.⁵ We do not know whether these groups were simply subjected, or also raided for cattle and slaves, but given the modalities of Lozi raiding in the nineteenth century, this seems entirely possible.⁶ Mboo is also said to have given his ‘sibling’ areas to rule over.⁷ Inālamwa received Mukola, Inyambo was given Sikuli, Mwanawina was given Sikongo, Yeta was given Mwandi, Mboanjikana was given Libonda, Nakatindi was given Sesheke and Namakau was given Kwandu.⁸ Each of these ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ was given the right to create *makolo* (sing. *likolo*). We do not know anything further about their form or structure, but it is likely that these *makolo* were initially territorial units, centred on the various siblings’ fiefdoms and serving to marshal their followers.⁹

There were a number of splinter groups during Mboo’s tenure, some ‘siblings’ apparently desiring a greater measure of independence and taking their followers with them. But by the reign of his second successor, Yeta I, no more *makolo* were created by anyone other than the reigning king.¹⁰ The growing power of the *bulena* was recognised by both the

² Mainga has, tentatively, dated the reign of Mboo to the late seventeenth century based on the assumption of a fourteen year average reign and twenty-five year generation. Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 213. The truth of the matter is that any attempt at dating the reigns of Lozi kings before the nineteenth century is virtually impossible.

³ Or variations on the name.

⁴ Mubiyana Wamunyima, interview, Limulunga, 25 November 2011.

⁵ Jalla, A.D. ‘The History of the Barotse Nation’ by A.D. Jalla (third edition 1932), typescript. ALM, LM 2/4/46/1, p. 12. This manuscript is Jalla’s own translation, and has been preferred for this reason.

⁶ All of these groups are in what is presently Kalabo district, which tallies with the supposed origins of the state in this area. See Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 24.

⁷ Flint, ‘Historical constructions’, p. 29, notes that as many as eleven children are credited to Mbuywamwambwa.

⁸ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 25, who quotes Jalla’s account almost verbatim. This is substantially the same as the account presented in Mbikusita, G., ‘The Barotse Tribal History’, December 1941, ALM, LM 2/4/93/1. In all accounts, the process is the same, but the allocation sometimes varies.

⁹ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

Lozi and their neighbours, as attested by Yeta making an appearance in Mbunda traditions.¹¹ Yeta's immediate successor Ngalama is said to have reincorporated the splinter groups, while the third *Litunga* after Yeta, Ngombala, extended Lozi influence further south and east, establishing a second kingdom, Lwambi, in the south. There are a number of ways in which to interpret the establishment of this kingdom, but what all traditions emphasize is the unequal status of the kingdoms, the northern, Namuso, being paramount. These were not truly distinct polities: their rulers were of the same dynasty, each kingdom controlled several villages (*munzi*) and village groupings (*silalanda*) in the territory of the other, and both had representatives at each other's court.¹²

Following the reigns of Yubya, chiefly remembered as a lavish king who must have drawn on the growing resources of the state in his indulgence, and Mwanawina, whose praise simply recalls his beauty, Mwanayanda inherited the throne.¹³ By all accounts a cruel and capricious king, he killed his father's *Ngambela* and set about killing his siblings, rivals to the throne. But his attempts on the life his half-brother, Mulambwa, and brother, Kusio, failed. It is this Mulambwa, or Mulambwa Santulu as he is sometimes known, who is the Santuru of Livingstone's account. Factional struggles between those holding positions of political power, the *manduna* (sing. *induna*), and the royal family escalated into a war between Namuso and Lwambi. The manner in which Mwananyanda died is not recorded, but his succession was disputed between Mulambwa and Kusio. A 'terrible war ensued' and 'Kusio and many of his people were slain.'¹⁴ It is not for nothing that Mulambwa was known, in the 1860s, as 'Cacoma Mulonga', he who speared the kingdom.¹⁵ Victorious, Mulambwa installed his son Mubukwanu at Lwambi. This would not be the end of the conflict between Namuso and Lwambi, but tensions would not boil over again for as long as Mulambwa was on the throne.

This, then, is a sketch of Lozi political history to the time of Mulambwa, of whose reign we already know something from the last chapter. By this time from territorial units under the control of various scions of the Lozi line, the *makolo* had been centralised and made a weapon for Lozi kings to counteract centrifugal tendencies among the elite. It was not only

¹¹ Mupatu, Y.W. 'Mulambwa Santulu receives Mambunda Chiefs, typescript by Y.W. Mupatu', typescript, 1958. ALM, LM2/4/93/85. As this manuscript is not consistently paginated, no page numbers are supplied here.

¹² Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 48.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 61-62; Mbikusita Lewanika, G., 'Lozi traditions, poems and legends by Mr. Godwin Mbikusita Lewanika, written between 1938-1939', ALM, LM2/4/93/43, p.56.

¹⁴ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 31.

¹⁵ da Silva Porto, A.F.F., 'Viagens e Apontamentos de um Portuense em Africa', vol. 5, 12 August 1868. This is Silva Porto's rendering of the praise, which I have found nowhere else. My translation is derived from the Silozi transitive verb *cokoma*, to spear or stab, and noun *Mulonga*, meaning realm or kingdom. See Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *cokoma*, *Mulonga*.

the political functions of the *makolo* which were being altered to suit the purposes of the nascent state. As the kingdom expanded, so too did the *makolo*, which came to 'encompass all men, women and children in Bulozhi. Every Lozi automatically became a member of a Likolo from birth, belonging either to his father's or guardian's Likolo.'¹⁶ The *makolo*, in other words, were turned into organised units of manpower, divided into sections, which might be called up in these divisions or as a whole, in the form of a *levée en masse*. Thus the *makolo* brought all labour, slave and free, into the service of the state. Not only did they provide labour, but they could also be called upon to provide manpower for raiding. They therefore served as the key means to expand the slave population whilst increasing their own capacity for labour. As demands for labour increased, as they had done under Mulambwa, the result was both increased raiding and ever greater reliance on the growing slave population.

The work of the *makolo* was still, and would remain, couched in the idiom of tribute labour – an idiom which suited Lozi cosmological construction of the *Litunga* as the apex of a society which owed its labour to him in return for his grants of land to his people. But this did not mean that slaves, when mobilised for work under their *likolo*, suddenly ceased to be slaves. Tribute labour did not make them free. It appears that the *makolo* simply expanded to absorb the slave population, for they remained the best means at the disposal of the Lozi elite to mobilise their subjects. As the next chapter further clarifies, the *makolo* also worked as channels for redistribution. The spoils and slaves taken in raids were distributed not only on the basis of rank, but also of fighting prowess. This was a system which ensured that wealth went to those who had the most invested in, or who had demonstrated the greatest loyalty to, the state. Reinforcing the bonds of loyalty was doubly important, for as the system expanded, losing its territorial structure, any one *likolo* would have members spread across the kingdom. This system also ensured that, from the first, the labour of slaves was channelled into the *makolo*. The *makolo* were permanent, as were the titles of their officers, the *manduna*. But succession to a title was not hereditary. The leader of each *likolo* was based at the capital, although he travelled the country where his *likolo* members resided, and had regional assistants.¹⁷ Each *likolo* had its own site at the capital, and visitors to the capital would reside in their *likolo* area, and communicated through their *induna* with the *Litunga* and councils.

The *makolo* also became specialised, with particular duties to perform. Mainga, for instance, cites the *likolo* of Njemwina's duty to procure salt.¹⁸ Salt could be manufactured in a number of ways. One can pour water through the ashes of burned cassava stems to produce

¹⁶ Mainga, *Bulozhi*, p. 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

mukele, a slightly saline water, but this is an extremely inefficient process. Alternatively, the sap of palm trees can be tapped and boiled down to leave a salty deposit.¹⁹ The best salt, however, was that harvested from salt pans. These are not evenly distributed over the kingdom, and so the duty to produce salt was assigned only to those *likolo* members in areas where salt pans were present. And these were certainly duties, for the work of the *makolo* was not optional. Even in the twentieth century, refusal to participate in organised labour of this sort carried heavy penalties.²⁰ But *makolo* were not the only form of organisation in the kingdom. It is commonly stated that alongside the *makolo*, and overlapping it, stood the *lilalo* (sing. *silalo*). As the *makolo* lost their territorial functions, the *lilalo* system was a necessary response. Any given *silalo* was composed of a number of *silalanda*, or group of villages. The village, or *munzi*, could thus be in a particular *silalo*, but the inhabitants might belong to different *makolo*. This territorial means of administration, it has been argued, enabled the Lozi to enhance their control over an expanding kingdom.²¹ While there has been some debate over the origins and functions of the *silalo*, it is certain that the *makolo* predate the Kololo interregnum.²² But the *makolo* and *silalo* did not stand alone, for upon them rested the superstructure of the state.

From the time of Mboo a number of senior councillors are said to have advised the *Litunga*. The offices of *Ngambela* (often translated as Prime Minister, more properly ‘the intermediary’) and *Natamoyo*, or ‘master of life’, who had the veto over judicial decisions and the power of sanctuary for those condemned to death, are said to date from this time.²³ Aside from being the most senior *induna* and the intermediary between the *Litunga* and the people, the *Ngambela* presided over the *Mulongwanji*, or national council. Composed of a single central body of *manduna*, this council handled matters of national importance such as war.

¹⁹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 107.

²⁰ Fines appear to have involved the seizure of cattle. Group interview, Sefula, 3 November 2011. Gilbert Matindo, interview, Mongu 16 November 2011.

²¹ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 48.

²² Complicating this simple vision somewhat has been the dispute over the historicity and functions of the *silalo*. Gluckman’s understanding, largely in line with that given here, stressed that the *silalo* related only to land, the *makolo* supplying the means of political and juridical control. Gluckman, *Economy*, p.94. Mainga, on the contrary, asserted that the *silalo* were largely coterminous with the *makolo*. Projecting the late nineteenth-century system backwards onto the pre-Kololo period, she argued that it was territorial units that were the building blocks of Luyana government. Mainga, *Bulozi*, pp. 50-53. But without sufficient evidence to disprove either hypothesis, the debate, as Prins put it, ‘entered a cul-de-sac’. Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 103-105. His solution was to suggest that both *silalo* and *makolo* evolved from an earlier institution, where political units centred around the holders of *lingongi*, or clapperless bells. While elegance is not, to paraphrase Vansina, proof, Prins’ argument is both a neat and compelling resolution of this debate, though too detailed and relating to too early a period of Lozi history to be examined here. Unfortunately, Prins made no attempt to reconstruct the political structure of the Lozi kingdom in light of his revelation, no doubt because our sources simply do not permit this to be done. See Appendix III. Vansina, J. ‘Is elegance proof? Structuralism and African History’, *HIA*, 10 (1983), pp. 307-348.

²³ Mainga, *Bulozi*, pp. 40, 45.

The *Natamoyo* was the second in seniority, but all other titles were promoted or demoted on the wishes of the King. This was achieved spatially through the arrangement of seating, the highest rank being those closest to the *Litunga*. To the right of the king sat the *Makwambuyu*, the most important division of the *Mulongwanji*, which included the *Ngambela* and *Natamoyo*. Their rank and titles depended upon the *Litunga*, and it was from these men that *makolo* heads were chosen. To the left sat the *Likombwa*, who attended to the affairs of the *Litunga* and his household, and supported his policies. The *Litunga* created ranks amongst the *Likombwa* as he saw fit, but it was Mulambwa who is credited with having introduced them as a body to the council.²⁴ The final group were the *Linabi*, composed of males of royal blood whose numbers remained small until the end of the nineteenth century.

Below the *Mulongwanji*, a body both large and infrequently convened, were a number of small councils, or *kuta*.²⁵ The *Sikalo* was composed of all the most senior members of the three groups that sat in the *Mulongwanji*. The *Saa* was similarly composed, but consisted of less important figures. Both councils discussed legislation and national affairs, and reports were passed between them in an attempt to reach a general agreement, which would then be reported to the *Litunga*. He might make the final decision singly, or with advice from his Privy Council, the *Situmbu sa Mulonga*, which generally included the *Ngambela*, *Natamoyo* and the head of the *Likombwa*. One further council, the *Katengo*, also existed, but its functions prior to the Kololo invasion are unclear. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was ‘a secret council which took decisions on witchcraft cases, executions, plots and counter plots.’²⁶

These structures, when married to the *silalo* and *makolo*, amounted to a large and complex state under the control of a body of men, the *manduna*, who formed a stratum owing their positions to the *Litunga*. As land was tied to office, this ‘bureaucratic aristocracy’ acted not only as a means of exerting control over more peripheral areas, but also of linking the core and periphery.²⁷ Thus, both the structures of the Lozi state, and the *induna* class in whose hands these rested, acted as centripetal mechanisms and ensured the supremacy and powers of patronage of the *Litunga*. But if this was a major strength of the kingdom, it was also a fatal weakness, for an ambitious royal had ‘no outlet for his ambitions except to succeed the king, either after his death, or through successful conspiracy’.²⁸ The rules for the succession were strict, but, theoretically, all males who could claim descent from Mbuyamwambwa were

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 43, 45.

²⁵ Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 98.

²⁶ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 44.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

eligible for the throne.²⁹ The potential field was therefore wide, although it often revolved around only one or two strong candidates and the powers of the *manduna* ensured that whenever a succession crisis broke out, it was they who were the kingmakers. In effect, the balance between the *Litunga* and his bureaucratic aristocracy, ‘which an active and able monarch could always maintain to his advantage, was upset at regular intervals.’³⁰ And from the time of Mwananyanda, the rulers of Lwambi had also become powerful enough to play a major role in these periodic crises. It was precisely this form of crisis which preceded the succession of Mulambwa.

‘He loved his people too much’: politics, trade and consolidation under Mulambwa

In the previous chapter we saw that while the floodplain held out rich possibilities, much labour was required to capitalise upon them. It was the *makolo* which served to meet this requirement. It would be no understatement to say that the *makolo* were throughout this period the single most important institution of the Lozi state. And the *makolo* lay at the heart of the consolidation of the kingdom under Mulambwa. The systems of government and political institutions of the Lozi state have now also been dealt with in some detail, and so we can turn out attention to what Mulambwa did with the kingdom he claimed from his older brother. This reign Mainga dates as commencing in 1798 and lasting for fourteen years. However, given what follows, 1812 is surely far too early for the conclusion of Mulambwa’s reign.³¹ It is difficult to be any more specific than this, for we have no contemporary accounts of Mulambwa. The nearest we can come is by re-joining our former guide, David Livingstone. The first serious mention of Mulambwa comes in Livingstone’s *Private Journals*, on the 5th of August 1851. We hear at second hand that ‘Seunturu, the chief of the Borotse whom [Kololo leader] Sebitwane [Sebitwane] expelled, was said...to have been in the habit of sending men up to the Lobale [Lovale] in order to purchase articles of European manufacture there’, namely ‘clothing, crockery and beads.’³² Thus Livingstone was already forming some idea of Mulambwa and his reign before he first arrived in the valley.

On Wednesday, 10th of August 1853, Livingstone arrived at Naliele, and appears to have been rather underwhelmed. He explained that it was ‘the chief town of the Makololo and

²⁹ On the rules of succession see Mbikusita Lewanika, ‘Lozi traditions’, p.1. It is worth noting that at the time this was written, the author’s claims to be a son of Lewanika were, to put it mildly, rather contested. It is therefore rather interesting that the first page of a document in excess of 50,000 words would set out the rule for the inheritance of the *bulena*.

³⁰ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 46.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230. See also fn. 2 above.

³² Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 41. See also Livingstone, D. (ed. I. Schapera), *Livingstone’s Missionary Correspondence 1841-1856* (London, 1961), pp. 185-186.

that which was the capital of Seunturu of the Borotse. It is the only one deserving to be called a town and yet it is not large. It does not contain 1,000 inhabitants.³³ He also mentions a town named Linangelo, describing it as ‘the site of the town of one of Santuru’s wives.’³⁴ Four days later, Livingstone wrote that Mulambwa had had ‘another and smaller town at a short distance from this called Cashiko. He began to reign there when young and employed it afterwards as a hunting station, but when become powerful and afflicted by a complaint in the eyes he removed to Naliele and built the site of the town.’³⁵ A week later, his view of the ‘former capital’ was modified again, and he noted that the ‘present town of Naliele was merely the storehouses for the corn of Santuru. The capital he occupied when young and with[out] power is called Lilonda [Lilundu].’³⁶ Again, a week later, Livingstone visited Lilundu, where he saw some items reputed to have belonged to Mulambwa. He reported that there was a nearby mound ‘formed by Santuru for a man who had fled from the Batoka after they had cut off his hands.’ He had also provided him with ‘cattle and sustained him.’³⁷ In the published account of his journey, Livingstone reports this visit, but describes Lilundu as Mulambwa’s ‘more recent capital...built...on an artificial mound...covered with different kinds of trees, transplanted when young by himself. They form a grove on the end of the mound, in which are to be seen various instruments of iron just in the state he left them.’³⁸ The second apparent contradiction in Livingstone’s account is easily reconciled. Mulambwa had indeed first resided at Lilundu. On becoming *Litunga*, he had established himself at Naliele and finally returned to Lilundu, where he died and was buried.³⁹ Clearly, Lilundu was the *liuba* Mulambwa chose as the site for his grave, and Livingstone’s account of those living at Lilundu and tending the grave confirms this. They were, he wrote, ‘supported by presents from the chief...This was the nearest approach to a priesthood I met.’⁴⁰ This, clearly is a reference to the *liñomboti*. The first contradiction, or rather error in place names, the editor of the journals was unable to resolve. In fact, it is likely that Cashiko and Lilundu were one and the same place.⁴¹

³³ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 202.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 212. Insertion in original.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

³⁸ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 219.

³⁹ This is the solution of the editor of Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 212, n. 2. He quotes Jalla in support of his argument, referring to the 1934 edition of *Litaba*.

⁴⁰ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 219.

⁴¹ The tradition of the establishment of Lilundu is a popular one, recounting the raising by Mulambwa of a mound to mark the grave of a much-loved hunting dog. A ‘*lilundu*’ in Silozi is a large mound or hill, and Cashiko [or Kashiko] was the hunting station of Mulambwa in his youth. One informant explicitly linked the two, stating that the place was not Lilundu, but a *lilundu* which had in common usage become a name supplanting Kashiko. Given that the leader of the Imutakela *likolo* created by Mulambwa bears the name *Mukulwakashiko*, which the informant rendered as *Mukulu-wa-Kashiko*, (lit. the leader/elder of Kashiko), it seems therefore that the title was instituted to be the holder of the

Just over a fortnight earlier, once he had arrived in Naliele, Livingstone wrote a brief account of the character of Mulambwa, presumably on the basis of what information he had gleaned over the course of his journey. He reported that:

Seunturu was a chief of superior intelligence. Was a great hunter and delighted in taming the young of wild animals. He had a tame hippopotamus and several Machwee, and loved his people much. The Mambari visited him of old and offered to buy children, but he gave them large presents of cattle and told them he loved his people too much to think of selling them. He employed all his people for several years in building the mounds on which his towns stood.⁴²

This precedent, of turning away the Mambari, was mentioned to Livingstone by the Kololo, who, as we shall see, were actually doing nothing of the sort.⁴³ But Livingstone did not hear this story from the Kololo alone, for in August 1853 he met two Arab-Swahili traders. Livingstone remarked that ‘they seem to pass and repass across the country’ and that ‘they came of old and the Barotse compelled their chief to refuse them access into the country because, said they, “the country is spoiled by children being sold”.’⁴⁴ In contrast to this, Livingstone noted that ‘The people of Londa [Lunda] came down the river and brought cloth for cattle and were much liked by Santuru.’⁴⁵ Livingstone also recorded of Mulambwa that, ‘All the other tribes were subject to him, and his sway was acknowledged from Mosioatunya [Victoria Falls] to Bapallen [BaPhaleng, a BaKgalagadi people residing in the area of modern-day Soshong, Botswana] & Libebe [named after Liebebe, a MaMbukushu chief, presently in western Caprivi Strip].’⁴⁶ Aside from an incidental reference to Mulambwa having forbidden the eating of boiled cassava meal by ‘his nobles, because it caused cough’,⁴⁷ this above represents the sum total of information about Mulambwa to be learned from Livingstone.

new mound. Mubiyana Wamunyima, interview, Limulunga, 25 November 2011. See also Mupatu, ‘Mulambwa Santulu’; Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 56 and Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *mukulu*.

⁴² Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 203.

⁴³ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 218. See also *Missionary Correspondence*, p. 252. There is some debate as to whether these Mambari, in fact Ovimbundu traders, acted as agents for Portuguese merchants on the coast or independent middlemen. See White, C. M. N., ‘The Balovale peoples and their historical background’, *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 3 (1949), p. 28. On the Ovimbundu. see Soremekun, F., ‘Trade and Dependency in Central Angola: the Ovimbundu in the Nineteenth Century’, in Palmer and Parsons, *Roots of Rural Poverty*, pp. 82-96; von Oppen, *Terms of Trade*, esp. p. 71; Heywood, L., *Contested Power in Angola, 1840 to the Present* (Rochester, 2000).

⁴⁴ It may be that Livingstone here conflates the itinerant lives of these Swahili traders with the account of Mulambwa barring the Mambari, for nowhere else does he make mention of these traders in connection with the great king.

⁴⁵ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 228.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152. For ‘Bappallen’, see p. 5; on ‘Libebe’, see p. 48.

⁴⁷ Livingstone, D. (ed. I. Schapera), *Livingstone’s African Journal 1853-1856* (London, 1963), vol. I, p. 66.

Although it does not seem to amount to much, armed with what we know of the Lozi kingdom up to the beginning of Mulambwa's reign, it can tell us a great deal.

In Livingstone's account it appears that the single most famous deed of Mulambwa was to have 'sternly refused' to deal with the Mambari slave traders.⁴⁸ As we have seen, there is more than one account of this event, or possibly of separate events. What is clear is that Mulambwa was not interested in selling slaves. Even if, as one of the accounts suggests, he was compelled to turn the traders away by his people, this simply indicates that he was not alone in his view. He, on the other hand, was willing to trade cattle, a valuable resource, with the Lunda in return for cloth, and he engaged in trade with the Luvale for European goods. No mention of what he exchanged for these goods is made, but, as we have seen, the products of the plain were much in demand on the uplands. And there was clearly a demand in Bulozhi for European goods. That Mulambwa would refuse to engage in trade with those best placed to provide him with such goods is a clear, if indirect, indication of the economic centrality of slaves to the Lozi economy.

In general terms, the importance of slavery as a means of extracting labour grew during Mulambwa's reign. Hermitte noted that the ancestors of 'most of the people with slave backgrounds in the central area of Barotseland' were brought in under Mulambwa or during the later nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Thus, when Livingstone writes that Mulambwa 'employed all his people for several years in building the mounds on which his towns stood', we have good grounds for thinking that the problem the Mambari faced was not that Mulambwa 'loved his people too much to think of selling them', but that he had a much greater need for labour, in particular the labour of slaves, than for any goods the Mambari could offer him. This impression is reinforced by the extent of the raids carried out during Mulambwa's reign.

Livingstone reports that the power of Mulambwa was said to reach Victoria Falls in the East, down into what is now Botswana, and to have included the western Caprivi strip. These are substantial claims. Jalla's *Litaba za Sichaba* records that Mulambwa fought four wars. The first was against Sibongo, chief of the MaKalahali; the second against Mwanamukana, of the same people, from whom he plundered cattle.⁵⁰ He is also said to have fought the Mashukulumbwe, or Ila, again in order 'to plunder cattle there'.⁵¹ Livingstone reported that Mulambwa sent men north to trade with the Luvale, implying reasonable relations at some stage. But, in Jalla's account, a dispute over the death of a Luvale chief's

⁴⁸ The phrase is Jalla's. 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 32.

⁴⁹ Hermitte, 'An economic history', p. 128, p. 158, fn. 85.

⁵⁰ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

son led to war. In this, he was supported by the Mbunda.⁵² The Mbunda also reportedly played a key role in Mulambwa's victory over Katusi of the Mankoya, to the east of the Zambezi.⁵³ It appears that Mulambwa struck up an alliance with the Mbunda to the west, giving them a number of privileges, settling them in the kingdom and assigning them to a *likolo*. In return, they served as allies in his wars. Thus bolstered, in the final years of Mulambwa's reign, raiding parties were harassing Ila and Tonga groups in the south-east for slaves and cattle.⁵⁴ But these parties were increasingly blocked from venturing below Sesheke and Kazangula by the growing presence of raiders coming from the south. As a result, 'the slave population within Bulozhi and less privileged groups were forced to bear a greater part of the State burden in the form of labour and tribute', the burdens which had built Mulambwa's great works. The outcome was rising tension and conflict within the kingdom.⁵⁵ The death of the *Litunga* on his return from a game drive ignited the situation, and a succession dispute flared between his sons Mubukwanu and Silumelume.

In making allies of the Mbunda, Mulambwa may have been engaged in the construction of a powerful faction within the kingdom and a useful group of allies in any internal power struggle. In the succession struggle following Mulambwa's death, the newly arrived Mbunda showed loyalty to the person of their late patron and his son and ruler at Lwambi, Mubukwanu, rather than to the *bulena* itself, which Silumelume had won with the support of his father's *Ngambela* and *Natamoyo*. Not for nothing did they earn themselves the moniker *Na yange nji Mwene*, 'I too am a king' or 'I am my own king'.⁵⁶ For it was the Mbunda of Mwene Chiyengele, summoned to receive their orders from Silumelume, who decided the issue. These events one informant related to me in the following dramatic terms.

That's when they came, the Mbundas, in the morning, coming whilst dancing manyanga [a Mbunda hunting dance⁵⁷]... So the mulena [lord or king, here Silumelume], when he came outside... his messenger noticed that; 'Ah Ah, these people are...coming to fight. Can't you see them fataa [pawing the ground, in the manner of those dancing an Mbunda hunter's dance]? These who are pawing like this, these, they are not coming for peace...They are pawing, the Mbunda, it's their way. Suddenly Kabui, Kabui child of Mwene Fwanyanga, "Kweee!" he pulls the bow and arrow,

⁵² Mupatu, 'Mulambwa Santulu'.

⁵³ 'Lozi Raids on Balla,' National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), KDE 2/43/1.

⁵⁴ Ibid. The Mbunda of chief Mwene Chiyengele, for instance, had apparently only been settled for two years in Bulozhi before Mulambwa died. Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 34.

⁵⁵ See Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 71.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁷ Mbikusita Lewanika, 'Lozi traditions', p. 30.

*It was during the cold season,
“Tuuu!” at Silumelume.
That’s when he fell.⁵⁸*

The fall of Silumelume would soon be followed by the fall of the kingdom. A successor was advanced by the *Ngambela* and his faction, but they were driven away north by Mubukwanu, leaving the way clear for his own installation. But events were about to overtake both the new king and his kingdom.

Makololo ki ba!: the Kololo interregnum⁵⁹

The raiders from the south who had blocked the southern margins of the kingdom to Mulambwa’s forces before his death had seized their opportunity and, in about 1840, marched on the valley. They fell first upon Mubukwanu at Kataba, to the east of the plain. Two of Mubukwanu’s sons, Sibeso and Sipopa, were taken captive, and the *Litunga* himself is said to have fallen in battle or to have been captured, then rescued by his son Imasiku and finally poisoned.⁶⁰ The Lozi, split into factions by the interregnal dispute, were defeated in detail. They now divided into three groups, one remaining in the valley, the other two going into exile. One, which included the majority of the royals, fled to Nyengo, in the north-west, where Imbua, a son of Mulambwa, became chief. The other fled to Lukwakwa, on the Kabompo river, under the leadership of Imasiku, the aforementioned son of Mubukwanu. The Mbunda, loyal to his father, joined him there.⁶¹ For a moment, it seemed as if a second group of raiders would overtake the kingdom. But this Ndebele group are said to have blundered, as Mubukwanu had, into an ambush. Their losses were so great that the site of their defeat is still known as *Libala la Matabele* (the plain of the Matabele).⁶² Now doubly victorious, the conquerors set about establishing themselves in their newly won kingdom. The Kololo had arrived.

The origins of the Kololo lay far to the south of Buluzi. Sebitwane, a Sotho leader, was driven out from his ‘patrimonial lands’, in the area between the Sand and Vet Rivers, during a period of conflict and dislocation, by Sekonyela, chief of the Tlokwa, in June 1822.⁶³

⁵⁸ Mubiyana Wamunyima, interview, Limulunga, 25 November 2011. I have found no other references to ‘Kabui’ or ‘Mwene Fwanyanga’

⁵⁹ Nalilungwe, M., (trans. H. Zulu), ‘Here are the Makololo by M. Nalilungwe (translated by H. Zulu)’, typescript, n.d., ALM, LM2/4/93/86. *Makololo ki ba!*, the original Silozi title of this vernacular work, might more literally be rendered as ‘The Makololo are here!’.

⁶⁰ Mainga, *Buluzi*, pp. 73-74.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 76

⁶³ Not wishing to enter into a discussion of the *mfecane* and its associated historiography, the term *mfecane* has been avoided an unnecessary here. This debate divides loosely into two camps, those

In his published account of Sebitwane's long journey north, Livingstone recounts a story of epic proportions. To its hero, Sebitwane, he attributed 'a great variety of fortune'.⁶⁴ First, he was driven back, with his BaPhuting and BaHlakwana allies, from an attack on the London Missionary Society (LMS) mission at Kuruman in 1823 by the firepower of the Griquas, in combination with their BaThalping allies. But he then rallied and routed Makaba, king of the Ngwaketse (Bangwaketse), seizing his 'town and all his goods'. He then 'twice...lost all his cattle' at the hands of the Ndebele, but he 'always kept his people together, and retook more than he lost'.⁶⁵ In the late 1820s, Sebitwane again suffered defeat at the hands of the BaNgwaketse, supported by the firepower of two English traders: Andrew Bain and John Biddulp.⁶⁶ This was the second lesson the Kololo received in the power of modern arms, and it was one they did not forget.⁶⁷ Moving northwards, the Kololo overran the country of the Subiya and Toka, but were still pressed by their old enemy the Ndebele.⁶⁸ 'Sebitwane's narrative', wrote Livingstone 'resembled closely the "Commentaries of Caesar", and the history of the British in India. He was always forced to attack the different tribes, and to this day his men justify every step he took, as perfectly just and right.'⁶⁹

Livingstone was clearly much taken by the chief, a man of 'about forty-five years of age...in manner cool and collected, and more frank in his answers than any other chief I ever met. He was the greatest warrior ever heard of beyond the colony...he always led his men into battle himself.'⁷⁰ Bearing in mind Livingstone's earlier classical allusion, in his account there is certainly something of the classical hero. Sebitwane may well have recounted this life as Livingstone recorded it, but some literary liberties may not have been beyond Livingstone. The moral of the story certainly conforms to the imprecation of Anchises to Aeneas to *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*.⁷¹ Nineteenth-century knowledge of African societies was,

who agree with Cobbing's challenge to the 'orthodoxy' and those who disagree, who form the majority. See in particular Cobbing, J., "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo", *JAH*, 29, 3 (1988), pp. 487-519, and, as a summation of the opposition, Peires, J.B., "Paradigm Deleted: the Materialist Interpretation of the Mfecane", *JSAS*, 19, 2 (1993), pp. 295-313.

⁶⁴ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 85. See also Kalusa, W.T., 'Elders, Young Men, and David Livingstone's "Civilizing Mission": Revisiting the Disintegration of the Kololo Kingdom, 1851-1864', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 42, 1 (2009), p. 61.

⁶⁵ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 85.

⁶⁶ See Geddes, A., *Journals of Andrew Geddes Bain* (Cape Town, 1949).

⁶⁷ A notable exception to the general consensus on the history of the Kololo, the most recent monograph on the subject, believes the Kololo to have arrived in Buluzi in the 1820s, to have established the first state there, and even to have derived their name from the *makolo*, which they instituted. In a similarly cavalier fashion, the *mfecane* is placed in the eighteenth century. This is all, to put it plainly, ludicrously wrong. Kayongo, K., *Reciprocity and Interdependence: the Rise and Fall of the Kololo Empire in Southern Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Lund, 1987).

⁶⁸ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, pp. 85-86.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷¹ 'Pardon the subjected and war down the proud'; Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.854.

after all, profoundly influenced by knowledge of the classical world.⁷² Whatever the case may be, Sebitwane's death only a few weeks after recounting this tale clearly affected Livingstone, who wrote of him as 'decidedly the best specimen of a native chief I ever met. I never felt so much grieved by the loss of a black man before'.⁷³ But before turning to the events which followed Sebitwane's death, we must first consider the nature of Kololo rule, their relationship with their subjected enemies and connections with the wider world. Two questions must be foremost in all of this. Why, having so easily conquered the kingdom, did Kololo suzerainty crumble in the face of a rebellion in as early as 1864? And given the centrality of slavery to the power of the kingdom under Mulambwa, as demonstrated by his refusal to trade with the Mambari, what part did slavery play in the history of the Kololo interregnum?

'The price of a boy was one old Portuguese musket': trading and raiding under the Kololo

The economy of the Kololo during their trek northwards, and during their time as masters of the Lozi kingdom was centred on raiding. But they had also incorporated large numbers of subjected peoples.⁷⁴ As an occupying force, the Kololo were inevitably permanently outnumbered by their subjects, both in the kingdom as a whole and even within the settlements they established.⁷⁵ To counteract this, some Lozi leaders were co-opted, and Sebitwane continued the same model of 'absorption on a large scale with the Makalaka', the contemptuous Kololo term for their subject peoples.⁷⁶ Even at the Kololo capital of Linyati, with a population 'numbering between six and seven thousand souls',⁷⁷ Lozi, Nyengo, Subiya, Kwanga, Tonga and Totela were in the majority.⁷⁸ The Kololo were divided by age-sets, a system that was part social and part military. Boys of a similar age would undergo circumcision together and form regiments in these groups.⁷⁹ Chiefs were appointed on the basis of their martial prestige, rather than their birth. This was, of course, a system which favoured a strong ruler, but to ensure the loyalty of these chiefs, much patronage was required. On the one hand, this patronage tended to bind the chiefs to the ruler, from whom they derived

⁷² Etherington, N., 'Barbarians Ancient and Modern', *American Historical Review*, 116, 1 (2011), pp. 31-57.

⁷³ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 90.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197

⁷⁵ A major caveat to anything we may say of the Kololo is the problem of identifying, barring major figures, who the majority of the Kololo actually were. First instance, only one of those who had accompanied Livingstone to Quelimane in 1855-1856 was Kololo, Gibbons, 'Explorations', p. 118. Of the sixteen 'Kololo' who accompanied Livingstone on his journey from Bulozhi to Tete in September-November 1860, only two or, at a push, three were Kololo proper, that is, Sotho; Clendennen, G.W., and Simpson, D.H., 'African Members of the Zambezi Expedition, 1861-1864: A Prosopographical Foray', *HIA*, 12 (1985), pp. 31, 45 fn. 17.

⁷⁶ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 197. On the *makalaka*, see also chapter 6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁷⁸ Kalusa, 'Elders, Young Men', p. 55. See also Flint, 'Historical constructions', p. 61.

⁷⁹ Ellenberger, D.F., *History of the Basuto, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1912), p. 283.

their wealth and ultimate authority. Yet at the same time, there was a latent tension within this system. The distribution of cattle and slaves also bolstered the wealth and following of individual chiefs. Should these chiefs be able to draw on sources of wealth outside of this network of patronage, not only would their own power vis-à-vis that of the ruler increase, but the bonds of patronage would potentially be broken.⁸⁰ What the Kololo needed, more than anything else, were the means with which to buy the loyalty of those who ruled for them. The Kololo do not appear to have harnessed the structures which had bound the kingdom together during Mulambwa's reign and before. Instead, they continued to operate a raiding economy, turning their attentions onto their newly won subjects. But they also turned to another source from which to obtain the goods necessary to prime the pumps of patronage.

In stark contrast to Mulambwa, the Kololo enjoyed active trade links with caravans from the west. A clear indication of this is the fact that, in as early as 1851, Livingstone remarked on the numbers of Kololo who sported European cloth. While Mulambwa had traded for European goods with the Luvale, they could not have been the suppliers of such quantities of imported goods.⁸¹ But while imported fabrics were clearly in demand, and conveyed considerable prestige, it was not bolts of cloth the Kololo wanted. Given the lessons learned at the hands of the Griqua and BaNgwaketse, and faced with the continued threat of Ndebele raids, what the Kololo wanted were guns. These the Kololo sought to obtain from the Mambari, whom Livingstone describes as residing 'near Bihe, under an Ambonda chief named Kangombe'.⁸² In Livingstone's version of events, having been sent packing by Mulambwa, the Mambari 'never came back again till 1850'.⁸³ Yet in a letter dating to early 1851, Oswell explained that Sebitwane had 'had traffic for the last three or four years' with them.⁸⁴ Oswell's dates roughly match those of the journey of Francisco Monteiro da Fonseca and Joaquim Mariano, the two *pombeiros* in the employ of Silva Porto mentioned earlier. And Mariano, in a letter of 1879 to Silva Porto, recalled that he had gone to 'Lui' to trade in '*marfim cera escravos*', that is to say, ivory, wax and slaves.⁸⁵ Flint suggests that it is likely that the entrance of the kingdom into long-distance trade networks may have been even earlier than this, but that the Kololo deliberately sought to conceal the length and extent of their involvement.⁸⁶ Whatever the date, the reason the Kololo might seek to conceal their involvement from

⁸⁰ Kalusa, 'Elders, Young Men', p. 62.

⁸¹ Chamberlin, D., (ed.), *Some Letters From Livingstone* (London, 1940), p. 155

⁸² Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 238.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸⁴ Oswell, W.E., *William Cotton Oswell*, vol. I (London, 1900), p. 230.

⁸⁵ 'Carta de Joaquim Mariano a Silva Porto com referências a contencimentos passados em 1847', in Maderia Santos, *Viagens*, p. 424.

⁸⁶ Flint, E., 'Trade and Politics in Barotseland during the Kololo Period', *JAH*, 11, 1 (1970), p. 72.

Livingstone is obvious enough: in the late 1840s and into the early 1850s, the Mambari would only exchange their wares for slaves.⁸⁷

On one occasion, Sebitwane exchanged '8 boys for the same number of guns, and four as presents.'⁸⁸ On another, '30 captives for three English muskets'.⁸⁹ On another, in return for the support of their guns in a raid on the Ila, the Mambari received 'all the captives' and the Kololo 'all the cattle....The Mambari rivetted [sic] the chains on the hands of the youths whom they procured, and departed with about 200 of them.'⁹⁰ Livingstone noted that the 'price of a boy was one old Portuguese musket or about 9 yards of cotton or baize',⁹¹ but elsewhere reported that the Mambari 'gave a piece of cotton cloth about 28 yards long for a man or boy.'⁹² In the latter instance, this price was paid by the same Mambari caravan that had taken part in the raid on the Ila. Their chattels in tow, they had moved north-north-west, where at this higher price they were able to 'collect very many slaves'.⁹³ It appears that they were by this stage on their return journey, and so perhaps having already obtained sufficient slaves by force rather than exchange, they were willing to part with their wares cheaply with a view to maximising their returns. There would have been little profit in carrying loads of cotton back with them.

Following Gann, Flint argued that having recognised the centrality of labour to harnessing the floodplain's rich environment, both the Kololo and Lozi were more concerned with importing labour than selling it.⁹⁴ As far as it applies to the Lozi, this is certainly correct. Flint then attempts to argue, drawing on Livingstone, that captives taken in Kololo raids were distributed among the population, rather than sold to slave traders.⁹⁵ But the three passages of Livingstone adduced in support of this argument only refer to female and child slaves.⁹⁶ In light of the above examples of the Kololo willingness to engage in the slave trade, it seems to be going rather too far to suggest that this indicates a general policy. In reality, this willing engagement reflects not only the Kololo desire for guns, but also a profound misunderstanding of the political economy of the floodplain. The interaction of these two factors is nowhere more clear than in the Kololo choice of capital. Sebitwane had first made his capital at Naliele,

⁸⁷ See Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 92, and *Private Journals*, pp. 42-43.

⁸⁸ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 43.

⁸⁹ Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence*, p. 183.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183 and *Private Journals*, p. 43.

⁹¹ Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence*, p. 183

⁹² Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 43.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹⁴ Flint, 'Trade and Politics', p. 75, referencing Gann, L. H. 'The end of the slave trade in British Central Africa', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal (RLJ)*, 16 (1954), pp. 38-39.

⁹⁵ Flint, 'Trade and Politics', pp. 75-76.

⁹⁶ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, pp. 234, 235, 251-252.

the 'grain store' of Mulambwa, but later removed to Linyati, in what is now the Caprivi strip. This was not, by most standards, a hospitable site. Livingstone thought the decision motivated by fear of attack, believing the fever-ridden swamps of this area, lying between the Chobe and Zambezi rivers, would provide some defence against incursions.⁹⁷ Flint, in contrast, doubted the defensive dimension to the decision, pointing out that the position could easily be flanked. The alternative rationale, he suggested, was that the motivation for the Kololo in basing themselves in the south, away from the plain, had more to do with internal than external threats.⁹⁸ This view has its merits, in particular the fact that the traditional north-south antagonism in Barotseland may have made southerners a more inviting proposition to live among than those from the heartland of the occupied kingdom. But it cannot entirely account for the Kololo persistence in living in such an unhealthy environment. To supply this explanation, we must return to the question of the Kololo desire for external trade, and to the period following Sebitwane's death.

Sebitwane was succeeded by his daughter Mamochisane, but by 1853 she had abdicated in favour of her brother Sekeletu, who Livingstone estimated as being around eighteen years old.⁹⁹ The young man seems to have been an unwilling candidate and an unpopular one, at least amongst the more senior men who also aspired to the throne. The insecurity of Sekeletu's position and the unfavourable terms of trade he received in Buluzi encouraged him to both support Livingstone's attempt to open an alternative trade route to the west coast and to remain firmly in Linyati, close to the source of goods, in particular guns, and thus in control of the flow of patronage.¹⁰⁰ Major changes beyond Sekeletu's borders reinforced this dynamic. First, with the independence of Brazil from Portugal in 1822, demand for slaves on the Atlantic dropped and Portugal alone proved a poor market. Then, twelve years later, the abolition of the Portuguese royal monopoly on ivory led to a major shift in the nature of long-distance trade. Rising profits placed Buluzi within the limits of profitable ivory trading networks.¹⁰¹ This is not to say that slave trading ceased. In 1853, for instance, we are told that the Mambari 'carried off between 300 & 400 slaves.'¹⁰² Still, for other traders, most notably Silva Porto, who paid his first personal visit to Buluzi in the same year, the region became the 'Eldorado of Ivory'.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 91.

⁹⁸ Flint, 'Historical constructions', p. 69.

⁹⁹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁰¹ Flint, 'Trade and Politics', p. 76

¹⁰² Livingstone, *Missionary Correspondence*, p. 12.

¹⁰³ von Oppen, *Terms of Trade*, p. 71.

Sekeletu continued to receive tribute from the subject tribes, but by 1860 the ivory trade had become his primary source of income. So valuable was this trade that it was declared that ‘All the ivory of the country...belongs to the chief.’¹⁰⁴ To the east, in the Batoka country, the Kololo traded iron hoes, much in demand, for ivory, which was plentiful, further securing their supply and snatching an opportunity from west coast traders.¹⁰⁵ Linyati, and nearby Sesheke, thus became the hub of the ivory trade, visited by traders from both coasts and the south.¹⁰⁶ Sekeletu became a ‘great horse-fancier’ and served ‘excellent American biscuits and preserved fruits.’ Fashion, particularly in beads, became ‘as despotic...as in London and Paris.’¹⁰⁷ The attractions of an otherwise deeply unattractive place, Linyati, are thus clear to see. Consumption was conspicuous, and most enjoyed by those closest to the person of the king, for he was building a bulwark against his rivals. But the latent tensions within the Kololo system of patronage were beginning to force their way to the surface of politics. Holding the monopoly on ivory left dealing in slaves as the one major, if rather diminishing, opportunity for members of the Kololo elite to access guns and imported goods. Seeking to secure his control over external trade, in 1853 Sekeletu outlawed raiding and the slave trade. While this ban would barely impact Sekeletu’s position, it greatly eroded those of potential rivals who were growing in power. In the same year, for instance, Sekeletu clashed with Mpepe, governor of Naliele and Sebitwane’s nephew. Lured to a meeting with Sekeletu and Livingstone under false pretences, Mpepe was dragged away and killed.¹⁰⁸ Shortly thereafter, Sekeletu had Mpepe’s father and another headman who supported him ‘hewn down and their bodies deposited...to be the food of alligators.’¹⁰⁹ But Sekeletu found he could not rely on those he had once trusted, for by 1858 he placed Mpololo, Mpepe’s replacement and the man he relied upon to interdict the slave trade, first on his list of enemies.¹¹⁰ Thus from the primary means for the Kololo to gain access to firearms, and a means to reinforce the power of the centre, slaves and the trade in them had become a serious threat to Sekeletu’s position.

By this stage, it was not only the health of Sekeletu’s reign which was waning, for by the time of Livingstone’s arrival in 1860, the Kololo king was suffered from leprosy. This he attributed to the malign influence of his rivals, and made himself yet more unpopular by executing those he blamed for his affliction.¹¹¹ Moreover, a ‘large body of young Barotse had

¹⁰⁴ Livingstone, *Narrative*, p. 288.

¹⁰⁵ Livingstone, *Narrative*, pp. 276-277. This policy, Livingstone claimed, was instituted at his suggestion. Livingstone, ‘Explorations into the Interior’, p. 357. See p. 96.

¹⁰⁶ Flint, ‘Trade and Politics’, pp. 83-84.

¹⁰⁷ Livingstone, *Narrative*, pp. 276-277.

¹⁰⁸ For the former see Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 183. For the latter, *Missionary Travels*, p. 182.

¹⁰⁹ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 201.

¹¹⁰ Silva Porto, *Viagens* (1942), p. 154.

¹¹¹ Livingstone, *Narrative*, p. 270. See also Mainga, p. 95.

revolted and fled to the north'; the Tonga chiefs Siaminwe and Mweemba had declared themselves independent; at Victoria Falls, Musokotwane 'was setting Sekeletu's authority virtually at defiance'. All in all, Livingstone reported, 'Sebit[w]ane's grand empire was crumbling to pieces.'¹¹² When Sekeletu died in 1863, tensions within the kingdom exploded into civil war. Sekeletu's supporters in the south favoured his son, a minor, and the regency of Mpololo over him. Ranged against them were the old guard Kololo, some former comrades of Sebitwane, who held territorial power in the rest of the kingdom and backed Sekeletu's uncle Mamidi Bogatsu. The dead king's monopoly of trade, particularly in guns, weighed heavily in the outcome. Mpololo's supporters' firepower put their enemies to flight.¹¹³ Mpololo then set about eradicating his internal opponents, and in January 1864 advanced north to Naliele, putting down enemies on the line of march. Aware that the conflict presented a golden opportunity for the Lozi who had remained in the plain to reassert themselves Mpololo ordered that all the sons of Lozi chiefs be put to the sword.¹¹⁴ But weakened by civil war, having forged few bonds with the conquered population and alienated those members of the Lozi elite who had not gone into exile, the position of Mpololo was precarious. The Lozi groups in exile were waiting in the wings.

These groups remained as divided as they had been when they first fled the plain. Among the Nyengo faction, internecine conflicts had erupted in 1855. A failed plot, aimed at deposing Imbua while he was away attacking the Lukwakwa faction of Imasiku, forced Mebelo, Mando and Litia, with his son Lubosi, to seek refuge with Sekeletu.¹¹⁵ Four years later, Mebelo and Mando, having displeased Sekeletu, were executed. In turn Sipopa and Sibeso, who had been captured during the Kololo invasion, fled to Lukwakwa. Following disagreements there, Sibeso returned again to the plain but was executed, alongside Litia, by Mpololo. At Lukwakwa, the Mbunda had remained loyal to the line of Mulambwa. But Imasiku's participation in slave-dealing perhaps proved a step too far, for they supported the deposing and execution of Imasiku and installed Sipopa in his place, with Njekwa as his *Ngambela*.¹¹⁶ It was this faction that seized the opportunity of the chaos engendered by the Kololo civil war. In September 1864 these Lozi rose against the Kololo, under the leadership of Njekwa. It is commonly said that a general massacre of the Kololo then ensued. Even the most recent account of these events asserts that, having defeated Mpololo, the Lozi executed

¹¹² Livingstone, *Narrative*, p. 272.

¹¹³ This is not to say that the Kololo were in possession of vast numbers of firearms, but that disproportionate armaments tend to significantly affect outcomes. Kalusa, 'Elders, Young Men', p. 76. See also Macola, G., 'Reassessing the significance of firearms in Central Africa: The case of North-Western Zambia to the 1920s', *JAH*, 51, 3 (2010), pp. 301-321.

¹¹⁴ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 93.

¹¹⁵ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 263.

¹¹⁶ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 93; Livingstone, *African Journal*, p. 24.

him, and captured and enslaved the Kololo women and children. Then, turning on the Kololo men, the ‘insurgents annihilated them almost to the last man.’¹¹⁷ Taken at face value, this account of a wholesale butchering of the Kololo seems rather far-fetched.¹¹⁸ Hitherto, historians have relied entirely on Lozi tradition or on accounts received at second or third hand, but there is another account, closer to the events, which, perhaps contrary to expectations, seems to entirely confirm the dramatic Lozi version of events.¹¹⁹

‘This terrible catastrophe for the Macarrollo tribe’: the Lozi *reconquista*

Silva Porto was, for present purposes, sadly absent at the moment of action. Four years later, however, he recounted in his journals what he knew of events. He had left Barotseland in August 1864, but being delayed by his porters, he had spent a few days ‘in common conviviality with Borollo [Mpololo] and his family, then the *Regente* of this beautiful country... We could hardly foresee then that a month later a revolution would be realised...which brought to power the current soba Chipopa [Sipopa] under the auspices of the most horrendous slaughter.’ This, then, places the uprising not, as hitherto believed, in August 1864, but rather in September.¹²⁰ This ‘terrible catastrophe for the Macarrollo tribe’, wrote Silva Porto,

only spared some women who willingly accepted the new order of things, giving themselves voluntarily to the hands of those who the day before bowed to serve their rule, and who in the short space of twenty four hours, changing the roles, passed from slaves to lords. Excepting these, the massacre was widespread, not sparing even breastfeeding babies.¹²¹

This information, he reported, was given to him by Antonio Mauricio de Faria, who Silva Porto had left in the company of José Corrêa do Sacramento.¹²² The latter, of ‘more robust constitution’, had ‘succumbed to the massacre defending the person of the *Regente*’. According to de Faria’s account, his final words were ‘Jesus! Our Lord!’, while the Kololo women, ‘offering the left side of their chests said, “Here killers! Kill us!! Because we don’t want to be outraged!!!”’¹²³ This dramatic account certainly lends weight to the idea of a

¹¹⁷ Kalusa, ‘Elders, Young Men’, pp. 70, 80.

¹¹⁸ See, for instance, Flint, ‘Trade and Politics’, p. 76.

¹¹⁹ Mainga, for instance, refers to Jalla and quotes the letter of an LMS missionary. Mainga, *Bulozi*, pp. 96-97.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹²¹ Silva Porto, ‘Viagens’, vol. 5, 15 August 1868.

¹²² I have found no further information on these two men, likely to have been *pombeiros*.

¹²³ Silva Porto, ‘Viagens’, vol. 5, 15 August 1868.

wholesale massacre. What is certain is that, as Silva Porto observes, the Lozi passed in this moment from being slaves to lords once more.

Before turning to the events that followed the Lozi *reconquista*, it is worth drawing together the strands which we have been tracing thus far. As we saw in the section on the reign of Mulambwa and his predecessors, while the history of the Lozi kingdom before the nineteenth century appears to have been one of expansion and consolidation, this depended on a number of crucial factors. First, any ruler had to be able to keep the lid on the aspirations of potential claimants to the throne. This was achieved by controlling the *makolo* through which the labour and tribute of the kingdom flowed. In essence, to control the resources of the plain was to control the kingdom. In pursuit of this control, labour and, increasingly, slavery became central to both the Lozi economy and the centralising ambitions of Lozi kings more generally. Supporting these ambitions were the other institutions of state, in particular the bureaucratic aristocracy which depended upon the *Litunga* for their land, positions and power. But political fault lines existed, both between Namuso and Lwambi and in the balance between the power of the *Litunga* and his *manduna*. It was these fault lines which had weakened the kingdom and opened the door to the Kololo.

Under the Kololo, tribute remained important to feed networks of patronage, but the Kololo did not harness the floodplain as their predecessors had done. More important during this period was the growth of external trade. Whereas in the early period, and in direct contradiction to the time of Mulambwa, the Kololo were willing to trade in slaves to obtain firearms, it was soon ivory which became the most highly prized trade good. That the bulk of the Kololo remained in the unhealthy environment of the Caprivi Strip shows the importance placed upon this trade, and of the comparative abundance of ivory in this area. The threats posed to Sekeletu by both Kololo rivals and antagonistic subject peoples in the plain merely reinforced this. If a strong ruler, like Sebitwane and Mulambwa before him, could master political challenges to his rule, then the wealth of the plain held out great opportunity. Its ecological specificity had, after all, been the key to the earlier growth of the kingdom and its predominance over the surrounding peoples. But the Kololo, unlike Mulambwa, never harnessed this wealth to the needs of their state, instead seeking to extract cattle, ivory and slaves to feed external trade and bonds of patronage. The success of the renewed Lozi kingdom would depend on the reinvigoration of the fundamental structures of the Lozi state. As we saw above, the restored *Litunga*, Sipopa, had been captured in his youth by the Kololo. He had in fact become a favourite of Sebitwane. Following his account of Sebitwane's life, Livingstone noted in his journal that Sipopa, 'son of Seunturu, the chief of the Borotse whom he expelled,

lived with him and he gave him a gun before he had given any to the Basuto.¹²⁴ We do not know if this gift was still in Sipopa's possession upon his triumphal return to the plain, but, as we shall see, the legacy of the Kololo interregnum would profoundly mark the kingdom.

'The *soba* came this morning to the *establicimento*': trade, politics and conflict under Sipopa¹²⁵

Silva Porto was the first literate observer to visit the kingdom following the installation of Sipopa in 1864. His impressions of the new Lozi dispensation from 1865 cast important new light on this hitherto unknown period. Silva Porto arrived at the mouth of the Zambezi on the 24th of October 1865, where he awaited permission from the '*soba da terra*', or chief of the land, for permission to set up his *establicimento*.¹²⁶ Three days later, having received permission, he crossed the Zambezi by canoe and took shelter at the house of Bonifácio José Rosquete and Guilherme José Gonçalves, who had left shortly before.¹²⁷ His first encounter with Sipopa, or, as he spelt it in his journals, 'Xipopa', proved to be a warm one, despite some initial reservations on the part of the chief. Silva Porto recorded that he was the last son of 'Santurro', was at the most thirty years old, and spoke, not only 'the same language as the Macorrollos', but also that of the 'people of the land', that is to say, Siluyana, and also 'ganguella' and 'quimbundo'.¹²⁸ Indeed, Silva Porto was much struck by the polyglot kingdom he encountered, a 'true Babel of languages in the land of west central Africa.' Sikololo, the language of the Kololo, was the most widespread, but the inhabitants switched between this and Siluyana, Kimbunda, Siluvale and a numbers of others at a moment's notice, demanding 'great perspicacity on the part of any foreign spectator, in order to say to which tribe the language in questions corresponds.'¹²⁹ But the legacy of the Kololo was more than just language, for Silva Porto believed the people had inherited 'totally the habits of the Macorrollos'.¹³⁰ Sipopa, for instance, married the daughter and chosen successor of Sebitwane, Mamochisane, an act which gained him 'considerable prestige, even among his own people'; in 1876, Holub recorded that Sipopa's favoured wife, Lunga, was Kololo and

¹²⁴ Livingstone, *Private Journals*, p. 26. Sipopa is variously described as the son or grandson of Mulambwa.

¹²⁵ The quote comes from Silva Porto, 'Viagens', vol. 5, 7 September 1868.

¹²⁶ An *establicimento*, Silva Porto's variant spelling on the modern Portuguese *estabelecimento*, or establishment, here means a trading camp. Silva Porto, 'Viagens', vol. 3, 24-25 October 1865.

¹²⁷ Madeira Santos called Gonçalves, ten years Silva Porto's senior and a man of some experience, the 'doyen of the *sertanejos*'. See Maderia Santos, *Viagens*, pp. 150, n. 5, 164.

¹²⁸ Silva Porto, 'Viagens', vol. 3, 25 November 1865. The 'ganguella' or Ganguela language is similar to both Nkoya and languages in Eastern Angola, van Binsbergen, *Tears of Rain*, pp. 16-17. 'Quimbundo', presumably refers to Umbundu, spoken by the Ovimbundu, although may be Kimbundu, spoken by the Mbundu of Angola.

¹²⁹ Silva Porto, 'Viagens', vol. 4, 6 May 1867.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 27 December 1865.

that his daughter had married a Kololo of the name of Manengo.¹³¹ But if Sipopa maintained some of the outward manifestations of the Kololo era, he had not forgotten the past.

On one occasion, Sipopa spoke to Silva Porto of the ‘power of his ancestors’, who possessed cattle in such number that they carpeted the earth. This Silva Porto was ready to believe, if the size of the herds presently in the valley were anything to go by.¹³² And it was not only cattle that were in plentiful supply, for ‘all the necessary resources for life are found as in no other places in this continent, because it has cattle in abundance, game of all species, fish, and grains of various qualities.’¹³³ It appears that, in sharp contrast to the time of the Kololo, who used to ‘seize on them like wolves’, the people of the plain found that life was safer under the new dispensation. Whereas before Silva Porto had rarely met a soul in the bush or open fields, just two years after the revolt, people were ‘found in all directions’ and could be seen cultivating.¹³⁴ He was also alive to, and much put out by, the fact that differential exchange favoured the valley. The ‘beads and other objects’ he was able to trade on the margins to some advantage were useless in the valley, where the only thing of ‘real value [is] cloth, but it needs to be at least two *pannos* or yards’.¹³⁵ Put simply, as had been true before the Kololo interregnum, the valley remained a focal point for exchange and at an advantage over the surrounding areas.

This was reinforced by another central feature of Sipopa’s reign illuminated by Silva Porto’s account: the effort to re-establish pre-existing tributary networks. In late 1865, Silva Porto witnessed a deputation of Luvale men bearing a tribute of dried manioc to the *Litunga*, for they had ‘nothing else to pay as tribute because they [had been] subjugated by the defunct Borollo.’¹³⁶ In return, Sipopa tried to ‘court the benevolence of all those who come to bring him tribute, reciprocating with cloth and other objects’, killing cattle and also making gifts of livestock. This, Silva Porto thought, would stand Sipopa in good stead, even though he also remarked that the ‘power of the *soba* around here is not of long duration.’¹³⁷ On one occasion, some years later, Sipopa begged extra cloth from Silva Porto ‘to distribute to his own people because he had started with people from other places.’¹³⁸ Two days later, further tribute arrived

¹³¹ Mackenzie, J. *Ten Years North of the Orange River A Story of Everyday Life and Work among the South African Tribes from 1859-1869* (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 244. Holub, *Seven Years*, vol. II, pp. 221, 228. Unless otherwise stated, volume II of Holub is referred to hereafter.

¹³² Silva Porto, ‘Viagens’, vol. 4, 3 June 1867.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 13 August 1868.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 1 June 1866.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 June 1867.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 11 November 1865.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, 12 November 1865.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 17 June 1867.

from the Mashukulumbwe, who brought ‘tobacco, salt, bracelets or wristbands of ivory and mpande shells’. Clearly, Sipopa was going to some length and expense to re-establish the networks of exchange that had held together the state of his ancestors. The tribute bearers prostrated themselves, offering prayers and clapping their hands, and in turn Sipopa ordered a bull be given to them to feast upon.¹³⁹ And Sipopa shared his tribute with Silva Porto, both the meat and fish of the plain and things like honey, from the margins.¹⁴⁰

It was ivory, more than anything else, that Silva Porto was in search of. At their first meeting, he gave Sipopa the gifts he had brought for Mpololo, handing them over ‘one by one, in order to make it obvious’.¹⁴¹ Returning the courtesy, Sipopa brought with him some ivory and cattle.¹⁴² Sipopa also sent Silva Porto a ‘*moleca* for my service’, but the Portuguese sent back the slave woman ‘in order not to get used to his gifts.’¹⁴³ On Silva Porto’s return in 1866, he was ‘beautifully received’ and given ‘2 ivory tusks of 80 to 90 pounds each, and two cows which I ordered to be slaughtered and distributed among my people.’¹⁴⁴ Sipopa was again similarly generous in 1867.¹⁴⁵ But it appears that, from the outset, Sipopa was rather reticent to trade for the cloth that Silva Porto had brought with him, for within two weeks of their first meeting he was already wondering whether the ivory due to him was simply ‘yet to arrive’, or ‘still in the mouth of the elephants.’¹⁴⁶ Indeed, on several occasions, he resorted to purchasing ivory in secret from hunters. Such ivory was by law ‘contraband and this is of such importance that it is punished with the death sentence’.¹⁴⁷ Thus it appears that Sipopa maintained the monopoly on ivory of his Kololo predecessors. Like them, what he wanted the ivory for was guns, and he was looking to expand his access to them. But to examine this more closely, we must widen our focus.

In 1865 word reached Silva Porto of a party of ‘English *sertanjeos*’ in the ‘lands of Guiceque’, or Sesheke. The ‘sobeta’ or sub-chief of that place had been trading with them, but

¹³⁹ Ibid., 19 June 1867.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 3, 11, 7 December 1865.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., vol. 3, 28 October 1865.

¹⁴² Ibid., vol. 3, 2 November 1865.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 4 November 1865. *Moleca* and the masculine *moleque* are derived from the Kimbunda word *muleke*, and appears to have entered Portuguese official discourse in the seventeenth century. While originally a term used to refer to children or young adults, by the early nineteenth century, it was generally applied to all slaves. See Miller, *Way of Death*, pp. 68, 338. n. 43. See also Guy, G., ‘Muitas Línguas. The Linguistic Impact of African in Colonial Brazil’, in Curto, J.E., and Lovejoy, P., (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil during the Era of Slavery* (New York, 2004), p. 134, and Sweet, J.H., *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill, 2003), p. 242, n. 38.

¹⁴⁴ Silva Porto, ‘Viagens’, vol. 4, 18 May 1866.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 1 May 1867.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., vol. 3, 8 November 1865.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 5, 2 August 1868, vol. 4, 22 June 1867.

he had only sent Sipopa two horses, ‘when he had bought seven, some barrels of gunpowder and some small quantities of ivory without guns and cloth.’ This withholding of tribute flouted Sipopa’s authority, only newly established. Moreover, the reason the sub-chief gave for his actions was even more audacious. He said he had been, so Silva Porto reported, ‘a long time ... in the service of the Macorrolos, to whom he had always been faithful.’ Now, in the same way that ‘Sipopa found himself in possession, he, Xipatorhana [Sipatonyana], who is of the Guete tribe...would take charge of the lands that he was administering and that belonged to him by birth.’¹⁴⁸ Just over a week later, word reached Sipopa that a force was headed towards the plain. Sipopa had the *maoma*, royal drums and the symbol of *bulena*, beaten to call the people to arms. Silva Porto cut a flag pole and raised the Portuguese flag, his heart rejoicing in ‘seeing the flag in the wind which, in happier times, had become the fear of the world.’ Sipopa was busy marshalling his troops, who performed ‘offensive and defensive exercises using the arms that they have, knobkerries, axes and assegais’. Silva Porto thought they would be no match for a party of European hunters, for firearms are conspicuously absent in this account.¹⁴⁹ This did not, however, prevent Sipopa from putting down the revolt. Indeed, so successful was this campaign that it is said to have penetrated as far as present-day Kalomo. Two years later Silva Porto records that the ‘Guete’ were bringing tribute like other subject peoples.¹⁵⁰ By the following year, in contrast to the above account, Silva Porto recorded that he had observed ‘exercises made by the soba...with some of his weapons, and some firearms as well that they loaded and fired at intervals.’¹⁵¹ Again, a year later, he saw guns further in evidence.¹⁵² It appears that Sipopa had struck up trade with the ‘English’ who had earlier traded with the rebellious Sipatonyana.¹⁵³ Sipopa now had the choice between traders from the Atlantic coast, and traders from the south. And he put the firearms he obtained to good use, for by 1868 he was raiding ‘the tribe of the land named Malundos, which is located to the east of Guiceque’, seizing slaves, ivory and cattle.¹⁵⁴ All of this demonstrates that Sipopa had set about systematically restoring the pre-Kololo networks of tribute and raiding with outlying peoples.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., vol. 3, 7, 26 November 1865. ‘Xipatorhana’, or Sipatonyana, was in fact a Toka-Leya chief. Silva Porto himself lends weight to this, explaining elsewhere that the name ‘Guete’ was coterminous with ‘Baleia’, or the land of the Leya. See da Silva Porto, *Silva Porto e Livingstone*, p. 51; Mainga, *Bulozi*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁴⁹ Silva Porto, ‘Viagens’, vol. 3, 17 December 1865.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. 5, 9 September 1868.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., vol. 4, 8 June 1867.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 28 August 1868.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 10 September 1868.

What Silva Porto's journals do not record, however, is what Sipopa did with the structures of the kingdom over which he ruled. Fortunately, the next literate observer of the kingdom was more interested in the machinery of government. Holub records a conversation he held with Sipopa, in which he 'gathered some information about the constitution of the country and the ranks of the officials.' These details provide our earliest guide to the Lozi state under Sipopa. The hierarchy, Holub wrote,

may be divided into four classes; first, the officers of state; secondly, the koshi or viceroys of the tribes in the different provinces; thirdly, the kosanas or makosanas, sub-chieftains who serve under the koshi; and lastly, the personal attendants of the king, whose rank may be said to be intermediate between the two latter classes.

This bears only a loose resemblance to what we know of the pre-Kololo Lozi institutions. 'Koshi', 'kosana', and 'makosana' are Sesotho words meaning prince and chief, and their use by Sipopa indicates the influence of the Kololo territorial structure on his own form of government.¹⁵⁵ But Sipopa was also reported to have an 'Inkambella' (read *Ngambela*), described as 'the head governor of the Barotse' and both 'a privy-council and a general council'.¹⁵⁶ Holub's account thus appears to depict the Lozi government in a period of fusion, with earlier Lozi institutions being welded onto a Kololo territorial structure. Sipopa had, after all, spent his formative years in the *manus* of Sebitwane and Sekeletu. He had also learned the lesson of the Mubukwanu-Silumelume conflict which had opened the door to the Kololo. He installed his sister Kandundu, disqualified by gender from the *bulena*, as the *Mulena Mukwae*, or chieftainess at Lwambi. Upon her death in 1871, Sipopa replaced her with his daughter Kaiko.¹⁵⁷

But Sipopa's centralizing efforts did not end the factionalism that had blighted Lozi politics. In 1869 the rump of the Lukwakwa faction made an unsuccessful attempt on the throne, largely a result of the intercession of Njekwa. Fearing the growing influence of the man who put him on the throne, in 1871, Sipopa forced Njekwa to marry his daughter Kaiko. The marriage failed, and Njekwa, having first fled, threw himself on the mercy of Sipopa. When he died shortly thereafter foul play was suspected, and Njekwa's brothers escaped south in fear of their lives.¹⁵⁸ Following a largely fruitless attack on the Lukwakwa faction, by this time led by Imbua, Sipopa found himself increasingly isolated by his own sectarian politics

¹⁵⁵ See Casalis, A, *English-Sotho vocabulary* (Moriija, 1905), s.v. *Chief, Prince*.

¹⁵⁶ Holub, *Seven Years*, pp. 238-240.

¹⁵⁷ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 114.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

and declining influence in the plain.¹⁵⁹ Like the Kololo before him, Sipopa moved his capital south, in 1874. As Holub explained two years later, there was a reason beyond his unpopularity which drove the move to Sesheke. Silva Porto had by this time left the kingdom, and Sipopa had grown increasingly unsatisfied with the Angolan traders who remained. Their goods he found 'to be of very inferior quality...accordingly he was anxious to make a move that would bring him into nearer connexion with the traders from the south'.¹⁶⁰ But as we shall see in the next chapter, Sipopa did not eschew all contact with his former trading partners. As for the traders from the south, there was one in particular that Sipopa wished to be near.

George Westbeeck Cobb, an English adventurer and trader, by all accounts lived a dramatic life. Emigrating to Natal in 1862, he soon struck up a partnership with George Arthur 'Elephant' (on account of his size and volume) Phillips, and the pair hunted and traded in Matabeleland.¹⁶¹ Westbeeck had attended the coronation of the Ndebele chief Lobenguela, with whom he enjoyed a good working relationship, as he had with his father Mzilikazi.¹⁶² In 1871, while Phillips remained in the south, Westbeeck journeyed north. Arriving at the Zambezi, he was met by Sipopa, retinue in train, and spent half a year trading. He apparently profited to the tune of £12,000 from this journey alone.¹⁶³ Returning in 1872, Westbeeck established himself south of the Zambezi and came to be a trusted advisor to Sipopa. He was a member of the *Lealui kuta* and the recognised headman of Pandamatenga, where his establishment was based. In Barotseland he was known *Georosiana Umutunya*, or 'Great George'.¹⁶⁴

Westbeeck had been lured to the confluence of the Chobe and Zambezi rivers by the promise of rich stocks of ivory. Sipopa, on the other hand, was attracted by Westbeeck's goods, reputedly of superior quality to those imported by the Ovimbundu traders.¹⁶⁵ As had been the case before, what Sipopa sought was guns, and he made repeated visits to Westbeeck 'always accompanied by a number of servants bringing great quantities of ivory, which he bartered...for guns and ammunition.'¹⁶⁶ Sipopa's was on another occasion 'very anxious' to inspect a shipment of Westbeeck's, having heard that it included a 'considerable number of

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁶⁰ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 134. See also Arnot, F. S., *Missionary Travels in Central Africa* (London 1914), p.22.

¹⁶¹ Sampson, R., *The man with a Toothbrush in his Hat: the story and times of George Copp Westbeeck in Central Africa* (Lusaka, 1972), p. 6.

¹⁶² Tabler, *Trade and Travel*, p. 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 113.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

elephant-guns.¹⁶⁷ Holub estimated that, by the time of his visit in 1875, ‘the number of guns that had been introduced into the country from the south and west amounted to 500 flint muskets, 1,500 ordinary percussion muskets, eighty percussion elephant-guns, 150 rifles, thirty double-barrelled guns of various sorts, ten breech-loaders, and three revolvers.’¹⁶⁸ Sipopa sought to assert a monopoly on the trade in guns, as he had over the trade in ivory, and employed professional hunters to seek it out. To these hunters he lent arms, liable to be recalled if he so wished.¹⁶⁹ The move south placed Sipopa close to the ivory supplies which he depended upon. Relying on the testimony of a descendant of Sipopa and ‘another unrelated modern informant’, Prins considered Holub was in error in stating that Sipopa moved south to trade. Instead, Prins surmised, he had gone there to hunt elephants.¹⁷⁰ But these are not contradictory explanations. While he may have enjoyed the sport, Sipopa wanted the ivory. The traders converged on the point where the trade was richest, and it was no coincidence that this was where the game was plentiful, and where the king resided. To the north, in Luvale country, elephants had been shot out or driven off rapidly in the 1840s.¹⁷¹ But as late as 1875, large numbers of elephants were still reported in the ‘angle where Chobe and Zambezi join’.¹⁷² As an indication of the intensity of demand for ivory, and the hunting of it, what was once rich ivory territory at Linyati had, by the late 1880s, been largely shot out, and the trade was becoming less profitable generally.¹⁷³ In a process which had begun during the Kololo era, ivory replaced slaves as the principal object of trade. By then, even if slaves had been offered, they would have hardly been eagerly purchased, for what Sebitwane and Sekeletu, and Sipopa after them, had all wanted more than anything else were guns. Despite the slow decline in the supply of ivory during his reign, Sipopa nevertheless amassed considerable wealth and a substantial arsenal. Those chiefs he had subjected in the east continued to render unto Sipopa, but, particularly after his move south, he increasingly lost control of his subjects in the plain, from whom he found it near impossible to extract tribute.¹⁷⁴ His apparent inability to make himself the master of the plain would have predictable consequences.

Recognising that without reasserting himself in the plain Sipopa would lose his throne, his *Ngambela* Mamili, who had replaced Njekwa, advised him to return.¹⁷⁵ Fearing, as in the case of Njekwa, the popularity of Mamili, Sipopa had him and several other *manduna* tried

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 217.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 341-342.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 142, 147, 160-161, 200.

¹⁷⁰ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 30.

¹⁷¹ Madeira Santos, *Viagens*, p. 83.

¹⁷² Tabler, *Trade and Travel*, p. 110.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 85, 92.

¹⁷⁴ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. p. 146.

¹⁷⁵ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 113.

for treason. They were acquitted, but fled fearing the king's wrath.¹⁷⁶ Mamili returned at the head of a rebel force, and in 1876 ousted Sipopa. The deposed king headed south towards Linyati, in the company of his adopted son Lubosi, son of Litia, who had been killed in 1863 on Mpololo's orders. Sipopa received a gunshot wound during his escape and, separated from Lubosi, eventually succumbed to his wounds near Kazangula. His other adopted son, Mwanawina, son of the Sibeso who had been killed like Litia, remained near Sesheke. It was to Mwanawina, as a *nabi* and thus qualified to hold the *bulena*, that Mamili gave the throne.¹⁷⁷ Mwanawina, said to be but 17 on his accession, did not remain on the throne long.¹⁷⁸ Mamili's overweening claims to precedence alienated both the *manduna* and Mwanawina, and he was soon killed alongside his brothers and children. Mwanawina installed his young sister at Lwambi, with his mother as regent, and is said to have deposed 'the relatives and friends of his father', all from the north, in favour of his maternal relations who were southerners.¹⁷⁹ This reignited the Namuso-Lwambi divide, and under cover of a campaign against the Ila, three northern groups, commanded by Mukubesa, Mataa and Numwa, converged on Mwanawina who fled, first towards Sesheke and then east. United in opposition and divided in victory, these groups favoured different candidates for the throne. Mataa favoured Musiwa, a son of Sipopa, popular with sections of the Mbunda. Mukubesa and Numwa favoured Lubosi. So too did the family of Njekwa, in particular Silumbu, brother to the dead hero of the *reconquista*. Celerity was all, and the faction which secured the *maoma* secured the throne. Lubosi, son of the murdered Litia and adopted son of Sipopa, was installed in 1878 at Namoyamenenwa, and his sister Matauka became of ruler of Lwambi. Lubosi, or 'the man with the powerful grip', would need all of his strength to keep his throne.¹⁸⁰ He would go on to be known by the name Lubosi Lewanika.¹⁸¹

Throughout the history of the Lozi kingdom there run a number of threads which weave in and out of each other, some rising to the surface, others receding temporarily before coming to the fore once more. In charting the turbulent history of the nineteenth century, several of these have been evident. Buluzi was a kingdom riven by factionalism, divided between the north and south and with an often fractious population. It was a kingdom threatened by internal and external enemies, fuelled by tribute and trade, and plundered for them. But in all this turmoil, it must be remembered that this only scratches the surface of what life was like for the overwhelming majority of the people who lived through these events.

¹⁷⁶ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. pp. 284-285, 365-367.

¹⁷⁷ Mainga, *Bulozi*, pp. 113, 116.

¹⁷⁸ Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, vol. II, p. 16. Unless otherwise stated, volume II of Serpa Pinto is referred to hereafter.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸⁰ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 30.

¹⁸¹ On his name, see chap. 7.

Times we perceive as of great insecurity may have barely affected those at a distance from the epicentre, and what appear to have been periods of consolidation may in fact have encompassed pockets of turmoil. That we have been able, in a few places, to see beyond the deeds of the powerful or notable is fortunate. Here we refer, of course, to slaves. We have seen the burden borne by slaves in the construction of Mulambwa's kingdom. We have seen the part the slave trade played during the Kololo interregnum. As raiders of cattle and men, predation by the occupiers must have grown under the Kololo, and what Livingstone witnessed was probably a fraction of the whole. If the Mambari fought to such effect alongside the Kololo when raiding the Ila, their firepower would have made independent small-scale raiding highly effective and difficult to prevent. Sipopa seems to have attempted to reverse the policy of the Kololo, and to re-establish the structures of the pre-Kololo kingdom, but he also made many of the same mistakes, and for the same reasons. He did not, as Mulambwa had done, bar the way to external trade, for by Sipopa's time it was not slaves, but ivory that traders sought. In return he received firearms in substantial quantities. But these did not, in the end, secure his position. Indeed, so unpopular had Sipopa and his guns become that in the rebellion against his rule, 'the great bulk of these were thrown into the Zambezi by the people'.¹⁸² What has been said of slavery here has been necessarily impressionistic. In the next chapter, the position of slaves within Lozi society will be dealt with in detail.

¹⁸² Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 342.

‘When you are a slave you cannot refuse’: the place and meaning of slavery in the Lozi kingdom

Chapter 4 was concerned with the interactions between environment and agency in the shaping of the Lozi kingdom and introduced the subject of chapter 5, which focused on the fundamental structures of the Lozi state and the vital importance of harnessing the unique environment of the plain to their evolution. The truth of this was demonstrated repeatedly in the political history of the Lozi to the late nineteenth century. It was also clear that this crucial factor depended upon the ability of the Lozi elite to mobilise and direct the labour of their subjects. This chapter examines in detail the place of slaves in the Lozi kingdom in the nineteenth century. As observed, while the limitations of the sources force one to deal with slavery as an institution, one can also begin to see something of the process of slavery and to get a sense of the experience of slavery for both masters and slaves. In order to make the best use of the material available, the sources have been approached with a few simple questions in mind. First, where did the slaves come from? Second, what types of slaves were there? That is to say, was there much, if any, differentiation between slaves? Finally, what meaning did slavery have in Lozi society? The pursuit of answers to these questions will of necessity require a sustained engagement with Prins’ model. The central objective of this will be not only to demonstrate its fundamental flaws, but to advance an alternative which foregrounds the fact that Lozi understandings of slavery were above all predicated on notions of foreignness. Given the origins of Lozi slaves, described in the first part of the chapter, this may not, perhaps, seem entirely surprising. Yet the fact remains that the conclusions presented here challenge not only the work of Prins and other students of Barotseland, but also the whole scholarly orthodoxy of benign, non-exploitative, incorporative slavery in Central Africa

‘Laying in a stock of “black ivory”’: the Lozi trade in slaves

As the evidence presented here demonstrates, a good many of the slaves available to the Lozi in the closing decades of the nineteenth century were the product of trade. In chapter 5 much was made of the refusal of Mulambwa to sell slaves to the Mambari. It was argued that, although there was a clear demand in Buluzi for European goods, Mulambwa’s refusal to engage in trade with those purveying such goods, eschewing the trade in slaves in favour of retaining the labour of its objects, was a clear indication of the centrality of slaves to the Lozi economy. Indeed, the scale of the raids undertaken by Mulambwa against the Ila and Tonga was there argued to speak volumes of the desire of the *Litunga* to secure more labour. We have also seen the consequences of the failure to harness redistributive networks and

institutions by the Kololo and by the first restored Lozi ruler, Sipopa. If anything at all is clear from the course of Lozi history in the nineteenth century, it is the power of these networks and institutions, and by extension slavery, in the fate of the kingdom.

Mulambwa's famous refusal had significant effects on regional trade networks, as it forced Mambari traders to shift their focus northwards in search of markets. As we have seen, with the growth of the ivory trade, Barotseland's rich stocks made it a valuable proposition, and by the 1870s the kingdom had become a major port of call in a trading network reaching to the north and east. Mambari traders obtained slaves to the east, from the Luba, Luba-speaking peoples and Msiri's newly formed Yeke state in southern Katanga, and then transported them to the Upper Zambezi, where they were sold for ivory.¹ Unlike Mulambwa, and on different terms than the Kololo, Sipopa had opened the kingdom to Mambari traders. This connection remained alive for, even after he had moved his capital south to Sesheke to be closer to the ivory trade, the trade in slaves had not declined entirely. In the 1850s, Livingstone had thought that 'knowledge of the great value of ivory puts a stop to the slave trade in a very natural way.' The argument ran that as the value of slaves on the west coast was so low, thanks to the presence of the Royal Navy, the Mambari purchased slaves only for domestic purposes. But to make 'such a long journey as that from Bihé to the Batoka country, east of the Makololo, at all profitable, they must secure a tusk or two.' These, he thought, could only be found among 'small tribes who depend chiefly on agriculture...and are so destitute of iron that they...use hoes of wood. They may be induced to part with ivory and children for iron implements, but for nothing else. The Mambari tried cloth and beads unsuccessfully, but hoes were irresistible.' The Kololo, he wrote, intended to stop this trade by force, but at his suggestion they instead purchased all the ivory with hoes themselves. He thought that if any 'among the tribes subject to the Makololo sells a child now, it is done secretly. The trade may thus be said pretty well repressed.'² But this reflects something of a misunderstanding of the nature of trade, for where one avenue is closed off, another is found.

On the final leg of his transcontinental journey, Cameron reached Bihe on the Ovimbundu plateau in October 1875, and there met one João Baptista Ferreira, recently returned from a trading expedition to the 'Urua', or Luba country and its then ruler, Kasongo. The statement he recorded provides us with crucial evidence of the workings of this Ovimbundu-dominated trade circuit.

¹ Von Oppen, *Terms of Trade and Terms of Trust*, p. 71.

² Livingstone, 'Explorations into the Interior', p. 357.

João was the white trader of whom I had heard as having been to Kasongo's country, and he was preparing for another journey thither, for since his return from Urua he had paid a visit to Jenjé, and exchanged the slaves he obtained from Kasongo for ivory. At Jenjé he met an Englishman whom he called George, and became most friendly with him. He had received from him a rifle and compass as tokens of amity...He told me, as rather a good story, how Kasongo had ordered hands and ears of slaves to be cut off in honor of his visit, and expressed his intention of taking about a hundred flint-lock muskets to that chief to exchange for slaves, and quite scouted the idea of going there for ivory. That, he said, could be obtained much more easily at Jenjé, to which place the road was comparatively easy and healthy.³

Ferreira's 'George' was almost certainly George Westbeeck, and Jenjé must be Bulozzi.⁴ And Ferreira cannot have been the only trader to ply this route.

To the south of the circuit described by Ferreira, Mambari traders had moved along the Chobe and Zambezi trading in ivory and slaves from the time of Sipopa onwards.⁵ So well did they know the country that Holub was even on the verge of engaging two Mambari as his guides on a tour from Sesheke, but thought better of it.⁶ This trade occasioned some outrage in the heart of Serpa Pinto in 1878. While he was not able to deny that Portuguese merchants were involved, he averred that although they might be 'Portuguese by birth, [they] have little of the Portuguese in heart; they are men without education or manners, mere savages in European clothes.'⁷ Nevertheless, business was good. In Sipopa's time, the price at Sesheke for a slave was a boat or canoe, a cow or several lengths of calico. Prices were said to be much lower in the west, and in the north a slave could be 'purchased for a few strings of beads.' While the trade was not conducted in public markets, slaves could be bought in 'any of the villages'. The Mambari were the 'chief buyers and vendors' of this trade, and Holub felt they

³ Cameron, V.L., *Across Africa*, (New York, 1877), pp. 402-403. .

⁴ Moreover, there were in fact *three* potential Georges who Ferreira may have received these tokens of amity from. The first, 'Georosiana Umutunya', or 'Great' George Westbeeck, we already know something of. The second, 'Georosiana Maniniani', or 'Little George', was George Blockley, a trading partner of 'Great George'. These two men were 'until Sipopa's death the only Europeans permitted to enter Barotseland and travel freely there.' The third man was George Dorehill, who was at Pandamatenga from June 1875, having travelled north from Bamangwato in the company of Macleod and William Frederic Fairlie, Scottish hunter-adventurers. In a caption to a sketch of Fairlie's, depicting Dorehill hunting giraffe on horseback, we read that this George was 'a young fellow who had been trading and hunting for 3 or 4 years', and that he 'was at the Zambezi and in Barotseland during 1875-1876 and 1876-1877.' He is also mentioned in several places in Holub's account. Tabler, *Trade and Travel*, pp. 7, 36, 108; Holub, *Seven Years*, pp. 243, 244, 245, 285.

⁵ Selous, F.C., 'Journeys in the Interior of South Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 3, 3 (1881), p. 173. Gibbons, 'Explorations', p. 106.

⁶ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 153.

⁷ Pinto, *How I crossed Africa*, pp. 64-67.

‘set the negroes the vilest of examples. With their prayer-books in their hand, they endeavour to represent themselves as Christians...but they are utterly unworthy of the name they pretend to bear...they only minister to their deeper degradation.’⁸ It seems that the trade in slaves was general, with slaves bought and sold on both sides, but the manner in which it was conducted suggests that any one transaction would not have consisted of large number of slaves.

Coillard considered the moral tone little improved in Sesheke, although he found the price certainly higher when, in 1884, he was offered, and refused, a ‘child of eight or nine years’ in return for a gun. The weapon was worth £6, though Coillard remarked ‘I could have had him for less.’ Not long thereafter, at Leshuma, he received a note that read ‘Dear Mr. Coillard,—Here is a little boy offered for sale. If you want him, you can have him, for I have enough of them. His price is, a hat, a waistcoat, two or three handkerchiefs, and some beads. If you would like to have him, tell me, and I will send him to you.’ The boy had been taken in a Lozi raid on the Ila, and his back bore the scars of a beating. Mme Coillard ‘could not turn her eyes away from the poor child...but to open a new slave-market, that was impossible. The slave-dealer, who had been sent by a chief of Sesheke, was displeased, and went away at once, very angry with the little Moshukulumboe.’⁹ A little over a decade later, travelling to the east of the plain, the region where Livingstone had expected the very natural decline of the slave trade, Coillard found that the Totela were buying slaves from the Nkoya, at a going rate of seven spades a slave.¹⁰ So much for the powers of Christianity and commerce, for it was among these people in particular that Livingstone had thought the trade ‘well repressed.’¹¹ Nevertheless, at least from Coillard’s perspective, some progress had been made. It appears that by the late 1880s Lubosi Lewanika was at least turning against the Mambari traders. Coillard wrote in April 1890 that

This year, a caravan of black merchants came from Bihe. The king learnt that, contrary to his express prohibition, these Mambari were secretly laying in a stock of “black ivory.” When they were on the point of leaving, Lewanika freed all the slaves, and fined the Mambari heavily, or, rather, confiscated a part of their ivory...He even thought he had gone too far, and asked my opinion. You can easily guess it.¹²

One wonders if it occurred to Coillard that Lubosi Lewanika’s objection was probably not on humanitarian grounds, for, as we shall see, the demand for labour in the kingdom was by this

⁸ Holub, *Seven Years*, pp. 292-93.

⁹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 152.

¹⁰ Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 103.

¹¹ See above, p. 96.

¹² Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 381,401. Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 280

time on the increase. A series of raids conducted by the Lozi in the 1880s and early 1890s also point to this conclusion.

Singing the *Liwale*: slavery and raiding

Lubosi Lewanika proved to be a keen proponent of the *razzia*, though not all of his expeditions met with success. In 1880 the Lozi were reported to have conducted an unsuccessful raid on the Tonga. One Lozi band had been massacred in an ambush, and another, with captives in tow following a successful strike, had been surprised in the night and cut down.¹³ Two years later, however, a force went out against the Ila and Toka and met with greater success. The Lozi party was said to have brought back with it ‘20,000 head of cattle...exclusive of what have died along the road.’¹⁴ No mention is made of slaves, but it is certain that those who could be seized were. In 1888, the Lozi launched a raid which was to last five months. Lubosi Lewanika explained to Coillard that the ‘Mashukulumboe...ill-treated Dr. Holub, who had just come from me; it is my duty to chastise them. Besides, they are not human beings; they are quite naked.’¹⁵ The missionary wondered at the cruel fate of the victims, for he knew that it was not simply cattle, but also slaves that Lubosi Lewanika was after, and that little quarter would be shown to the men.¹⁶ But upon his return, it seemed that Lubosi Lewanika had shown some clemency, restoring ‘liberty to several women captives of a certain age...also their cattle, wives, and children to those who had courage to perform an act of submission.’¹⁷ For this was no exterminatory raid, but a way to establish Lozi supremacy and make something of a profit to boot. Nevertheless, these raids posed enough of a threat that some Ila took to stockade building to guard against the depredations.¹⁸

In 1893, the Lozi raided the Luvale, and Coillard witnessed the return of the fighting men. The *manduna* gave laconic accounts of their part and of their losses, amounting to ‘twenty-six or twenty-eight Barotsi chiefs of all grades (they take no count of the slaves)’, and of the cattle and captives they had returned with. The raid had been a great success, although the force had been struck by small-pox during the campaign. For four days Lubosi Lewanika was busy morning until night dividing the spoils. Curious to see what so occupied the *Litunga*, Coillard went to watch. Keeping himself apart, for fear that any proximity might be construed as his being a part of proceedings, he saw a sight which ‘made one’s heart ache’.

¹³ Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 139.

¹⁴ Westbeeck to Arnot, Lealui, 5 October, 1882, in Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 62.

¹⁵ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 299.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 305; Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 200.

¹⁷ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 313.

¹⁸ Gibbons, ‘A journey’, p. 138

Picture to yourselves thousands of Barotsi crouching in a circle before the king and the principal chiefs of the country. In the midst, heaped up close together, are hundreds of these unfortunate prisoners. Not a single man among them...There are not even any old women. What could they do with them? These are young women, the greater number with little children on their backs; or they are young girls, and a multitude of children of all ages from one to twelve, and of both sexes. See one band after another, six or seven at a time, who are made to rise and approach, and who are subjected to a minute inspection while thousands of eyes are fixed upon them...There is a great consultation under the pavilion; then a chief advances towards the poor wretches to execute the king's good pleasure...Here is a little child scarcely three years old, who is being snatched from a young woman's arms. He shrieks and kicks about, wrenches himself free, and runs into the midst of the crowd, quite lost, and crying for his mother, who has already been carried off. This unrehearsed effect is a capital joke for everybody. "Knock him down!" they shouted laughingly to his master...I make a calculation, and find they must have captured more than six hundred women and children, without counting those who have died of small-pox or of ill-treatment, and that they have killed more than three hundred and fifty men, without counting the wounded and those who crawled away into the woods to die of their wounds.¹⁹

Captives were paraded in this fashion whenever a raid returned, for they had to be presented to the *Litunga* before they became the full property of their masters.²⁰ Cattle were similarly divided and, as we saw in chapter 5, the families of those who had died compensated. These were times of national celebration, times when the *Liwale* would be sung. This was a song of the Lozi women, only sung on occasions of national jubilation, when the *Litunga* recovered from illness or when the Lozi captured 'a country or cattle or slaves'.²¹ Successful raids also tended to draw those subject to them into the tributary networks of the Lozi, for once they had submitted to the force of arms and acknowledged the Lozi sway, tribute served to recognise Lozi authority and, perhaps, to discourage further raids. We know that this tribute was rendered in kind. But it was also rendered in slaves, and while we do have evidence for this practice, how these slaves were distributed is unclear, for we have no accounts of this taking place.²² The manner in which traded slaves were integrated into the kingdom is likewise unclear, for the same reason, although some hint of this may be gleaned from the

¹⁹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 468-469, 471, 472.

²⁰ Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 274

²¹ 'Malozi a ba i lo hapa naha kapa likomu kapa batanga ya binwa.' Lewanika, 'Lozi traditions', p. 31.

²² On slaves rendered as tribute see below.

conditions endured by slaves captured on raids. Whether through force of arms or the lustre of ivory and iron, they were all captives. It is, however, highly unlikely that bought slaves were presented to the king in the way that those captured on raids were. That nothing is known of this is a consequence of both the small scale and widely dispersed pattern of trading. The royal monopoly on ivory, so vital to the Lozi elite's control of external trade was not, unsurprisingly, watertight, and the obvious but unfortunate corollary for present purposes is that such trading would have taken place away from the prying eyes of both the Lozi elite and Europeans.

'Those are not *people*...they are our dogs': the place of slaves in Lozi society

With few exceptions, the accounts of explorers and early missionaries are united in their portrayal of the cruelties of slavery in Bulozhi. Both the Lozi and Kololo, wrote Silva Porto, 'force their slaves to perform the hardest of tasks and treat them with the greatest cruelty.'²³ Coillard believed that, aside from polygamy, an institution also fed by slaves, slavery was the major obstruction to the success of the PEMS' attempt to establish itself. Slavery, he wrote, was 'at the very foundation of the social edifice.'²⁴ Contrary to the view expressed by the *Mukwae* of Nalolo in 1885 – that the 'Makalaka', 'slaves and serfs', were in an enviable position as 'revolutions [did] not touch them' – the position of slaves at times of unrest was often extremely precarious.²⁵ To be sure, there are accounts that assert that the 'slaves – or, perhaps one should say, servants – of the Barotses seem happy enough with their lot.'²⁶ Yet, as Livingstone noted, 'my informants possess a sad proneness to "amiability," and they will roundly assert whatever they think will please you. For example: - "Are you happy as a slave?" "O, infinitely more so than when I was free;" and then run away from their masters.'²⁷ For even during settled periods, the lives of slaves were hedged about with prohibitions, their liberty constrained, rights questionable and labour forfeit.

Several observers remarked on the clear delineation between master and slaves in settlements. At Sesheke in 1881, the Jesuit Fr. Depelchin described the hut provided for him as composed of 'a wide rotunda of reeds, surrounded by a circular corridor...A mortar of various colours covers the walls, earth grey in the lower portion, it turns to dazzling white in the upper portion.'²⁸ Depelchin thought these buildings possessed 'a certain elegance', but

²³ Porto, *Viagens* (Lisbon, 1942), p. 114.

²⁴ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171. On the *Mukwae*'s use of the term *Makalaka* see p. 112.

²⁶ Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 242.

²⁷ Livingstone, 'Explorations', p. 355.

²⁸ Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 208.

were always accompanied by ‘several groups of little huts about three feet high and about four or five deep.’ The ‘spacious construction in reeds, you will be told, are reserved for the masters, the Barotses; the narrow huts, on the other hand, like kennels, are reserved for the slaves.’²⁹ Holub, too, saw ‘rude, conical huts of grass and reeds, so slightly put together that they could have taken only a few hours to construct... intended for the female slaves, and were not allowed to have any enclosure, so that the ingress and egress of their occupants might be under supervision.’³⁰ Food was similarly divided, for slaves ate after their masters, and certain food were forbidden to them.³¹

The *Litunga*, a man already elevated above all others, was further distinguished by that fact that he neither swore on oath, nor submitted to a trial by ordeal to deny accusations in the *kuta*.³² No other could refuse to undergo such an ordeal, but, fortunately for those of sufficient status, slaves could be made to stand proxy for their masters. One of the several methods practiced by the Lozi was trial by boiling water. When facing a charge of witchcraft, the accused would plunge their hands into a pot of boiling water. Were they to come through unscathed, their innocence would be proved.³³ Nor was this the only way in which slaves were powerless in the face of the justice of their masters. A preferred method of chastisement appears to have been strangulation, by hand or garrote, with the intention of causing unconsciousness rather than death.³⁴ Whipping was a presumably less risky option. Such punishments were applied for ‘a mere nothing, a delay, an order ill executed, or a utensil broken’.³⁵ Not that this always achieved the desired effects, for, as Ratau, a Sesheke chief, lamented to Coillard, we ‘have power to strangle and kill these slaves, but not enough to make them obey us.’³⁶ One striking example of the truth of the risks of resistance was witnessed by Holub. Drawn to the river bank in Sesheke by a mixed crowd ‘brawling, screeching and laughing’, he saw the body of a girl being brought up out of the water. She recovered consciousness and was dragged to her master’s quarters. She was a slave of the *Mukwae*, who had ordered her to marry an older man. She had ‘protested that she was anxious to serve her mistresses with all fidelity, but pleaded that she might have nothing to do with the odious old man’. Enraged, the *Mukwae* had told the groom to be to ‘carry off the girl...to the river, to hold

²⁹ Ibid., p. 212.

³⁰ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 233.

³¹ Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 235; Jalla, *Sikololo-English Dictionary*, s.v. *likolwe*.

³² Lewanika, ‘Lozi traditions’, p. 5.

³³ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 282, 287-288.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 424.

³⁵ Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 276.

³⁶ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 195.

her under water till she was half dead, and thence to take her to his own quarters, where she would wake up again a “mosari” [*musali*] – a married woman.³⁷

Such neglect and abuse was a common fate. On one occasion, Fr. Depelchin saw ‘a little slave of perhaps ten years in a pitiful condition. The right leg and foot were nothing more than a hideous sore and one of the hands was completely mutilated. They told us he has epilepsy and often falls into the fire; despite this, they make him work morning, noon and night.’ The Fr. and his colleagues, ‘moved by compassion’, treated his wounds as best they could, to be met with astonishment from the people surrounding them. They began, he wrote, ‘to laugh, not able to understand why anyone would lavish such care upon a miserable slave.’³⁸ Coillard described the treatment of one slave boy as that meted out to a dog, and Arnot was told in no uncertain terms: ““Those are not *people*...they are our dogs.””³⁹ Ears and noses were also cut as a means of punishment and, possibly, as with cattle, ears were cut and slit as distinguishing marks of ownership.⁴⁰ In times of shortage, the slaves tightened their ‘belts in vain; they do not always succeed in cheating hunger; and if they do not steal, they take to flight. If they are caught—and alas! they always are caught, even if it is not for twenty years—they are no better fed; they are simply strangled or flogged more liberally.’⁴¹ For those who did manage to survive, old age was no protection. In one reported instance from 1874, an old slave crept up to Sipopa’s beer-drinking to beg for food. Upon discovering that the old man was not only a slave, but one well beyond work and dependent upon charity, Sipopa simply had him drowned.⁴² Even were this story a fabrication, that it was thought credible by its reporter speaks volumes of the normality of violence against slaves. There were, however, moments of respite for slaves. The time of the flood left the slaves with less labour to perform, and the *kuomboka* took their masters to the margins. For those slaves who remained behind to care for the villages, or who were needed only to paddle canoes, life was easiest at this time of year. But every year the water would recede, and so ‘the village is re-peopled. Then the slaves have a hard life.’⁴³

Having gone some way towards establishing the place of slaves in Lozi society, it is worth attempting to gain some sense of what proportion of the population slaves made up. In 1881 Sesheke was reported to have had around one thousand inhabitants. Lealui was reported

³⁷ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 261.

³⁸ Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 199.

³⁹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 435; Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 73.

⁴⁰ Clark, P., *The Autobiography of an Old Drifter* (London, 1936), p. 149; Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 106. The latter suggestion, reported by one informant, I have been unable to confirm.

⁴¹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 327.

⁴² Selous, *Travel and Adventure*, p. 249.

⁴³ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 65, 327.

to have had a similar population. In both cases around two-thirds of these people were slaves.⁴⁴ Arnot also believed that slaves were in the clear majority, and Jalla thought the figure to be around three-quarters.⁴⁵ Other estimates exist, but these were made by those who visited the kingdom during the 1890s, after the period at hand. These figures will serve as a baseline, but must be further refined, for although one might have the overall proportion, it is equally important to understand who these slaves were. Having answered the question of the origins of slaves, it is now time to address the second. What we must now ask is whether we ought to distinguish between categories or degrees of slavery. This is an important question, for upon it hinges the meaning and history of Lozi slavery. To properly address it, we must examine the model established by Prins' *Hidden Hippopotamus*, for, as will be argued here, this has done much to cloud our understanding of the realities of slavery in Barotseland.

Makalaka and mutanga wa sichaba: the meaning of Lozi slavery

Prins divided the institutions of bondage in Barotseland into five categories, in part, perhaps, because he was attempting to make sense of the contradictory definitions provided by earlier scholars, as discussed in chapter 3. This was done, Prins claimed, on the basis of linguistic evidence. The categories are the following.

- (1) *Lifunga*, the practice of bringing up the children of chiefly families in the royal courtyard as pages and domestic servants
- (2) *Butanga*, everyone in Barotseland was *mutanga*, the king included, which Prins translates as ‘the common man’ with an implication of social responsibility’
- (3) *Tukuluho*, bondsmen in settlement of debt
- (4) *Liketiso*, slaves brought as tribute, and
- (5) *Buzike/Makoba*, slaves captured on raids.⁴⁶

Each of these categories will be dealt with, and doubts cast on the validity of Prins' typology. We will then proceed to expose the flawed organicism which underpins this edifice. The discussion will require, first, a close examination of Prins' linguistic evidence. This will be followed by a wide-ranging consideration of similar material in order to support the argument that Lozi slavery was first and foremost characterised by foreignness.

⁴⁴ Roberts, *Journeys*, pp. 209, 242. Gibbon gave a similar figure for Sesheke in 1895. Gibbons, ‘A journey’, p. 122.

⁴⁵ Arnot, F.S., *From Natal to the Upper Zambezi* (Glasgow, 1884), p. 59; Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 233.

⁴⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 71-72.

Prins describes *lifunga* as ‘a system under which children of chiefly families were brought up in the royal courtyard where they were pages and domestic servants. Subsequently they were placed as chiefs of judges themselves or given strategic marriages.’⁴⁷ He does, however, note that Coillard used the term for several sorts of enslavement and, in early references, as ‘the royal-press gang’.⁴⁸ For instance, in April 1891, Coillard wrote that

Just now, all our district is again agitated. Panic has seized everybody, and the villages are deserted. It is the *Lefunga*—the Terror of the king. Messengers swoop down on all the villages, carrying off the children, boys and girls, the prisoners of a certain age being knocked down with blows. Later on, it was the turn of the women, to be taken forcibly for disposal according to the king’s caprice.⁴⁹

This seems at odds with Prins’ description, but, as Mainga noted, this institution had undergone change over the nineteenth century. What had once been, as Prins argued, a method for recruiting promising children to be moulded for office had become a means of recruiting labour.⁵⁰ In the early twentieth century, Jalla recorded that *lifunga* had gained a further meaning. By then it was the ‘function of men who urge people to work, to go to school’, although he also recorded that it still meant a razzia ‘made by order of the king, to bring him slave girls’.⁵¹ But, contra Mainga, who believed that *lifunga* ‘suddenly changed character’,⁵² there is good reason to believe that, as an institution, *lifunga* had long been coercive. The word *lifunga* is closely related to two others. The first, *lifungelo*, is derived from the second, *funga*, a Lozi verb meaning ‘to tie, to bind, to tether’.⁵³ A *lifungelo* is a place where the cattle are tied by a *sifungangombe*, one who ties cattle. The point being that, in whatever form it took, *lifunga* was a seizing, a binding of people and, further, that it is Coillard’s amorphous use of the word which comes nearer reality than Prins’. The connection with cattle is also an obvious one, and entirely reasonable. Given that slaves were obtained by the same means, they could be controlled and marked like cattle too.

Prins explained that slaves ‘in settlement of debt were more correctly bondsmen’, and that there was no prohibition against such bonding in a legal settlement, nor was any class

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 266, n. 81.

⁴⁹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 424.

⁵⁰ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 39. See also Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 274

⁵¹ Jalla, *Sikololo-English Dictionary*, s.v. *lifunga*.

⁵² Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 149.

⁵³ Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *funga*, *lifungelo*.

excluded from this.⁵⁴ He then deployed a Luyana proverb, *Lya ulwa ñete, li ibaa ndambo*, rendered as ‘If there is no foreigner, a Lozi may enslave someone he knows well’.⁵⁵ Yet Prins’ translation of the proverb is suspect. His own source elsewhere gives a different translation: ‘If there is no foreigner, a warrior kills his own.’⁵⁶ *Ibaa* is the Luyana equivalent of the Silozi *bulaya*, to kill, and so it is difficult to see what, if anything, this proverb has to do with debt bondage.⁵⁷ Prins’ inability to clearly define his terms obviously arises from the fact that people who were made slaves in the settlement of a debt were simply slaves.⁵⁸

Slaves brought as tribute, whom Prins defined as *liketiso*, were certainly a feature of Lozi society, and here he is on firmer ground.⁵⁹ All the more so in that he considered that the status of such slaves was like those of his final category: slaves captured on raids. But here, once more, Prins is found wanting. Such slaves, he argued, were the *ba buzike* or *makoba*, ‘although *buzike* really covers both categories.’ We are told this is a Toka-Leya loanword, and these captives were ‘particularly the spoil of raids in Lubosi Lewanika’s reign up the Ila...and...Toka-Leya...The linguistic and social connections are therefore unsurprising.’⁶⁰ This does have a certain logic, and both *muzike* and *likoba* (sing. of *makoba*) are recorded as words meaning slave.⁶¹ Yet it is not clear why Prins chose to use *buzike*, a loanword, to cover both categories and simultaneously limit the number of slaves this could apply to. Moreover, the implication is that this was a somehow imported notion, something for which the Lozi lacked a word, when this was not the case. The Lozi word *muhapi*, meaning ‘conqueror, one who captures in war, who despoils’, has a number of related terms, in particular, *lihapiwa*, meaning ‘booty’, *sihapiwa*, ‘person taken in war or razzia’, and *muhapiwa*, ‘one who has been captured’. Interestingly, in his dictionary, Jalla adds an illustrative sentence, *mulao wa sicaba u lukulula ni muhapiwa kaufela*, or ‘the law of the nation emancipated all the *muhapiwa*’, although the word *lukulula* might more simply be rendered as to untie or unbind.⁶² In this return to bondage, we are returned to *lifunga* once more.

There is one further category of slave that Prins described. As with the others, his argument is deeply problematic, but for somewhat different reasons. *Butanga*, the condition of slavery, is translated by Jalla as ‘servitude, slavery’, and *mutanga* rendered as ‘servant,

⁵⁴ People could also be reduced to slavery for brawling, wounding others and theft. Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 320

⁵⁵ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 72, 266.

⁵⁶ Mupatu, Y.W., *Silozi se lu bulele* [The Silozi we speak] (Lusaka, 1978), no. 130.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, nos. 51, 205, 258, 291.

⁵⁸ Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *itiulula*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, sv. *liketiso*, *maketiso*; Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 72.

⁶⁰ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 72.

⁶¹ Jalla, *Dictionary*, sv. *muzike*, *likoba*

⁶² *Ibid.*, sv. *lihapiwa*, *muhapi*, *muhapiwa*, *sihapiwa*, *lukulula*

slave, bondman or woman.’⁶³ To translate *mutanga*, as Prins does, ‘as “the common man” with an implication of social responsibility’ – and to do this on the basis that ‘everyone, including the king, was a *mutanga*; he was *mutanga wa sichaba* (servant of the nation)’ – flies in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, obfuscating the real extent of social divisions in the kingdom and is less indicative of the realities of slavery than of Prins’ unending search for cosmological significance and tendency unnecessarily to exoticise the mundane⁶⁴

In relation to slavery, Prins makes use of three Luyana proverbs, one of which has already been discussed. The other two are *mubika ni likumba ka li fula ba meyi li oloka*, ‘A slave is like [dry] bark which softens when placed in water’, and *Si ku nuinine ku si tundo*, ‘Although I am your chief, I know where you come from’.⁶⁵ While the first is rightly read as demonstrating the powerlessness of the slave, the second apparently reflects the ‘awareness of interrelatedness and mutual dependence’.⁶⁶ One could easily substitute these, for such examples are not hard to find. For instance

Kwa lya mbumu kwa lya mubika, mbumu ni mu tunda ku ubika. Where the mulena eats the mutanga eats, a mulena comes from slavery.⁶⁷

Ku kanwa kwa mubika ni kupumena. When you are a slave you cannot refuse.⁶⁸

A binary pairing like this, however, does not automatically demonstrate social equilibrium. The same might be said of the phrase, *mutanga wa sichaba*, or ‘servant of the nation’. This, Prins claimed, was a reflection of the reciprocity of the relationship between the *Litunga* and the people.⁶⁹ Yet clearly this was at odds with reality. The *bulena* of the Lozi could not be inherited by someone not of royal blood, and the *Litunga* only served the nation in the fanciful sense in which we might call a politician a public servant. The divide was a wide one. As one induna expressed to Coillard of Akafuna, the pretender to Lubosi Lewanika’s throne, “‘He is the stuff *batlankas* [*batanga*] are made of...but kings – no!’”⁷⁰

⁶³ Ibid., sv. *butanga*

⁶⁴ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 71. On this tendency, see also chap. 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 73, 267 n. 88. The Lozi word *mukolobisa*, the ‘manner of turning disobedient people into humble servants’ is derived from the word *kukolobisa*, ‘to soak in water’. Jalla, *Dictionary*, sv. *mukolobisa*, *kukolobisa*.

⁶⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 74.

⁶⁷ Lewanika, ‘Lozi traditions’, p. 55.

⁶⁸ Gilbert Matindo, interview, 22 November 2011, Mongu.

⁶⁹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 71.

⁷⁰ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 195. On Akafuna see chap. 7.

This poses the problem of how one is to approach the material. In place of Prins' model, seeking to burrow down in pursuit of some fundamental idea, one can more usefully seek to understand what the language used in proverbs can reveal about cultural attitudes. Following Strickland and Finely, Prins' benchmarks in the definition he provided of slavery in Bulozhi are: that not only must a slave be the chattel of another, who might be exploited, punished or sold with impunity, but that weight also ought to be given to the deracination of the slave in the society.⁷¹ The first, certainly, is a reasonable proposition and much the same as my own in chapter 3. But the second approaches the problem from an entirely incorrect perspective. It is here that we strike the heart of the argument. What one ought to be in search of is not the deracination of a slave but the entrenching of his/her status as somehow alien in the society. It is this which can lead us to the meaning of Lozi slavery, for, as will be argued, it is in the permanency of the identity of slaves as slaves that the essence of Lozi slavery lies. In the spirit of pursuing as wide a perspective as possible on Lozi concepts of slavery, what follows is a list of Luyana proverbs gleaned from publications, and confirmed and supplemented through fieldwork wherever possible.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | <i>Mubika ni likumba ka li fula ba meyi li oloka</i> | A slave is like [dry] bark which softens when placed in water. ⁷² |
| 2 | <i>Kwa lya mbumu kwa lya mubika, mbumu ni mu tunda ku <u>ubika</u>.</i> | Where the <i>Mulena</i> eats the slave eats, a <i>Mulena</i> comes from slavery. ⁷³ |
| 3 | <i>Ku kanwa kwa <u>mubika</u> ni kupumena.</i> | When you are a slave you cannot refuse. ⁷⁴ |
| 4 | <i>Katunlanu kangu na ni lyateka, abano ni ombolile <u>ubika</u>.</i> | It is not that I don't have the strength, or guile, but I am held by slavery crushed as I am. ⁷⁵ |
| 5 | <i>Ufumu kulya <u>ubika</u>.</i> | Wealth eats slavery. ⁷⁶ |

⁷¹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 71.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁷³ Lewanika, 'Lozi traditions', p. 55.

⁷⁴ Gilbert Matindo, interview, 22 November 2011, Mongu.

⁷⁵ Mupatu, *Silozi se lu bulele*, no. 102.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 243.

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|----|--|--|
| 6 | <i>Wa numa u nume meyi, na mulilo,
kutwa ni <u>ubika</u>.</i> | When you send me, send me to fetch fire
or to fetch water, pounding [grain] is
slavery. ⁷⁷ |
| 7 | <i>Ndonga lu waneka misongo, mbumu
lu waneka <u>abika</u></i> | A needle gathers the thread, the <i>Mulena</i>
gathers the slaves. ⁷⁸ |
| 8 | <i>A ñelele mumbunda ni a <u>wina</u>
Mboo.</i> | Those who wear bells around their waists
are slaves of Mboo. ⁷⁹ [The children of the
<i>Malena</i> come from Mboo] |
| 9 | <i>Mubangwa ni <u>muwina</u> ngana,
mushemwa ni <u>muwina</u> nina</i> | A sick person is the slave of their doctor, a
child is the slave of their parent. ⁸⁰ |
| 10 | <i>Mei a yowa ñumbini mu a yowela
nalwange, u mumu u akenena.</i> | The water the ñumbi [Cormorant] washes
in is the same as the nalwange [Egret], one
gets clean one stays black. ⁸¹ [Even if it is
the slave who works well, his master is
admired] |
| 11 | <i>Mukotekwa so wo limi lububo ni
minya luwa.</i> | Even if a help works farms hard, the praise
goes to the owner of the garden. ⁸² [No
matter how well a slave works he is not
admired, people admire his master]. |

Proverbs 10 and 11 convey allegorically something of the thankless life of a slave, but it is 1 to 9 that are of real interest. The operative word is underlined in each case. There are two: *mubika* (sing.) and variants, *abika* (pl.) and *ubika* (noun), and *muwina* (sing.) and *wina* (pl.). These appear to be the two Luyana words for slavery, and thus it would appear, on the basis of admittedly rather scant evidence, that slavery in the pre-Kololo period was perhaps not particularly stratified.

Jacottet's late nineteenth century linguistic study provides definitions for both *mubika* and *muwina*. *Muwina* he translates as 'serviteur', but uses the word only once, in the context

⁷⁷ Ibid., no. 327.

⁷⁸ Lewanika, 'Lozi traditions', p. 54.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 55. The glosses in square brackets are Lewanika's own.

⁸⁰ Mupatu, *Silozi se lu bulele*, no. 167. B.Silumesi, interview, 9 November 2011, Mongu.

⁸¹ Lewanika, 'Lozi traditions', p. 51.

⁸² Ibid., p. 51.

of the story of ‘*Le chien et l’homme*’. In this story, the dog was once the master of men. He reflected that he did not know how to farm, nor kill game, and so offered himself to man as a *muwina*, a *serviteur*.⁸³ *Mubika* he also translates as slave, but uses it in several contexts.⁸⁴ In the story of ‘*Le lion et le lièvre*’, the hare is the *mubika* or ‘*serviteur*’ of the lion.⁸⁵ In the story of ‘Mwalé’, a girl disagrees with her mother in law over the pounding of grain, asking her ‘*time mubika ndji?*’ or ‘*suis-je (ton) esclave?*’⁸⁶ Jacottet also uses *mubika* twice in the context of a dead person being made into the ‘*esclave*’ or, more properly, familiar of a witchdoctor after his/her death: ‘*un fantôme qui le servira*’.⁸⁷ All this suggests that *mubika* was the widest of the two words, but also that which was closest to outright slavery. There is, however, one other particularly interesting case where Jacottet translates a word as *esclave*.

In ‘*La mort d’un chef*’, Jacottet translates a short account of the rituals which follow the death of a chief. When a chief dies, according to this account, cattle are killed to accompany him in the afterlife. When he is buried, water, beads and other objects are placed in his tomb, and trees are planted to form a sanctuary where people can pay homage. They give the royal salute, ‘*Yoshoo! Yoshoo*’. Offerings of milk are made, and the dead chief consulted on matters of importance. But Jacottet was told that one prohibition must be strictly observed, for ‘*On dit qu’il n’y doit pas entrer d’esclaves, mais seulement des A-Louyi*’.⁸⁸ This, in the original, reads as ‘*A tatji ka ku liata ñete, kondji mwan’a mu-Luyi*’.⁸⁹ The crucial word is *ñete*. The phrase ‘*mwan’a mu-Luyi*’, child of the Luyi, set in contrast to *ñete*, suggests that to be a slave is to be one who is not *mwan’a mu-Luyi*. Foreignness is thus rendered a key attribute of slavery.

The word *ñete* appears in a number of proverbs. As those given below suggest, the words carried connotations, not simply of foreignness, but also of inferiority and incompetence.

Umbumu wa ñete lububaela mbango.

The *bulena* of the *mañete* even if it becomes famous is not real.⁹⁰

⁸³ Jacottet, *Etudes*, vol. 3, pp. 90, 225.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 56.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 153, 172

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁹⁰ Lewanika, ‘Lozi traditions’, p. 55.

<i>A tumwa ñete amalala, a tumwa na teelela.</i>	Send a <i>mañete</i> to collect reeds, and he will never come back. ⁹¹
<i>Lya ulwa ñete, li ibaa ndambo.</i>	If there is no <i>mañete</i> , a warrior kills his own. ⁹²

The last of the three, we have of course, already met. The word *ñete* also has diminutive forms, including *kañete*, ‘a weak, feeble foreigner; a young foreigner, a small stranger’.⁹³ Yet, in Jacottet’s account, the word is explicitly linked with slavery. A number of my own informants made a similar connection. On one occasion, an informant moved directly from discussing the idea of *mutanga wa sichaba* to the subject of *mañete*. He then sought to explain the meaning of *mañete* with another proverb. This same proverb was again proffered by a different informant during a discussion of slavery. There are various forms of this proverb provided below, with the translation given by their source.

<i>Wamumona lyambwa ni mwana na mukuka</i>	When you see a person who has no respect he is a child of a slave. ⁹⁴
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<i>Wamumona maoyo atunda kwanu</i>	When you see a person with respect he is coming from a respected family. ⁹⁵
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<i>Wa liambwa ni mwana namukuka, wa maoyo u tunda kwa anu.</i>	A person who speaks ostentatiously is born from a parent who has nothing, he who has respect comes from parents who are well behaved. ⁹⁶
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<i>Wa mumona maoyo atunda kwanu, wa lyambwa ni mwana na mukuka</i>	When you see him to be well behaved, then he comes from a well cultured family, but if he is a careless talker, his parents are equally uncultured. ⁹⁷
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The key term is *namukuka*, or rather *mwana namukuka*, which translates as the child of an unmarried or untidy woman.⁹⁸ The point here is that these proverbs, unlike those quoted

⁹¹ Mupatu, *Silozu se lu bulele*, no. 31.

⁹² Ibid., no. 130.

⁹³ Jalla, *Dictionary*, sv. *kañete*.

⁹⁴ Gilbert Matindo, Individual Interview, 22 November 2011, Mongu.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Mupatu, *Silozu se lu bulele*, no. 273.

⁹⁷ B.Silumesi, interview, 9 November 2011, Mongu.

⁹⁸ Jalla, *Dictionary*, sv. *namukuka*.

earlier, are not Luyana but Silozi, and so are not proverbs *sensu strictu*. They are *lishitanguti*, wise sayings or adages, as opposed to *liloko*, Luyana praises and proverbs proper. But this particular *lishitanguti* is not only widely known, but taken as synonymous with the idea of the *mañete*. The behaviour of someone who is ill mannered is the behaviour of someone who does not know dominant cultural norms, who acts like a foreigner. What lies at the heart of this is the Lozi concept of *likute*.

Likute, which Prins' terms the 'energising principle' of Lozi society, encompasses 'politeness, deference and cooperation'. But it is incorrect to see it as 'facilitating social labelling and reciprocity through its practice.'⁹⁹ It was rather a means of differentiation. For instance, when writing from Sesheke in 1886, it struck Coillard that, even in the midst of the upheavals following Lubosi Lewanika's suppression of the revolt against his throne, 'These are the most polished people in the world, and I think they even outdo the Parisians. A master always calls his slaves "Shangwe" [a term of respect, meaning 'my father' in Luyana] even the youngsters. A slave would never address another without making use of the same expression, and calling him you, not thou'.¹⁰⁰ For good manners, proper behaviour, was a crucial means of casting oneself in the mould of the master, to differentiate oneself from the *ñete*. Those highest in the Lozi hierarchy, the children of the *Litunga*, were not referred to with the honorific 'bo', but by their own particular titles. To address them as 'bo' was *buñete* [the condition of being a *ñete*], because their titles carried their own respect.¹⁰¹ Those who do not know how to behave - and those who are foreign do not know how to behave by default, not being *mwan'a mu-Luyi* - are not entitled to the treatment of those who do. This is the other side of Prins' organising principle, the inverse of his model of reciprocity.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the position of the subject people of the Lozi. These were, as the *Mukwae* of Nalolo called them, *makalaka*, weak, despicable foreigners.¹⁰² That the *Mukwae* despised the *makalaka* in the same terms as the Kololo is surely indicative not only of the long legacy of the interregnum but of the contemptuous attitude of the Lozi to their subject people. They formed a large proportion of the population at both Sesheke and Lealui in the 1880s and were firmly under the Lozi heel. Except where they had been 'declared free by the sovereign, members of all the subject tribes, except the Marutse and Mabundas, [were] regarded as slaves...The children of any vassal who may have married a Marutse wife are also regarded as vassals, and bound to perform the same service as their father.'¹⁰³ We have already

⁹⁹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁰ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 228. Jalla, *Dictionary*, sv. *shangwe*.

¹⁰¹ Lewanika, 'Lozi traditions', p. 23.

¹⁰² Jalla, *Dictionary*, sv. *makalaka*.

¹⁰³ Holub, *Seven Years*, p. 292.

seen that the Mbunda became under Mulambwa the allies of the Lozi, rather than a subject people. This led Holub to consider the kingdom as the ‘Marutse-Mambunda Kingdom.’¹⁰⁴ Coillard was disparaging of Holub’s error, but this was perhaps a reasonable mistake to make, given the condition of all other subject peoples in the kingdom.¹⁰⁵ It is reasonable to suppose that, as one moved away from the floodplain, and Lozi power was less immediately felt, Lozi suzerainty was reflected in the receipt of tribute more than anything else. In the context of the far greater demands for labour in the plain, however, this seems unlikely, and Lozi raids served to both supply this labour and to reinforce this suzerainty.¹⁰⁶

In chapter 3, it was argued that the best way to approach a definition of slavery was to follow Mier’s suggestion to use the local terms and describe their meanings. It was also argued that, instead of a single overarching definition of slavery, this thesis would advance two propositions. The first was that slavery was first and foremost a property relationship. In this chapter, this relationship has been clearly demonstrated – as has the justification that underpinned it. Slaves were not *mwan’a mu-Luyi*, children of the Lozi. As outsiders they did not deserve any other than the treatment meted out to them as their proper ration. It was their place to work, and proper to despise them. We have also begun to get a sense of the ends to which slaves were put. There was, clearly, nothing in the least benign about this slavery, even in its most intimate, domestic settings.

The second proposition advanced in chapter 3 was that slavery was also a labour regime. Having thus far addressed the question strictly on the basis of local terms, it is now worth considering one final, important distinction before we turn to the workings of this regime. What we must be absolutely clear on is the distinction between slave and tribute labour. The fact that the labour of slaves entered the wider structures of the Lozi state through the institution of the *makolo* may be argued to render it effectively indistinguishable from tribute labour. If the labour of all subjects was called alike and subsumed under one category, the means of coercion – it could be contended – was not slavery itself, and therefore it was not slavery, but rather tribute, which was at the heart of the Lozi ability to mobilise labour. But this is to put the cart before the horse. Tributary relationships impose theoretically permanent obligations on the parties involved. In reality, however, for those rendering tribute, its impositions are finite. Once the needful tribute is gathered, it is sent. Once a canal is dug,

¹⁰⁴ Holub, E., *Eine Culturskizze des Marutse-Mambunda-Reiches in Süd-Central-Afrika*, (Vienna, 1879).

¹⁰⁵ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 651.

¹⁰⁶ In 1880, ‘the people of Wanki’ had ‘placed themselves under the protection of the Barotses, to whom they pay tribute.’ It seems unlikely that people from this distance would have rendered labour in the valley. Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 123

it is dug. The relationship, moreover, is not one-way. Those receiving tribute have obligations, too: to extend protection or refrain from attacking those who pay it, to grant land in return for labour, to redistribute valuable goods and so on. In a tributary relationship there are, in theory at least, considerations to both parties. The obligations imposed by slavery, on the other hand, are of an entirely different order. The obligations of slaves arise not from any reciprocity or transaction, but from the slaves' very condition. Slaves work for their master because he is their master, not because they owe him tribute. The obligations of the slave cannot be fulfilled, and the impositions never cease, for they are, at least in theory, without end. Participation in tribute labour did not make slaves free. But the absorption of slaves into the structures of tribute labour did enormously expand their capacities. Quite how substantial these capacities had become by the late nineteenth century is, in part, the focus of the next chapter.

Part III: The Ends of Slavery in Barotseland

The building of a kingdom: politics, diplomacy and slavery 1878-1897

This chapter resumes our account of the history of the Lozi kingdom following the installation of Lubosi. Its terminal point is the late nineteenth century, on the eve of the first manifestation of colonial power. This was a politically tumultuous period, encompassing as it does the beginning of Lubosi's rule and the brief rebellion against it, the attempts of various missions to establish themselves in the kingdom and the concessions which would in time draw the Lozi into what became North-Western Rhodesia. In this same period, the Lozi embarked upon a series of public works which radically altered the face of the plain, facilitating the transportation of people and goods and opening land for cultivation. Within the kingdom, this was a time of advancement, if only for the few, and for a brief moment the kingdom was the focal point for the advance of colonial power north of the Zambezi. The first sections of this chapter are concerned with the period from Lubosi's installation to the arrival of the PEMS mission in 1886. Next, the chapter provides a general account of the changing Lozi economy from the late 1880s to the late 1890s, supplemented by a close investigation of a crucial, though hitherto largely ignored, portion of a much grander public works programme. Although only a small fraction in relative terms, this case study throws into sharp relief the scale of these great works. The last sections of this chapter thus frame the Lozi kingdom at a time when the power of the king was at its peak, before the growing ascendancy of the BSAC and its corollaries: the eclipsing of the Lozi elite and the formal abolition of slavery in the early twentieth century.

'The king greets you much': Lubosi on the throne, 1878-1884

We now return to the point at which we left the story in chapter 5. There, we concluded with the race for the *maoma* which saw Lubosi installed as *Litunga* at Namoyamenenwa and his sister, Matauka, as *Mulena Mukwae* at Nalolo in 1878. Lubosi's father was from Namuso, the northern kingdom, and his mother from Lwambi, in the south, and the installation of Matauka was clearly a move to further reinforce this connection and bind the two kingdoms, or rather halves of the kingdom, together. While hardly an original tactic, it formed part of Lubosi's wider strategy of placing his supporters and relations in positions of power to buttress his own position. Indeed, threats were not long in coming. In early 1879, the deposed Mwanawina launched an attack on Sesheke. After burning it to the ground, he advanced north. His forces met Lubosi's at the Lumbe River, where Mwanawina's were bested in the first engagement

and scattered.¹ Alongside dealing with this immediate threat, Lubosi had set his house in order. He filled the post of *Ngambela* with his supporter Silumbu, the then *Namuyamba*. Of his other allies, Mukubesa was made *Muleta*, Masheke *Ingangwana* and Njekwa *Mukulu-wa-Kashiko*.² This apportioning of spoils did not, however, satisfy all of his supporters. One in particular, Mataa, appears to have been aggrieved. He had aspired to the office of *Ngambela*, but was instead made *Namuyamba* in Silumbu's place. Yet, when Silumbu took up his new office, in Jalla's account, he 'kept some of the men who belonged to the post of *Namuyamba*' and 'for these things Mataa hated Silumbu.' For 'men' here, one ought to read slaves.³ Mataa is also reputed to have covertly supported Musiwa, a son of Sipopa, as a rival for the throne, and his father to have had a hand in the execution of Lubosi's father, Litia, by Mpololo. For the time being, Lubosi knew Mataa to be too strong an agent to be either put down or bypassed.⁴ But he was not reticent in his handling of potential rivals to the throne. Mutumweno, Kaluwe and Wamolimungu, all sons of Sipopa, were killed.⁵ Musiwa, another son of Sipopa, sought refuge among the Mbunda of Mwene Chiyengele, but in 1880 was killed by Lubosi's forces under Numwa. It is variously reported that the Mbunda either brought Musiwa to Lealui 'to absolve themselves from blame' or that, according to Mainga's informants, 'Numwa slaughtered his way to Musiwa's hiding place and delivered him bound to Lubosi at Lealui'.⁶ On either account, once in Lubosi's hands, Musiwa was starved to death.

The first Western observer to visit the kingdom following Lubosi's accession was Serpa Pinto. He arrived in August 1878, almost immediately after the installation at Lealui, the new capital Lubosi was constructing for himself. This Portuguese soldier-adventurer recorded that Lubosi was 'a young man about 20, of lofty stature, and proportionately stout' and well attired in European clothes. Shaded by an attendant, Lubosi sat in a high-backed chair waving his fly whisk, an essential symbol of chiefly power, 'to and fro with great gravity.' Surrounded by councillors and subjects, Serpa Pinto greeted Lubosi, the *Ngambela*, Mataa and two other councillors in 'an exchange of compliments and polite greetings, which appeared rather to belong to a European court than a barbarous people.'⁷ Even correcting for what may be a little artistic licence, Serpa Pinto was clearly much taken with Lubosi. A young man he may have been, but Lubosi already appears in this account as a king in his dignity.

¹ Bradshaw, B.F., 'Notes on the Chobe River, South Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, 3, 4 (1881), p. 210; Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 75.

² Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 74.

³ Ibid., p. 74. Njekwa had similarly refused to be parted with the cattle and slaves that went with the title of *Ngambela*, a move which had infuriated Sipopa and others. See Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 109.

⁴ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 122.

⁵ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 75.

⁶ Ibid., p. 75; Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 120.

⁷ Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, pp. 3-6.

Jalla's account records that Lubosi kept up royal entertainments as Sipopa had done, giving feasts of meat and beer, but scrupulously avoided 'the habit of taking other men's wives and property. If he wished to have a cow or a dog he always paid the owner.' Right rule, it seems, was the order of the day. Similarly, and again unlike Sipopa, it is recorded that he was 'content to have only one Capital so that the nation would not grow weary of building new villages.'⁸ All of this points us in a single direction. What Lubosi sought was the reestablishment of the stability, dignity and patronage of the *Litunga*.

But his troubled relationship with sections of the elite complicated matters. By way of an example, late in 1878, Lubosi received a request from the PEMS missionary Coillard, then at Sesheke, to enter the kingdom. This request was refused on the grounds 'of the civil war which was threatening it'.⁹ Two weeks later, Coillard received a somewhat different message. 'The king greets you much. He is pleased by your arrival in Bulози. But you will find him only recently installed on the throne, he is still living in the fields. Now he must build his capital. He has not yet a house. He cannot receive anyone at present. Leave the country before the rain, depart in peace but return in the winter.'¹⁰ In Serpa Pinto's account, however, these two replies are recorded as one. To his mind, 'King Lobossi's reply, as dictated by Gambella [*Ngambela*], was a fine specimen of diplomacy, neither admitting nor absolutely rejecting the proposal.'¹¹ But there was more at work than diplomacy, for serious objections had been raised by Mataa, who opposed Coillard's entrance with 'the whole power of his eloquence.'¹² Serpa Pinto himself had by this time already been attacked, and would shortly thereafter be expelled.¹³ He claimed Lubosi dared not confront 'great opposition from the elders in his council', whom he believed to have consistently opposed his presence.¹⁴ It seems likely that Mataa, and other *manduna*, were vehemently opposed to the presence of any interlopers who might potentially serve as allies to the king. Thus the departure of Serpa Pinto and the turning away of Coillard may have served to calm relations between king and aristocracy at a time when Lubosi was not yet secure.

Several aspects of Lubosi's project to forge a newly powerful *bulena* appear to have stuck in the aristocrats' collective craw; yet we gain only a glimpse of this process in Lozi formal tradition. It is possible, however, to unpack what we do have a little. In Jalla we read that 'the Chief continually tried to revive the old Barotse customs such as those causing fear

⁸ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 74.

⁹ Coillard, *Journal*, 14 Oct., 1878, quoted in Caplan, *Elites*, p. 20.

¹⁰ Coillard, *Journal intime*, 1 Nov. 1878, quoted in Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 17. Cf. Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 64-65.

¹¹ Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, p. 100.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70. But on Serpa Pinto's imagination, see Tabler, *Trade and Travel*, p. 49.

of the chief and forced labour for the chief's gardens and other work.'¹⁵ In particular, Lubosi set about the restoration of the *makolo* system, in abeyance since the reign of Mulambwa. Yet this clearly posed a threat to the positions of the aristocracy, drawing not only labour to the centre, but also tending to restore control of armed force back into the hands of the *Litunga* and the men he chose to lead each *likolo*. Were this not sufficient, Lubosi also attempted to have *manduna* till their own fields.¹⁶ Jalla further records that 'the Chief could no longer be easily approached and at the Kuta the Indunas had to crouch instead of sitting on stools. Commoners were refused admittance to the royal enclosure.'¹⁷ Both of these measures were clearly aimed at the elevation of the *Litunga* above both the people and elite. It may be thought unwise to lend too much credence to this formal tradition alone in seeking to interpret Lubosi's policies. However, it is possible to corroborate this interpretation with other evidence, either previously overlooked or, in one case, deliberately distorted.¹⁸ To further underline the transformation of himself from simply Lubosi, the winner of the throne among a number of potential claimants, into the true king, Lubosi took on a new name.

It has been asserted by several authors that it was only in the latter half of the 1880s that Lubosi became known by the name Lewanika. Thus Mainga tells us that, where once he had been 'Lubosi "the escaped one"... after 1885 he was Lewanika "the conqueror"'.¹⁹ Elsewhere we read that "'the man with the powerful grip'" became '*Liwanika la matungu* (one who gathers together)',²⁰ with the note that the name Lewanika first appears in Coillard's journal in January 1885. In reality, the name had first been recorded four years earlier. A Jesuit missionary, on his way to attempt to win permission to establish a mission in Bulozhi, wrote on the 1st September 1881 that

It seems that Luwanika, another name for Lebushi, has summoned all the indunas of the empire and is contemplating an expedition in the near future. At the end of last year, there was a general massacre of the Mabundas [for their part in sheltering Musiwa], and now woe to the Mashukolumbwes, the only neighbours still causing offence to the bellicose Lebushi.²¹

This same missionary, Depelchin, had up to this stage consistently used the name 'Lebushi'. From the date of the Jesuit's journal entry, 1st September 1881, it appears that Lubosi took on the name Lewanika following the defeat of Musiwa and the Mbunda, although the name

¹⁵ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 76.

¹⁶ A number of Caplan's informants reported this to him. Caplan, *Elites*, pp. 21, 35 n. 15.

¹⁷ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 76.

¹⁸ See fn. 26.

¹⁹ Mainga, *Bulozhi*, pp. 127-128

²⁰ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 30-31

²¹ Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 236. See the editor's note on p. xxiv.

Lubosi also remained in circulation for some time thereafter. In general, it appears that those who knew of the *Litunga* when he was Lubosi kept the name in use, while those who arrived after the change had taken place knew Lubosi *redivivus* as Lewanika. As Depelchin had feared, Lewanika soon took steps to earn his new name, for Lewanika launched the expected raid against the Ila in 1882.²² The king later recalled of this raid that ‘he went with lot people with him & he caught fought [sic] with Mashukulumbwe, it was called Bwengwa war, it caught lot cattle & people [sic].’²³ Jalla’s account adds a little more details. When the army ‘reached Buyengwa it captured many cattle...the chief asked the leaders if they were satisfied with the spoils but the Ngambela decided to go and captured many more cattle.’ On its return, the Lozi force drove with it ‘great herds of cattle and many slaves, especially women and children.’²⁴ Raids such as these were of fundamental importance, for the spoils they brought were essential to the reestablishment of tributary networks. Not only did they tend to force the compliance of the peoples thus targeted, but they also provided the king with the largesse he needed to further bind people to the throne and unite his new kingdom. To conquer and unite were two sides of the same coin.

While Lewanika’s successful raid on the Ila is likely to have done much for his martial credibility among his subjects, there remained a serious threat beyond the borders of the kingdom, one which was likely to overmatch the forces at his disposal. In 1878 Serpa Pinto had reported that the king ‘was not on the best of terms with the Matebelis [Ndebele].’²⁵ The Lozi had long feared, and occasionally been threatened by, Ndebele raids. However, during the time Arnot spent in Lealui, between 1882 and 1884, he reported that a ‘powerful emissary’ was sent ‘to Liwanika, bringing presents of spears and shields, and inviting Liwanika to become his blood brother, and to join with the Matabele in resisting the invading white man.’²⁶ Lewanika’s subsequent action, in Arnot’s account, was to write to Khama of the Ngwato, ‘asking for his friendship’. Khama replied that Lewanika should ‘join with him, not against the white man, but against the white’s man drink [sic] if he wished to be Khama’s friend.’²⁷ Yet in the wider context of events, this makes little sense. If Lewanika had sought an alliance ‘against the white man’, why would he make one with a less powerful king? Moreover, why

²² Shortly after the king’s return from this raid, Arnot was attempting to gain permission to travel north into the Barotse valley, and he, too, calls the king ‘Liwanika’. Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 63.

²³ ‘Bashukulumbwe History’ 7 September 1910, NAZ, KDE 2/43/1. Several similar statements are to be found in this folder. This version, the least polished, was written by Kambai, the king’s clerk and translator, and it is the only one to have been signed by the king.

²⁴ Jalla, ‘The History of the Barotse Nation’, p. 75.

²⁵ Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, p. 23.

²⁶ Baker, E., *The Life and Explorations of F.S. Arnot* (London, 1921), p. 97. In Caplan, *Elites*, p. 23, this quotation from Baker has been altered to read ‘Lubosi’ in the place of ‘Liwanika’. This, clearly, is a result of Caplan subscribing to view that the change of name occurred several years later than our fuller evidence suggests.

²⁷ Baker, *Life and Explorations*, p. 97.

would Lewanika's letter to Khama, as Arnot's account makes clear, contain 'a postscript to the effect that Khama was to do all in his power to help M. and Madame Coillard and party forwards'?²⁸ It was precisely because Lewanika sought to make some alliance with these invaders that he had written to Khama, the king who had applied for British protection in 1876. Not only is it absolutely clear that Lewanika wished to have dealings with the whites, but that it had become imperative for him to do so. Although Arnot gives no date, this series of communications took place in 1884, when Coillard and his mission were already on their way north, returning to the valley after an absence of 6 years. What had changed between 1878 and 1884 that made Lewanika desirous of having Khama do 'all in his power' to help the mission forwards? The timing of these communications is critical, for by 1884 Lewanika's internal position was once more precarious.

As we have seen, Lewanika had turned Coillard away in 1878, seemingly at the behest of the *manduna*. During Coillard's long absence, which he spent trying to garner support for the PEMS mission to the Zambezi, a party of Jesuit missionaries had trekked north under Fr. Henri Depelchin. On their arrival at Pantamatenga, Depelchin assessed their chances poorly. Word of a rebellion was in the air.²⁹ Nevertheless, in 1881 the Jesuits made the journey north to the valley and, apparently warmly received, they reported obtaining grants of land from Lubosi and promised to return the following year.³⁰ Yet when Arnot reached Pantamatenga in 1882, he found the Jesuits languishing there. Arnot soon secured, through the good offices of Westbeeche, permission to travel onwards.³¹ 'Strange to tell', wrote the Jesuit Fr. Booms, 'though barely here two minutes' Arnot was 'getting as many boats and porters as he likes' whereas they could get none at all.³² When they finally did return to Lealui in May 1883, having lost one of their number to the Zambezi rapids, the Jesuits found themselves no longer welcome, and rightly blamed Westbeeche's influence.³³ 'I have', Westbeeche wrote in 1855, 'kept the Jesuits out to assist Coillard, who asked me in 1878'.³⁴ Coillard finally returned in 1884 and Westbeeche told him he had kept the way open, but 'given up all hope myself. It was impossible to understand your delays.'³⁵ And it was not only Westbeeche who was beginning to despair. Marrying this narrative to the communications between Lewanika and Khama, it

²⁸ Ibid., p. 97. Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 76 gives a rather sparser rendering of this, and one probably closer to the truth.

²⁹ Roberts, *Journeys*, pp. 108-109.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 250.

³¹ Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 62 reproduces a letter from Westbeeche to Arnot to this effect, dated 5 October 1882.

³² Roberts, *Journeys*, p. 291.

³³ Gelfand, M., *Gubulawayo and Beyond: letters and journals of the early Jesuit missionaries to Zambesia (1879-1887)* (London, 1968), pp. 421-422.

³⁴ Tabler, *Trade and Travel*, p. 38.

³⁵ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 132.

is possible to see the impact of the changing political situation on Lewanika's priorities. For it was, in Jalla's account, shortly after the failure of the second Jesuit mission of 1883 that the Ndebele embassy arrived and Lewanika sent his message to Khama, urging that Coillard be sent on without delay.³⁶ On the 29th of April 1884, Arnot reported that a 'few lines from Basutoland' and a blanket had arrived from Coillard 'to say that he was coming on.' But this was dated April 1882, and so not connected the Lewanika's letter to Khama of the previous year. Meanwhile, a message and blanket had also arrived from the Jesuits, still 'very energetic and determined to succeed.'³⁷

This poses two questions. First, why, despite the proximity of the Jesuits, was it Coillard that Lewanika wished to see established in his kingdom? This, presumably, we can lay at the door of Westbeech's intervention. Second, given that Lewanika's letter to Khama was written unprompted by any word from Coillard himself, why had Lewanika decided to ignore the earlier objections of his *manduna*? The answer, in short, is that Lewanika's position had become so precarious that he had abandoned any hope of reconciliation with his opponents. What he needed was an ally, for by late 1883 Arnot was already writing of Lewanika's 'quarrels with his "officers of state,"...they taunt each other, and I fear the end will be another king-killing.'³⁸ Then, in April 1884, shortly before Coillard's message arrived, Lewanika had cause to rebuke Mataa for his pride and purportedly went so far as to say "You are the man who will assassinate me".³⁹ Fearing the consequences, Arnot took advantage of the offer of Silva Porto to strike out for Bihé together. Taking his leave of Lewanika on the 1st of May, the king had told Arnot "You are my friend; come back soon. But," he added in a tone of sadness, "you may not find me here."⁴⁰ Coillard, meanwhile, continued northwards. Upon his arrival at Sesheke he was delayed by the panic occasioned by rumours of an Ndebele raid. On the 1st of September, Coillard resumed his journey, but was forced to return to Sesheke. Word had reached the chiefs, and through them Coillard, that a revolt had been launched against the king.⁴¹

The leader of this coup was none other than Mataa, the constant thorn in Lewanika's flank. A would-be king maker, he had been passed over for office and then doubly slighted by the refusal of his predecessor, Silumbu, to part with the cattle and slaves associated with the position of *Namuyamba*, Mataa's by right. Lewanika had seen the crisis coming, and feared

³⁶ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 76.

³⁷ Baker, *Life and Explorations*, p. 88.

³⁸ Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 91.

³⁹ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 77.

⁴⁰ Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 95. Prins erroneously stated that Arnot departed with Serpa Pinto. Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 133.

⁴¹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 146-148.

himself unequal to the threat. So it was to prove. Lewanika had wrought much destruction upon his accession, even dealing with his brother as he had with the sons of Sipopa. His restoration of the *makolo* was a direct threat to the power enjoyed by the *manduna*, whom he had also forced to till the fields. Numwa, the man entrusted by Lewanika to dispatch Musiwa, was particularly aggrieved by this last measure. For his part, Mataa had certainly been sufficiently provoked, and Lewanika's shift from appeasement reflected and compounded this. The time for manoeuvring was over. So it was that, following Jalla's account,

Murder, hatred, slander and drunkenness fanned the flames of rebellion, and in July [1884], Mataa, flinging aside all pretence of loyalty, collected together Mukubesa, Numwa (the son of Sibangano), the Sambi of Nalolo and many other indunas who were under his influence and surrounded the royal enclosure. That night the Chief heard the sound of gun shots and realised that it meant rebellion.⁴²

In this rendering, Lewanika is the man betrayed. Yet, as we have seen, it is equally reasonable to see the revolt as an attempt to put down an over-weaning monarch. We have two accounts of the events that follow. Westbeech's account, presumably as told to him by Lewanika, is rather thin on detail and broadly in agreement with the second account, as recorded by Jalla.⁴³ Let it suffice to say that in both accounts, Lewanika made good his escape by a combination of fortitude and good fortune.

In Lewanika's place, Mataa elevated Tatila Akafuna, grandson of Mulambwa and son of Imbua. Maibiba, Akafuna's sister, was placed in Nalolo. Mataa was made *Ngambela* and his allies installed, while opponents of the new regime were killed or driven out. It appears that the country once more divided along the Lwambi/Namuso fault, with Lewanika supported by the south.⁴⁴ Interestingly, Mataa, once so vocal in his opposition to a missionary presence in the kingdom, sent word that Coillard should be sent north. He granted the mission a site at Sefula, promising them support, before Coillard returned to Leshuma to fetch the rest of the mission party. All of this Coillard did in direct contravention of the advice of Westbeech. We shall return to this encounter in the next section. Lewanika, meanwhile, remained in exile at Mashu with his son Litia, Silumbu and a party of loyalists. In the Lozi account we read of a series of adventures, forged alliances and astute decisions, casting the deposed king in the best possible light. His trials and tribulations, vividly rendered in the Lozi account, our only detailed source for the period, need not concern us here.⁴⁵

⁴² Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 78.

⁴³ Tabler, *Trade and Travel*, pp. 44-47; Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', pp. 78-79.

⁴⁴ Caplan, *Elites*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', pp. 84-92.

The next event of significance, about which Westbeech proves the most informative source, was an attempted counter-coup launched in March 1885 by Lewanika's supporters from the Nalolo-Senanga area under Simasiku. This force marched north, but, meeting the enemy,

they fought a battle about 12 miles from Li-aLiue [Lialui] and were worsted. Semaseku [Simasiku] and some hundreds were killed (37 took refuge in some garden huts, were found there, secured inside, the huts set on fire and they were roasted inside). Those who survived the fight fled to Lewanika⁴⁶

To topple the rebels and regain the kingdom was clearly going to prove a bloody business. In July the same year, the king agreed to the mounting of an expedition to the valley, to be led by Silumbu rather than the royal personage. His group joined with those of the south near Senanga and, finding that Mataa and Akafuna had fled Lealui, seized the capital. Mataa deposed Akafuna, and in his stead placed Akafuna's brother, Sikufele wa Namiluko. Then, alongside Numwa and their new puppet king, Mataa headed south to resume the fight.

Lewanika was marching north, having crossed the Zambezi at Naliele. He joined forces with Silumbu south of Lealui and sent out scouts. A further day was spent moving northwards, before the army made camp at Nayunga. The following day the opposing forces faced one another just to the south of Lealui. It appears that it had originally been Lewanika's intention to throw his men into battle as one body, but he was overruled by Silumbu. One part of Lewanika's army, composed of men from the southern kingdom, deployed to the east of the Nalusa stream in the direction of Mongu. To the west of the stream, Kabeti *likolo* held the line between Lwatile and Sangandu and Njeminwa *likolo* took up positions to the west, between Lwatile and Liamoku. Silumbu was in command of Kabeti, and Imakumbili and Kalonga commanded Njeminwa. A sign of the deep rifts in the kingdom, and of the centrality of *makolo* to the structure of the kingdom, can be read in the composition of the rebel forces. Numwa and Sikufele commanded their own Njeminwa *likolo*, and Mataa the rebel Kabeti. The deployment of the rebel force appears to have mirrored that of the loyalists, for in the ensuing battle Numwa and Sikufele led the rebel Njeminwa against Silumbu's loyalist Kabeti, and Mataa's Kabeti engaged the Njeminwa of Lewanika's forces. Silumbu and Numwa's forces were the first to join battle. Silumbu is said to have wounded Numwa, but Numwa was the ultimate victor. It is said that so vicious was Numwa in battle that when *Ngambela* Silumbu's body was found, Numwa had bitten away his ears and lips.⁴⁷ Not for nothing was Numwa's praise *nasiñamba lushimba masho*, the one with teeth like spears. Silumbu's Kabeti

⁴⁶ Tabler, *Trade and travel*, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Mubiyana Wamunyima, interview, Limulunga, 25 November 2011

were routed, and Lewanika's Njeminwa were wavering. At this stage, in some accounts, Lewanika is said to have called upon a detachment of armed Mambari. Enticed by the promise of favourable future terms of trade, their fusillades tipped the balance. Mataa was killed and Numwa fled, was pursued, wounded once more and finally overcome. Coillard reported that a Scottish trader, John MacDonald, had found himself in Lealui when Lewanika's forces first recaptured the place, and had thrown his lot in with the king. In Coillard's account, 'the natives boast of his great shooting and having defended himself against so many with a double barreled gun' during this battle.⁴⁸ Westbeeche, however, makes no mention of either MacDonald or the Mambari in the account he presumably gleaned from Lewanika. It is possible that neither were there, but given that all accounts agree the battle was a gruelling and close run thing, a decisive intervention swinging the battle in Lewanika's favour is not impossible. Nevertheless, the outcome of the battle was assured by the arrival of the southern forces, who smashed the rebel Kabeti *likolo* and then joined the fight against Sikufele's Njemwina. The pretender was mortally wounded and the battle turned into a rout. With the death of Mataa, a major threat to Lewanika's reign was removed, although it had been no easy task. The praise of Mataa, *sinyatela sifanu na mulipumo*, the man who was like a sickness that cannot be cured, is said to speak of his mercilessness in battle, but he had been as persistent a problem off the field for Lewanika as upon it.⁴⁹ In February 1886, three months after the battle had been fought, the grisly aftermath was still lying on the field. Westbeeche wrote that

the flat from Li-a-Liue to Mongu...a distance of 12 miles without a bush, is even now covered with skeletons and grinning skulls, as there was no hiding place, it being the month of November and the grass only an inch or two high. Selumbu was the only one that received funeral honours.⁵⁰

Thus ended the revolt against Lewanika. What the foregoing ought to make clear is that, given the fact that that Lewanika had taken steps to revitalise tributary networks and the centralising institutions which had underpinned Mulambwa's reign, the revolt against him rested largely upon internal unrest. Unlike previous revolts, external trade does not appear to have been a factor, barring the possible Mambari intervention during the battle before Lealui. Similarly, it would be a mistake to read the attempts of the Jesuits and PEMS missions to establish themselves as destabilising factors in themselves. Rather, it was the perception of the potential strength they could lend to whoever was in power that made them a threat. We can clearly read evidence of this perceived threat in the action of Mataa. Once on the throne

⁴⁸ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 134-135, quoting Coillard, *Journal intime*, 8 Jan. 1885.

⁴⁹ This account is an amalgamation of Tabler, *Trade and travel*, pp. 46-47; Caplan, *Elites* p. 33 and Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', pp. 96-97.

⁵⁰ Tabler, *Trade and travel*, p. 47.

once more, Lewanika would indeed take steps to draw upon the perceived strength of the mission to secure his reign beyond question.

L'esprit missionnaire: The coming of the Paris Evangelical Mission

A number of scholars have gone into a great deal of detail about the return of the PEMS to Barotseland from 1884 onwards, none more so than Prins, who devoted around a page and a half to the period 1876-1884, and then over fifteen pages to the events of a single day, the meeting between Lewanika and Coillard. Prins' intention was to cast light into the interstices of the accounts of Coillard and others, drawing an intimate picture of the mission and their relationship with the Lozi, and, in so doing, reveal a deeper logic to events. On these terms, it must be admitted that his reconstruction is a masterly one. It would be churlish to claim otherwise. For Prins, the essence of the colonial moment is the struggle for power, both practical and ritual, between the mission and the Lozi elite. The mission had to be controlled, for 'if the Europeans ran amok, were seen to be superior to the kingship and unaffected by it, then they had the potential to do great damage.'⁵¹ Yet eschewing the banal misses much of the reality of life, for in reading between the lines one runs the risk of missing the importance of the lines themselves. This is not to suggest that everything outside of the material reality of life is unimportant. Rather, as was argued in the introduction, it is this reality which must come first. Prins elevates 'the partial mutual misunderstandings between Lozis and Europeans and...the fruitful consequences of those mutual misunderstandings' to the centre of the story.⁵² But the dawn of the colonial moment in Buluzi was not the comedy of errors Prins makes of it. That he was able to paint it in such colours had much to do with the end point of his narrative. His is an argument that can reasonably stand up for the period before the arrival of the BSAC, but it is made nonsense from that point onwards. To argue that 'the absolute importance of the Concessions [signed with the Company] has been overstated in the past' and that the role of the PEMS in the concessions must recede in the face of other factors, such as their contribution to agricultural improvements in the 1890s, misses the point entirely.⁵³ This is an argument to which we will return in the next chapter. At present, given the attention that has already been devoted to the early days of the PEMS mission, little more than a brief account is necessary here.

We left Coillard at Sesheke in December 1884, having just received news of the revolt against Lewanika. One might expect the reasoned response to this would be to await events. But Coillard, who believed that the '*esprit missionnaire est un esprit d'agression et de*

⁵¹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 165.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

conquête’,⁵⁴ was not to be put off. Accompanied by Aaron, a Basuto evangelist, and Middleton, an artisan missionary, he began the journey up the river.⁵⁵ Arriving in Lealui on the 7th of December, they were received by the young king Akafuna and Mataa. The latter, according to Coillard, told the party: ‘You are welcome, servants of God...you who bring us rain and slumber, peace and abundance. It is in the name of the whole nation that we receive you. We have waited long years for you, and thought you had forsaken us’.⁵⁶ Given Mataa’s previous position, this may have stretched the truth somewhat, but it certainly suggests that, where Coillard had once been a potential enemy, he was now a potential ally. The missionary was granted a site for a station and then returned to Leshuma, intending to come north again with the rest of the mission party. When Westbeeck met Coillard there in early June 1885, the missionary was preparing for the return journey, despite Westbeeck’s contrary advice.⁵⁷ The missionaries advanced, reaching Sesheke on the 24th of September, but were held up by weather, transport problems and instability further north. News reached them there on the 4th of November that Lewanika had seized his kingdom back and they were ordered to wait at Sesheke until Westbeeck had seen the king. As the man himself explained, all of Coillard’s ‘overtures have been made to the King who has fled, Wa-ga-Funa [Akafuna], and I must make things agreeable for C[oillard] before he will be permitted to go on...So much for being strong-headed and refusing, or at all events, not taking my advice.’⁵⁸

Westbeeck was clearly able to convince Lewanika that Coillard ought to be allowed to visit the valley. Much has been made of the timing of Coillard’s journey upriver by Prins, who argued that ‘a specific royal directive is the only reasonable explanation of all that happened’, that is, the change in attitude of the Sesheke chiefs, from recalcitrance to co-operation, and the prestige and quality of Coillard’s escort.⁵⁹ So too the timing of the departure, according to Prins, on the day of the new moon and travelling during a waxing moon, the most propitious circumstances. Famously, Prins has argued that the encounter between the two parties near a royal *sitino*, the grave of Mulambwa in his reading, was intended to place the missionary in a cosmologically subservient position.

If the missionary was to be harnessed, it was imperative that the first thing to happen should be an act ritually locating him below the combined human and spiritual powers of the kingship...The intention was to get Coillard to Lilindu [*sitino* of Mulambwa] on

⁵⁴ ‘Rapport de M. Le Missionnaire Coillard, Paris, le 26 mars 1880’, in *La Mission au Zambèze, Rapports présentes au Comité de la Société des Missions de Paris par M. le missionnaire Coillard et par M. le pasteur Appia* (Paris, 1880), p. 5.

⁵⁵ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

⁵⁷ Tabler, *Trade and travel*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 176.

a waxing moon. This was rather important and so, for safety's sake, the king dispatched more boats to ensure that there was no delay. In this, the king only just succeeded...Had he not stopped [for the Sabbath], Coillard would have reached Lealui on Saturday 20th, the night when the moon appeared at its fullest. In fact that was the day he reached Nalolo. However, the moon would not have begun to wane appreciably by the 22nd, so effectively the missionary arrived at full moon.⁶⁰

There is certainly logic to this argument. However, it is not entirely based on an accurate presentation of the facts of the matter. The purpose of having Coillard arrive at Lilundu was to have the missionary sacrifice at the grave of the former king, thereby making him a supplicant to the *bulena* in the broadest sense. Coillard, however, refused to make the obeisance required of him. In his original diary, quoted by Prins, Coillard wrote that a messenger from the king had brought the following response: 'The king understands. If the moruti [missionary] doesn't pray to our gods, let him give a metre of calico which is sufficient.'⁶¹ However, in Coillard's published account, the messenger tells the missionary: 'The king understands your reasons, and excuses you from praying at the tomb. He only asks a yard of white calico and he will pray for you.'⁶² Clearly, the latter version places a rather different interpretation on the encounter, for the supplication is at one remove, not Coillard's own but Lewanika's on his behalf. The distinction may be a fine one, and the published rendering a later justificatory gloss, but when an entire argument is built on such minutiae, this matters.

Much the same can be said of the alleged significance of a waxing moon. Coillard did not arrive at Lealui until two days after the fact, 'effectively' at full moon. In contrast to this, Prins' argued, the Jesuits 1881 journey had left Sesheke on a waning moon, passed the rapids during the most unpropitious days, and the mission had ended in failure. Yet, as Table 1 shows, the Jesuits had actually arrived at Lealui almost immediately before the full moon, and had remained there throughout its peak. By the same token, in 1882, Arnot made the passage through the rapids during the most dangerous days; yet his mission was no failure. In 1883, conversely, the Jesuits had arrived at a propitious moment, but the results of their mission had been disappointing, finding, as they did, that they were clearly not welcome in Lealui. Admittedly, in 1884-1885, Coillard arrived a little after the moon's peak, but had certainly left with a reasonable expectation of arriving in the valley during the optimum period. He would likely have arrived at full moon had he not been delayed by his wife's health. When Westbeeck travelled north to convince the king to permit Coillard to do the same in 1886, he completed

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 186-187.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 179, quoting Coillard, *Journal intime*, Wed., 24 March 1886.

⁶² Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 217.

much of the journey during the least favourable days (See Table 1). All of this is to say that it is going rather too far to suggest an absolute cosmological significance for the timing of journeys up the Zambesi and that, if one is to do so, it must not be presented disingenuously.

What Lewanika desired from Coillard was obvious from the outset. The day after the missionaries' arrival, Lewanika asked him to write a letter requesting the extension of British protection over his kingdom.⁶³ Again, in 1887, Lewanika wrote to Khama through Coillard, seeking his advice on the subject. In September 1888, news of this reached the Foreign Office, who took a rather dim view of the matter.⁶⁴ 'The King Lewanika', wrote Coillard again on the 8th of January 1889, 'is most anxious to solicit that the Protectorate of the British Government should soon be extended to him and his people'. Lewanika and his headmen's steadfast persistence in this had, to Coillard's mind, removed 'all motives for further delay.' But delay there was, for this letter did not arrive until the following August.⁶⁵ In the meantime, on the 27th of June 1889, Lewanika signed a concession with a trader and concession hunter, Harry Ware, granting exclusive mining rights, and the rights to wood, water, land for construction, grazing, road and railway construction and free access in 'the whole of my country extending east from the river Majile [Machili], the boundary to the north to be the cattle path leading to the Machikulomboe, the boundary to the south to be the Zambezi river'.⁶⁶ In September Sir Sidney Shippard, through whom Coillard had sent Lewanika's request in January, replied, telling Coillard that 'the Hon. C.J. Rhodes is out here, who has received a Royal Charter without limits for the whole of the interior...The new Chartered Company will be able to afford to Lewanika and his people the fullest protection...Mr. Rhodes tells me he is sending a Mission to you.'⁶⁷ The Company had, in fact, not received its charter in September. But then Shippard was a man known for his part in the cajoling and duping of numerous chiefs into the signing of concessions with the BSAC. For this, he would earn for himself the unflattering moniker *Morena Maaka*, or 'Lord of Lies'.⁶⁸

Rhodes' envoy, Frank Elliot Lochner, formerly of the Bechuanaland Border Police, set off in October. Ware, meanwhile, had sold his concession to two Kimberley speculators, from whom Rhodes obtained it in December 1889, at the cost of £9,000 and 10,000 shares in

⁶³ Mackintosh, C.M., *Coillard of the Zambezi* (London, 1907), p. 381.

⁶⁴ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 211; Clay, *Your Friend*, pp. 58-60.

⁶⁵ Hole, H.M., *The Making of Rhodesia* (London, 1926), pp. 213-214. Cf. Clay, *Your Friend*, pp. 60-61.

⁶⁶ The Lozi had raided the Ila the previous year, and so while the cattle path certainly meant something then, it means very little now. See Clay, *Your Friend*, p. 158.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁸ Parsons, Q. N., 'Shippard, Sir Sidney Godolphin Alexander (1837-1902)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <accessed 4 September 2013: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36070>>

the BSAC. Thus the way was clear for Lochner to try and obtain an agreement with Lewanika. This he did, on the 27th of June 1890. Lochner's was a far wider ranging document than the Ware Concession, which it explicitly superseded, but defined no further boundaries, beyond 'the whole territory of the said nation.' The Lozi, Coillard recorded, claimed that this included the Lunda and Luvale to the north, the Kaonde to the north-east, the Ila to the east and the Tonga and Toka to the south-east.⁶⁹ Thus this vast area of perhaps 200,000 square miles came under the control of the BSAC. Yet it was an area over which the Lozi had very dubious claims. In return, Lewanika received what he desired, for the concession proclaimed that 'this agreement shall be considered in the light of a treaty between my said Barotse nation and the Government of Her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria, but nothing written in this agreement shall otherwise affect my constitutional power or authority as Chief of the said nation.' Lewanika's consideration in all of this, beyond the royalties he was to receive, was the undertaking and agreement 'to protect the King and nation from all outside interference and attack.'⁷⁰ The Company further undertook to 'aid and assist in the education and civilization of the native subjects of the King', establishing schools, communications and transport, and to appoint a 'British Resident, with a suitable suite and escort, to reside permanently with the King.'⁷¹ Crucially, one critical clause was omitted from Lewanika's copy of the concession. For Lewanika had, unbeknownst to him, promised 'to continue in my endeavours for the suppression of slavery and witchcraft in my country, and will assist the Company in their efforts for the same object'.⁷² The immediate impact of these concessions, however, was slight. It appeared, at least initially, that Lewanika had won a major victory. In time, Lewanika's 'alliance making' would entangle the Lozi and colonial state, fixing formal relationships and institutions in a manner neither equitable nor negotiable, despite appearances to the contrary. For if the Lozi and the Company were allies, then it was the latter which unquestionably became the *primus inter pares*.⁷³ The longer consequences of this, and of the emerging tripartite relationship between the BSAC, mission and Lozi elite, will be dealt with at length in the next chapter.

⁶⁹ See Caplan, G., 'Barotseland's Scramble for Protection', *JAH*, 10, 2 (1969), p. 292.

⁷⁰ 'Appendix B – The Lochner Concession', in Clay, *Your Friend*, pp. 160-161.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 199, cf. fn. 109.

⁷³ The argument presented in this section is much the same as that in my article, Hogan, '“What then happened to our Eden?”'.

'I am the *moshimane* of the *Baruti*': the PEMS mission and slavery

If what Lewanika wanted from the missionaries was obvious from the outset, then so too, on some level, was what they wanted from Lewanika. Clearly, what they sought in the first place was permission to establish mission stations and schools and to proselytise amongst his people. And by the late 1880s, the impact of the missionaries and mission was beginning to be felt for the first time. In the school they established at Sefula, one can see Lozi social tensions writ small. The first students came with a retinue of slaves, some of whom attended the school, sitting behind their masters.⁷⁴ Those first students were drawn from the Lozi elite, and whilst the missionaries welcomed their attendance, this posed a problem. School was still considered the exclusive preserve of 'the young princes; and those who attend it are, or by the mere fact become, their serfs and their slaves. That is enough to frighten the parents, and the children themselves.'⁷⁵ In the case of Lewanika's daughter, Coillard had attempted to insist that she come alone, without slaves. This was met with some surprise by Lewanika's sister Katoka, who had exclaimed "What!...let our children go to Sefula without slaves? Never!"⁷⁶ Litia, Lewanika's son, surrounded 'himself with an etiquette which forbids familiarity, and safeguard[ed] his authority among this mob of boys and slaves'. Litia's frostiness notwithstanding, by 1889, the principle of equality in the classroom began to be accepted. Even Lewanika's daughter, though 'always surrounded by slaves and flattered by everybody', thus preserving 'a little prestige which often contradicts our authority', did without maids and performed household work like slave girls.⁷⁷

This occasioned some grievance, however, and in April 1889 it appeared that the school was in danger of collapsing, as the *Mulena Mukwae* of Nalolo began to openly oppose the mission's work. For his part, Lewanika was wavering. Coillard learned that one of the grievances against him was that he 'made the Barotsi children do the work of slaves.'⁷⁸ The teachings of the mission and the ordering of the school posed a direct threat to the essential division between slave and master. As Arnot had found in 1883, to teach that 'God dealt with the *hearts* of men, and not with their skins; that a poor "matlanka" [*mutanga*] (lowest slave) might be seated in the palace of God, and a king or chief shut out', was a message inimical to the basic structure of Lozi society. It is hardly surprising that Lewanika had forbidden him to ever speak of such things again.⁷⁹ By 1890, Coillard was reporting that his pupils remained

⁷⁴ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 286.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 348, 398.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁷⁹ Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 73.

‘terribly wild; they cannot bear restraint for long.’ This he attributed to the fact that most had ‘their own slaves and villages. At home, they are masters... they go off *borotsi* as they say (that is, *to the Valley*), to enjoy the liberty of fishing and boating, and the servile adulations of their subordinates.’ Upon their return, nothing was remedied, for when ‘they return *mosito* [*mushitu*] (i.e. *to the woods*, where we live), others go away; and farewell to progress.’⁸⁰

But the mission did work some small transformations. In one case, three slave girls, ‘properly dressed’, able to ‘sew and read and perform all sorts of little household tasks’, were thus so elevated that Coillard reported that the *Mulena Mukwae*, ‘when they came to salute her, quite forgot herself, and gave them her hand.’⁸¹ We know nothing of what these girls made of this, but through the mission there were slaves who found not only new masters, but a powerful message as well. One, ‘Nguana-Ngombé’, or Mwanangombe, was a slave given to Coillard by Lewanika. He was also a member of Coillard’s first class of catechumens, which began in November 1887. In August 1888, Coillard reported that he had stood at the end of a Sunday service and asked to speak. Coillard recorded his address.

You all know me. I am Nguana-Ngombé, a *moshimane* (here, a slave). My father is a Mosubia, my mother a Motoka. I am the *moshimane* of the *Baruti* [missionaries]. Yes, but I am more than that – I am a believer... Are you going to say, ‘Look at Nguana-Ngombé, he wants to be a white man’? How can I become a white man, when I was born black. God is not the God of the whites only...the *Moruti* has never been up to heaven. But he is going there; and I, his *moshimane*, am going too.⁸²

In June 1895, when travelling amongst the Mbowe, at another Sunday service, Coillard had one of his young converts, a ‘Moshukulumboe’, speak. This man, who promised ‘to become a “son of thunder”’, drew his speech to an impassioned end, warning his audience that

Satan deceives you in making you believe that the good news of salvation is only for our masters. I tremble for you too, my lords—I who am, as you say, nothing but a dog of a slave, a nothing. As for you, you puff yourselves up, you imagine that you will enter Heaven because you are great. Know then that slaves—yes, your slaves—have already outstripped you; and if you do not take care, you will find the door shut.⁸³

⁸⁰ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 396.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 321-323. Mwanangombwe, baptised with the name Andreas at Pentecost, May 1890, subsequently lapsed in 1891 and became apostate in 1892. He then served Lewanika as a steward, eventually becoming headman of Imusho near Sesheke. Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 263, n. 49.

⁸³ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 600-601.

There is, perhaps, some cause to doubt the accuracy of Coillard's reportage. But the message remains clear enough. In their preaching of salvation, redemption and the love of God, the mission's message worked towards subverting fundamental structures in Lozi society. Yet their work was circumscribed by the power of the king. It was on him they depended not only for permission to carry out their work, but also for access to labour and even, occasionally, for the basic necessities of life. For his part, Lewanika held the mission in 'genteel bondage'.⁸⁴ He had much better uses for his slaves than as converts and rather different ideas from the missionaries of their value to his kingdom.

'Mwayowamo, thou has been dug by many': slavery and public works in the 1890s

Having provided a chronological account of political developments up to 1884, we now turn our attention to slavery in this period, and consider the position of both slaves and their masters. Yet having few Lozi sources and no record of any statement by slaves, one must find a means to supplement the words of others to make the lives of slaves visible and meaningful. If one were to pursue a reconstruction based solely upon the accounts we do have, it would merely reproduce what others made of their bondage. Fortunately, there is an objective yardstick against which we can see for ourselves what being a slave meant for those so bound. The great public works of the late nineteenth century, and the changing Lozi economy of which these works were but a part, must serve as our measure. More than anything else these public works bear witness to the extent of the labour the Lozi elite drew upon in the pursuit of their own ends. Nowhere was the nature of Lozi slavery more clearly revealed on the large scale.

Mainga has described the latter half of the 1890s as a time punctuated by a series of natural disasters. Thus, in 1895, a 'great famine' nearly forced the closure of the missions, and 1896 saw the outbreak of 'rinderpest and cattle plague that raged till 1898'. Locusts and drought prolonged the famine, and the 'extraordinary floods' of December 1896 damaged crops and exacerbated the problem. Then, in November 1897, an outbreak of influenza took its toll on the population. Among the sick was the king. His recovery, we read, 'was greeted by the entire male population with cries of joy.' Less cheering, however, was the continuation of the famine, for 'in Batoka and Sesheke people were dying of hunger.' These biblical

⁸⁴ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 232.

tribulations, to paraphrase Clarence-Smith, immiserated the kingdom, weighing upon a 'frightened, sick and famished nation'.⁸⁵

However, Lewanika's programme of works complicates this gloomy reading of events. Prins has demonstrated the centrality of Lewanika's drainage program, facilitated by the low floods of the early 1890s, to the 'dramatically strengthened' agricultural system of the later 1890s. Drawing upon this agricultural strength, and making full use of *likomu za mbuwa* and *bonamukau* to tighten the bonds of patronage, Lewanika, Prins demonstrates, ensured his was a kingdom 'more cohesive and united than it had been for several generations at least, if not ever before.'⁸⁶ This argument is, so far as the position of Lewanika and the Lozi elite is concerned, certainly correct. Yet it entirely ignores the backs upon which this strengthened edifice was constructed: the people who not only cut the canals and tilled the king's gardens, but over whose heads the patronage flowed. Once again, as in the case of the moment of contact between Coillard and Lewanika, Prins moves from a convincing and well-grounded historical reconstruction into obfuscation. In this case, the most obvious example of the distortions which inevitably arise from Prins' approach is his examination of the purpose and consequences of the canal building programme. We can gain a clear picture of how these distortions affect his work by unpacking another of the proverbs that Prins uses to paper over cracks in his own argument.

The Mwayowamo canal, begun in 1891, ran from Lealui to Nañoko, at the mouth of the Namitone valley to the north-east, some 15 miles as the crow flies, although the course of the canal was rather longer. It involved, by Prins' own calculation, the excavation of more than eight million cubic feet (roughly 226,535m³) in around five months.⁸⁷ The name Mwayowamo is said to derive from a proverb: *ya sa tapi mwa teñi h'a na ku fela masila*, 'Who does not wash there shall not be rid of dirt', in Prins' translation. This saying remains well known today in Buluzi, although it appears to have become associated with religious - that is to say, Christian - notions of sin and redemption.⁸⁸ While clearly a modern grafting onto an older idea, this adaptation nevertheless points back in the direction of Prins' gloss: 'whoever does not benefit from the canal has only himself to blame.'⁸⁹ Prins' derivation of Mwayowamo's name and his understanding of the purpose of its construction are drawn from a paean to the canal written by Y.W. Mupatu, more particularly from its third stanza:

⁸⁵ Clarence-Smith, 'Climatic variations and natural disasters in Barotseland, 1847-1907', University of Zambia seminar paper, 1977, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 60.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁸⁸ Mubiana Wamunyima, Interview, Limulunga, 25 November 2011; Mufaya Kulila, Interview, Mongu, 10 November 2011; Gilbert Matindo, Interview, 16 November 2011.

⁸⁹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 7.

Mwayowamo, Mwayowamo, thou has been dug by many,
And thou hast been dug for many...
Mwayowamo means “He who does not bathe in thee will
never be clean”.

Mupatu’s homage continues, and we begin to move further towards the actual purpose of the canal.

People in Lealui would be in great want of water were
thou not dug there. Lealui is right in the
plain, the few pools there during the dry season are quite dry.⁹⁰

And this rather extraordinary poem continues, listing more of the canal’s cardinal virtues.

There were no inhabitants in Namitome dale, it was quite destitute.
Today when thou art flowing through there, drums are beaten
by people enjoying feasts.
It is peopled by many people who are growing varieties of eatables.

...

During the wet season tiger fish leave the Zambezi river.
They come into thee and eat fish merrily living there.
The big crested tiger fish which get fat after having eaten
Their fellow tiger...

...

With your water may the feet of the school children,
their bodies, clothes and slates be kept continually clean.
We feel quite pleased when we feel that thou hast been dug
by our grandparents. Thou didst not lose national money in
being dug. But thou hast been dug by willing patriotic hearts,
The rich, the poor in harmony wilfully agreed with King Lewanika to dig thee.

Mupatu, in venerating the works of Lewanika, clearly brought his own concerns to bear, most visibly here those of an educationalist and advocate of tradition and self-reliance. Prins, in swallowing Mupatu’s vision whole like the ‘big crested tiger’, saw this canal as one bringing near universal benefit. Like Mupatu, he was ready to believe that it was rich and poor alike, ‘willing patriotic hearts...in harmony’, who laboured on a canal dug by the many, for the many. Yet by their very nature, canals only bring benefits to those living along their course,

⁹⁰ Mupatu, ‘Barotseland in days past’, p. 29.

or on land they might drain. Herein lies the rub. The Mwayowamo canal ensured both a water supply and communications for Lealui. It also allowed for an easy passage for the royal barge, the *Nalikwanda*, during *kuomboka*. Clearly the choice of Lealui, seat of the *Litunga*, suggests that securing the benefits to the king and to his capital was a major consideration. Moreover, the opening up of land allowed the king to settle villages along its course. Thus the bonds of patronage were strengthened. This was no incidental benefit, as Prins would have us believe.⁹¹ As Mupatu recognised, Lewanika ‘didst not lose national money’ in the construction of the canal, but instead gained a great deal. Read in this light, it is rather difficult to reconcile oneself with the notion that it was those who actually dirtied themselves in the digging of the great work who were the ones who benefitted most.

Having set our understanding of the nature of this canal building program on a proper footing, we can now turn to the origins and timing of these works. As discussed before, canals had long been a central part of the agricultural system of the floodplain. Ngombala, the *Litunga* who had founded the southern kingdom, had had a canal named *Nuka ya Malozi*, the ‘stream of the Lozi’, dug in the south, near Kazangula.⁹² During Mulambwa’s reign a canal was dug which ‘eventually formed the core of the Little River, a branch of the Zambezi’.⁹³ The Mbunda and Sipopa had similarly dug small canals for drainage purposes.⁹⁴ What changed under Lewanika was the scale of the undertaking. What appears to have swelled the king’s ambition was the canal begun by the missionaries from their station at Sefula. Between November 1887 and the following February, one and a quarter miles of canal, seven feet wide, was dug in the Sefula valley. Work was halted, however, by a lack of supplies and the departure of the workforce to raid the Ila. This canal was supervised by Auguste Goy, although Coillard had been the one who obtained permission from Lewanika to recruit sufficient labour for the task, and Lewanika had in fact made a gift of ten head of cattle to Coillard towards the costs of the work. Goy was assisted by Mwanangombe, the catechist quoted above. With over seven miles still to be dug in order to affect a connection with the Zambezi, work was resumed in May 1889, but by April 1890 it remained unfinished.⁹⁵

Meanwhile, Lewanika had begun his own works. Mupatu recorded that work began on Mwayowamo in 1889, although it appears that major works actually started the following year.⁹⁶ The Sikalongo canal, covering the five miles between Lealui and the Zambezi was cut, making use of both existing waterways and a feeder lake. As Lewanika’s successor, Yeta III,

⁹¹ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 70.

⁹² Hermitte, ‘An economic history’, p. 42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 67, n. 85.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197

⁹⁵ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 66-67.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264, n. 60; Mupatu, ‘Barotseland in days past’, p. 29.

made clear several decades later, the canal provided a means for bringing food to Lealui and a route to the capital for people travelling from the west.⁹⁷ Undertaken by ‘hundreds of chiefs and thousands of people’, it was completed before the rainy season of 1890, but was not navigable as it drew insufficient water. The following year, however, this section of the canal was joined with the Mwayowamo, itself fed by the Namitome stream, which had been also partially canalised. Thus, a link of about 22 miles between the margins of the plain and the river itself had been completed in three digging seasons, that is to say, when the valley floor was not flooded. It appears, however, that although this link was complete in 1891, work continued for several years afterwards to make it navigable in all seasons.⁹⁸ In 1895 Coillard was to the east of the plain, travelling among the Mbowe. There, following the resounding sermon given by one of his evangelists, he set about evangelising himself. Sitting down among a group of men, Coillard asked

‘Do you know that the king has made a great canal which crosses the whole plain, from Nangoko [Nañoko] to the river?’

‘Yes, we were there, at it.’

‘Really! And what to do? You were no doubt watching and admiring the king, who was digging out his canal all by himself, and who will one day be one of your gods!’

They laughed. ‘The king had summoned the whole nation. Thousands of men worked at it for months and months. It was the same the following year, and yet it is not finished. We have not reached the two lakes which are to supply it, and it dries up during part of the year.’⁹⁹

Coillard went on to compare the power of God in making the Zambezi, which never runs dry, with that of a king who seemingly could not bring off his canals with any success. The comparison was hardly apt, however, for although this canal was proving a sticking point, it was but a fraction of Lewanika’s creation.

In 1892, and for two further digging seasons afterwards, the Namitome stream was further canalised as were its tributaries; *malomba* and *mingunja* were dug to drain the surrounding land. In 1893 and 1894, a canal was dug which ran from the junction of the Mwayowamo canal with the Natimome stream in the north southwards along the margins of the plain, joining with mission’s canal from Sefula. This section, of approximately 19 miles formed the final part of an effective circuit enclosing a substantial area (See Figure 3).¹⁰⁰ It was an impressive achievement, and cast the efforts of the mission into the shade. They may

⁹⁷ Resident Magistrate Mongu to Native Commissioner, 10 September 1928, NAZ, KDE 2/9/1.

⁹⁸ Prins implies it was completed by 1891. Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 69.

⁹⁹ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 601.

¹⁰⁰ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, pp. 66-67.

have had their God above them, but the *Litunga* had the entire kingdom at his command. He also, by this time, had Mwanangombe, who, having learned much assisting Goy on the Sefula canal, was of great value. As Waddell, an artisan missionary with the PEMS wrote, Lewanika had ‘repossessed’ him.¹⁰¹ Eventually the connection of the canal with the Zambezi and Namitone network made it a permanent watercourse, which drained fertile marsh land for cultivation and remained navigable even during the dry season, with canoes passing ‘proudly up and down it.’¹⁰² As Coillard had written in October 1893 of the Sefula canal, ‘When they saw me making mine with a handful of workmen, they said to themselves, “We can do something better.” And they did.’¹⁰³ It was, Coillard was pained to admit, the same with a causeway between the mission at Lwatile and Lealui. To complete the causeway, it would have to cross the Mwayowamo canal to the south of the capital. Working in cooperation with Lewanika, Coillard was to build one portion and the king the other. The progress the king made was in stark comparison to the missionary.

You should see the enthusiasm with which these young men, from a hundred to a hundred and fifty, divided into shifts, work all the afternoon, digging, carrying turfs in their hands, and working to the time of their wild songs. I make a very poor show with my handful of hired men, one or two pickaxes, and six or seven spades, notched and broken.¹⁰⁴

The work was completed, and a wooden bridge built by Waddell in 1894. In the same year, Coillard again reported that ‘Canals are in fashion: Lewanika is making them, and Mokwae [Mukwae Matauka] also, in four or five parts of the Valley at once.’¹⁰⁵

Lewanika was also putting his labour to more direct political ends. Not only had he ‘mused aloud to Coillard the idea of damming the Lui river and flooding the entire valley’ as a barrier to a rumoured Ndebele invasion in 1893, but he had actually begun to fortify the river.¹⁰⁶ In October 1893, Arthur Baldwin, a Methodist missionary among the Ila, received word that the king was

building a strong stockade, all along the further bank of the river with loopholes, and digging a trench, as a defence in the event of a Matabele invasion. The trench is to be filled with armed men who will through the loopholes of the stockade be able to fire

¹⁰¹ Waddell, *Diary*, 15 May 1892, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁰² Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 515.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 515-516.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 516.

¹⁰⁵ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 559.

¹⁰⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 68.

upon an enemy in comparative safety. I wonder where the King has got the idea from.¹⁰⁷

Lewanika was also intending to ‘defend the fords of the Njoko, Lumbe, and Ruyi by strategic works, redoubts with loopholes, of which he made me a copy in miniature on the banks of the canal’. Coillard, too, was mystified as to the origin of this idea, but recorded that it was achieved by the king dividing ‘his army into three corps’, which we may take as meaning assigning different *likolo*, or sections thereof, to the task.¹⁰⁸

It was through the *makolo* that Lewanika organised and put into effect all these works. In 1891, James Johnston had witnessed the construction of the Mwayowamo canal and described Lewanika as having ‘set thousands of his slaves to work’, digging a channel ‘fifteen feet wide and six deep’ that passed through ‘one of the most thickly populated districts of the Zambesi valley’.¹⁰⁹ This statement Prins’ dismissed as that of a ‘passing visitor’, claiming that the accounts of the missionaries made it ‘quite clear that this was not “slave” labour’.¹¹⁰ He then quoted Coillard, writing in November 1890 of ‘bodies of men running from all sides in their thousands’ and supervised by ‘hundreds of chiefs’.¹¹¹ He also reproduced Waddell’s diary entry from 1892, which explained that the ‘work was soon accomplished by thousands of men who were summonsed with their respective chief who acted as forman or managin Engenears.’¹¹² It is hard to see how anything in this contradicts the claim that this was slave labour. Of course, Prins may have had a different image in his mind of slaves. It is worth reiterating, however, that the absence of chains does not evince the nonexistence of servitude, nor – as already pointed out – should slavery and tribute labour be confused.¹¹³ The accounts of the missionaries, more than anything, appear to be descriptions of the working of the *makolo* system into which all labour, slave and free, was drawn.¹¹⁴ Given that the proportion of the population formed by slaves was higher in the plain than elsewhere, it makes no sense whatsoever to assume that such brief snatches of the missionaries’ accounts point to anything but the conclusion that Lewanika was drawing heavily on the slaves in the plain to dig his canals.

The immediate impact of this canal building programme, beyond the huge labour requirements of its construction, was an increase in the long-term labour requirements of

¹⁰⁷ A. Baldwin, *Journal*, 11 October 1893, SOAS, MMS/17/02/05/01.

¹⁰⁸ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 528.

¹⁰⁹ Johnston, *Reality versus Romance*, p. 178.

¹¹⁰ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 68.

¹¹¹ Coillard, *Journal intime*, 9 Nov. 1890, quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 68.

¹¹² Waddell, *Diary*, 15 May 1892, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 68. Spelling as in original.

¹¹³ See p. 114.

¹¹⁴ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 68, does recognise that the work was undertaken by the *makolo*.

agriculture. In particular, the canal which ran along the margin between Namitome and Sefula brought much rich *sishanjo* soil into use. This heavy, peaty soil was fertile but labour intensive to cultivate. As crops were now increasingly cultivated on both the plain and along this zone, inevitably the agricultural burden increased substantially. This burden fell upon the slaves. As we have seen, while tilling the land was the preserve of women, digging the side drains and channels was men's work and so labour for both increased. While it is impossible to precisely estimate the new areas brought under cultivation, from the scale of the canals, these were clearly substantial.¹¹⁵ As a direct consequence, this was a time of growing wealth for the kingdom, although inevitably this bounty was largely reserved for the enjoyment of the elite.¹¹⁶ But these projects served not only economic but also social and political ends, increasingly centralising the kingdom and, in doing so, reinforcing the very power that had set the process in train. All of this was achieved with the sweat of the slave population, a population which by this time was no longer being replenished, for the traditional sources of slaves were being cut off. The PEMS went to great lengths to prevent the Lozi raiding their subject peoples and trading in slaves, and, as we shall shortly see, the BSAC, too, tried to put an end to the slave trade. Lewanika was, in one sense, receptive to this message. By 1894, he was asking Coillard to write to Baldwin and his colleague Buckenham, telling them to inform the Ila chiefs around their mission that they 'must on no account sell or allow their people to sell human flesh' to the Mambari. He was also sending them messengers 'to give his word more authority'. He had, Coillard wrote, made the Mambari 'well aware that they will not be allowed that trade [in people]'.¹¹⁷ This was not, however, the victory the missionaries may have imagined. Lewanika, like Mulambwa before him, refused to sell slaves, for doing so on any scale would undermine the reinforced economy he had done so much to construct.

There is also evidence to suggest that the increasing burden falling upon the slaves was beginning to meet resistance. As Clarence-Smith rightly pointed out, on at least one occasion, slaves attempted to resist the tribute in children by force.¹¹⁸ Clarence-Smith also hinted at 'an important slave insurrection in the Sesheke area in 1893'. A little more detail concerning the affair can be found in Baldwin's unpublished journal.

There has been an insurrection among the slaves at Sesheke against their chiefs.
Threatening of stranglings [sic] – evidently for the Barotse a serious business...The chiefs have ever encouraged their slaves to be insolent, troublesome and thieving

¹¹⁵ On this point see *ibid.*, p. 70.

¹¹⁶ Hermitte describes this as 'considerable growth in national income'. Hermitte, 'An economic history', p. 197-198.

¹¹⁷ Coillard to Buckenham and Baldwin, 19 Nov 1894, Rev Arthur Baldwin Papers, SOAS, MMS/17/02/05/01.

¹¹⁸ Clarence-Smith, 'Slaves, Commoners and Landlords', p. 231 quoting Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 261.

toward the missionaries (we have had experience enough) and now it is coming home to them. I confess I am rather glad than otherwise. Then all the people of Sesheke are to go to the Capital to receive their new head-chief – Mwanangono's [Mwanañono Kabuku, Lewanika's nephew] successor – from the hands of the King. Who it is to be hasn't yet been divulged.¹¹⁹

Mwanañono Kabuku had died of smallpox in April 1893 and was eventually replaced in 1894 by Litia, Lewanika's son. This, then, appears to have been a period of unrest during a brief power vacuum. What is significant about this account is not necessarily the details of the event itself, but that it was reported as a 'slave insurrection', either by Baldwin's source or the missionary himself. Given the arguments advanced in the last chapter about the close connection between slavery and subject peoples, this should come as no surprise. When Baldwin heard of a slave revolt, this was in fact a revolt, not of slaves against masters alone, though this was surely part of it, but of a subjected people against their overlords. And there is further evidence of not only the close connections between foreignness and slavery set out in the last chapter, but of this connection actually being reinforced in the 1890s.

Jalla reported that in 1894 '*Lewanika a déclaré que toute personne pouvant prouver qu'elle est née ou issue de ma-Rotsé serait affranchie. Des parents peuvent payer la rançon des membres de leur famille. Le roi émancipe qui il veut.*'¹²⁰ Clearly, then, until this point there were slaves who, by virtue of their Lozi parentage, had some claim to freedom. The mention of the slave's families is surely significant, for in the cases of slaves with family to actively seek their redemption one can well understand how such emancipation could not only come about, but also prove rather politic. But Jalla's remarks also suggest that so extensive had slavery become by this point that there were even slaves among the Lozi themselves. The fact that a ransom was levied also implies that this was a measure taken with the likely response of the masters in mind. Whatever the case, given the very process through which slaves were commonly obtained, it seems likely that only slaves of Lozi descent would have had any social network to draw on at all, and that these formed only a small proportion of the slave population. Such a concession could in fact reflect the desire to strengthen the Lozi grip on their slave population by sharpening the distinction between Lozi and non-Lozi, free and slave. For those who remained, the burden would have fallen all the heavier. Over the course of the 1890s, moreover, the Lozi elite were also presented with new opportunities, primarily for the export of foodstuffs, further increasing this burden. It was, for example, during this decade that the Lozi first began to export cattle.¹²¹ With the arrival of the Railway at Bulawayo

¹¹⁹ A. Baldwin, *Journal*, 11 October 1893, SOAS, MMS/17/02/05/01.

¹²⁰ Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 224.

¹²¹ Hermitte, 'An economic History', p. 220.

in 1897, the cutting of a road north to the Victoria Falls in 1898 and the subsequent founding of a settlement at Old Drift, the establishment of the headquarters of the colonial administration at Kalomo in 1899 and the tentative beginning of tourism from 1900, markets were opening up to the south and west of Buluzi.¹²² The expansion of the Lozi agricultural system was poised to meet this demand but needed to retain as much labour as possible to be able to do so. There was, however, a serious obstacle to be dealt with: how to physically access these markets.

Following ‘le fameux canal’: the diggings at Ngonye Falls

All water borne transport into Buluzi travelled along the Zambezi. From Livingstone onwards, every traveller, trader, missionary and administrator at some stage made the voyage by canoe to or from the heartland of the valley. And all without exception, having shot the rapids found, like Livingstone had, that ‘the falls of Gonye present[ed] a much more serious obstacle.’¹²³ In Livingstone’s time, the inhabitants of a nearby village were required to ‘assist the Makololo to carry their canoes past the falls.’¹²⁴ Livingstone had seen these villagers transport the canoes by ‘slinging them on poles tied on diagonally. They place these on their shoulders, and, setting about the work with good humour, soon accomplish the task.’¹²⁵ Arnot, too, recorded that upon his approach to the falls, ‘the men had to carry the goods overland for three miles, and afterwards come back for the boat, so that we were delayed some days.’¹²⁶ A little more detail is provided by the account of Serpa Pinto, who recorded that the track along which this portage took place ran ‘through a dense forest, not less than three miles in length’. As for the porters,

The conveyance of the canoes by land was effected by natives of the hamlets of Sioma, people of Calacas [*makalaka*] or slaves, governed by a Luina chief, who are established there by the Lui government for the express purpose of performing this service, to which, they are bound without being entitled to any recompense whatsoever.¹²⁷

¹²² Gann, L.H., *A History of Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1964), pp. 97, 127. MacGregor, J.A., ‘The Victoria Falls 1900–1940: Landscape, Tourism and the Geographical Imagination’, *JSAS*, 29, 3 (2003), p. 725.

¹²³ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 213.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹²⁶ Arnot, *Garenganze*, p. 64.

¹²⁷ Pinto, *How I crossed Africa*, p. 86.

Given that this arduous work was an imposition upon the population, it is hardly surprising that, in 1885, Coillard was forced to wait for four days before the porters were collected from the surrounding country.¹²⁸ In the same year Selous had a similar experience, for from ‘the first moment they perceived us, the Makalaka dispersed and hid in the woods; and it is incredible what threats, what abuse, our people must resort to, in order to bring them together and force them to perform their corvee.’¹²⁹ The two men differed as to the cause of the delay, however, for where Selous saw only obduracy, Coillard thought the inhabitants dispersed by ‘famine’.¹³⁰ Three years later, Selous once more found himself held up for three days on a journey downriver in order for the canoes to be dragged overland the three miles to a point below the falls.¹³¹ In order to avoid delay beyond the time necessary to transport the vessels, it appears Lewanika took to sending messengers to press the carriers in advance of parties navigating the falls. In July 1889 at Seoma Coillard found

a messenger from the king, who had outrun us, and was waiting for us. According to his orders, he had collected the men of the village and the neighbouring hamlets, and was watching to see they did not disperse—no idle precaution. The Makalaka of Seoma... are obliged to transport all travellers’ canoes up and down the river. It is a forced labour which they generally only perform when driven to it by threats and ill-treatment. As soon as they see a pirogue in the distance, they disperse secretly into the woods, and there the Barotsi have to search for days together, and collect them with the terrible African whip in their hands.¹³²

With no mention of a famine on this occasion, one may reasonably assume that this was a problem of long standing. The missionary professed that he had once considered distributing calico among the porters, but had been told by Lewanika, ‘with justice, that this would be a precedent which they would certainly make use of to torment travellers.’ To Coillard’s mind, what they were ‘in want of is a vehicle to facilitate their labour.’¹³³ There is no evidence to suggest that Coillard put this idea before the king, but Lewanika was clearly thinking along the same lines.

In October 1890, Jalla had passed the falls and the canoes had been carried as they had always been. In January 1891, Johnston had a similar experience.¹³⁴ Johnston thought the distance nearer four miles, but found, as others had done, that the king had ‘thoughtfully sent

¹²⁸ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 168-169.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

¹³¹ Selous, *Travel and Adventure*, p. 258.

¹³² Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 361-362.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 361-362.

¹³⁴ Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 48.

on a man to collect natives, so as to have no delay.’ He took the time to attack Serpa Pinto’s account, in particular

a picture [reproduced as Illustration 4 below]... representing hundreds of men, about forty at each canoe, carrying them on sticks laid underneath, and climbing up a steep hill through dense forest and tropical foliage. This is gross exaggeration from first to last... The transferring of the canoes past the falls is, after all, a very commonplace affair...and as to the hill, there is nothing imposing about it, being only five or six feet high. Nor is there any forest, unless a solitary tree in every other acre can be made to do duty for the dense jungle so elaborately portrayed by pen and pencil.¹³⁵

There was, clearly, some artistic licence at work in the illustration in Serpa Pinto’s book. Other accounts make no particular mention of the terrain and flora along the drag route, although they do mention surrounding woodland, and even today Johnston’s description of large trees being few and far between along the likely portage route rings true (see Illustrations 7-9 and Figure 4). Yet it is possible to resolve this seeming contradiction and reconcile these accounts and the evidence on the ground.

In 1892, Coillard visited Lewanika, and left us with a description of how the king occupied himself when not attending to matters of state.

Under the shadow of a thick grove...he has had a workshop built, into which none but handicraftsmen may enter. You will find him there in his leisure hours, working with his own hands, with about ten workmen under his orders. What does he do there? Or, rather, what does he not do? Sometimes it is a little fancy canoe, or the portable framework of an immense tent which is to serve for his annual hunts, an ingenious camp-bed or a vehicle of his own invention to transport the white men’s canoes to the Ngonye Falls and bring him back plenty of money!¹³⁶

Lewanika clearly did not come up with an immediate solution to the Ngonye problem, although Gibbons recorded in 1895 that he had a temporary measure put in place. From below the falls, Gibbons wrote, ‘the goods were landed immediately below the Gonye Rapids. From this place the canoes are dragged over rollers, and native porters carry the loads for a distance of 21 miles, and clear of the Gonye Falls’.¹³⁷ In 1899 Chapman observed the same system in

¹³⁵ Johnston, *Reality versus romance*, pp. 190-191.

¹³⁶ Coillard, *On the Threshold*, pp. 496-497. On Lewanika’s workshop, see also Milbourne, K.E., ‘Lewanika’s Workshop and the Vision of Lozi Arts, Zambia’, in Kasfir, S.L., and Forster, T., (eds.), *African Art and Agency in the Workshop* (Bloomington, 2013), pp. 234-251.

¹³⁷ Gibbon, *Exploration and Hunting*, p. 79. Strangely, passing the falls in the same year, Bertrand made no mention of these rollers, although his account does say the canoes were dragged, rather than carried. Bertrand, *The Kingdom*, p. 108.

action, which he described as simply the dragging of canoes on rollers. But, he notes, ‘a few months later a plan which emanated from Lewanika's brain was carried into effect, and now canoes can be towed with ease through a system of narrow canals from a few yards below the river at the one end to a short distance above it at the other.’¹³⁸ Jalla, too, wrote in 1899 of the ‘Canal de Seoma’, which Lienard called ‘le fameux canal’.¹³⁹ Nearly a decade earlier, Johnston had thought that precisely such a solution would have suited the king’s purpose very well, and perhaps having tried the alternative, Lewanika had concluded that a canal was the best solution.¹⁴⁰ Lienard gives a detail account of this canal’s construction and of its creator, Mohaiba, ‘an inventive and industrial genius’.

It is he who executed the canalisation of which I send you a sketch. [It has been constructed to enable canoes to avoid the Ngonye Falls and the regions of the rapids above and below them.] Being excavated to the depth of 6 or 9 feet below the level of the soil, from 6 to 12 feet wide, with a depth of water averaging three feet, this canal represents a great work for the Zambesians. One must bear in mind first that it has been dug out of very tough clay, with little wooden spades about 3 ½ inches square. How many shovellings does that represent! Secondly, that it was a native who conceived the idea and slaves who carried it out under his directions. Then one will make allowances better. The first notion of it was really derived from M. Coillard’s famous canal at Sefula. The Zambesians are very imitative, and that is a good sign. The canal winds about a good deal, as we remarked to its engineer. ‘Oh but,’ he replied coolly, ‘rivers do that too.’ That is the native’s philosophy. Moreover with all its meanderings, the canal has not been able to avoid a rocky hill where it has now come to a standstill, at only half the distance desired to traverse, but probably it will be completed.¹⁴¹

Lienard also provided us with the only detailed account of the roller system previously in operation. From the complexity of what the missionary describes, this was certainly a significant achievement, and here likely in its most developed form.

[Before the canal was made, the canoes had to be dragged overland along a sort of siding, with traverse rollers, something between a sliding dock and a tram-way. The route is indicated in the sketchmap: the cut below shows the detail of construction.

¹³⁸ Chapman, *Africa from North to South*, p. 132

¹³⁹ Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 282; Lienard, *Lettres et fragments*, p. 90

¹⁴⁰ Johnston, *Reality versus romance*, p. 192.

¹⁴¹ *NfB*, No. 8, April 1900 pp. 13-15. An abbreviated version of this same letter may be found in Lienard, *Lettres et fragments*, p. 90. Strangely, I have found no further reference to Mohaiba the inventive genius. Parentheses as in original.

Km. stands for kilometre.]

This also was made entirely at the suggestion of the king and Mohaiba, without any white man's help. The Barotsi began and successfully finished it, quite by themselves. Perhaps they may have got the first idea from some stories about railways. One only regrets that in achieving it they cut down a whole forest.¹⁴²

Lienard's diagrams, reproduced below, give some idea of the scale of this work. This may also, incidentally, account for the deforestation of the area below the falls, first to serve as rollers and then for the siding. As for the diggings, while nowhere near the size of the major canals in the plain, this was a different proposition entirely. Comparing Lienard's map (reproduced as Illustration 10) with a survey carried out for the Director of Water Affairs in 1962, reproduced in modified form with annotations as Figure 5 and corroborated by a site survey conducted in 2012, it appears likely that the canal was actually closer to 5,515m in length, and the siding perhaps 4,500m. This makes the total volume of earth dug approximately 16,545m³ or 584,284 cubic feet. In seeking to answer Lienard's rhetorical question, making a generous assumption that a shovelful of a 3 ½ inch square was of the same depth, so around 43 cubic inches, it required approximately 23,550,000 shovelfuls to complete the total distance. Of course, these are all approximations, but this was certainly no mean feat of engineering, given the terrain. Illustrations 5-9 give some indication of the environs of the falls, and the start and end points of this canal. As the satellite image makes clear, there is no mistaking its former course. The canal is largely invisible on the ground today, likely in part due to erosion and silting, and because subsequent works destroyed at least part of the canal.

Despite problems of transport the Lozi elite did, initially, experience some success in meeting the demands of the growing markets. In 1905, for example, Lewanika was estimated to have earned £1,500 from the sale of 7,000 cattle, £200 from a curio shop in Livingstone, £200 from the hire of canoes from Livingstone to Lealui, and £50 in tolls at the falls, site of his canal digging.¹⁴³ This project was revived at least twice over the course of the next fifteen years, as Lewanika pursued the goal of opening up the Zambezi as a highway into the plain to ensure his kingdom remained the focal point of the advance north of the Zambezi. Lewanika had even hoped that railways would head, from Bulawayo, towards his kingdom.¹⁴⁴ Yet even by the early twentieth century, the moment was already passing, if not already gone forever. In 1903, in a report to the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society in London 'On the extension of the South-central African Mission', the Rev. E. W. Smith had described the course of development of the BSAC possessions north of the Zambezi and its consequences for

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Worthington, 'Estimate of the Chief Lewanika's Income', NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/16.

¹⁴⁴ Caplan, *Elites*, p. 91.

mission work. Quoting a Company report detailing the intended line of development to run along ‘a broad path drawn north from the Victoria Falls to the sources of the Kafue River’, Smith had remarked that along that line lay ‘Livingstone, Kalomo, Nanzela, Nkala, the Silver King mine, Kasempa, Kananshi – these are the most important places in the country. The Barotse valley is out of the line altogether.’¹⁴⁵ How this had come to pass in a few short years forms the opening part of the next chapter, charting as it does the dramatic shifts in the course of Lozi history which followed the arrival of the British Resident in 1897.

This chapter has considered one of the most dramatic periods in the history of the Lozi kingdom. Within its ambit fall intrigue and revolt, competing European missionaries, the initial intrusion of colonialism and a truly remarkable economic transformation. More remarkable is the fact that the one thing which ties all these events together is Lubosi and his later incarnation as Lewanika. It was he who harnessed structures long in abeyance to his cause, who deftly handled incoming missionaries and secured a concession which appeared to achieve his own ends. But for all that he has been at the centre of this story, so too have the people on whom he relied to see through his radical programme of works. As has already been argued, it was on their backs that this edifice was built. From the standpoint of the late 1890s, it appeared secure. What the foregoing analysis of the place of slavery in the 1890s had demonstrated, more than anywhere else so far, was the absolute centrality of slavery to the Lozi economy. Moreover, it has demonstrated that when one strips away notions of these works being carried out for public benefit, they stand in their true light as an astonishing example of the ability of a society to exploit labour on a large scale. It is, perhaps, something of an irony that it was the example of the mission, and the security which their intercession on behalf of Lewanika made possible, that permitted this enormous mobilisation of labour. How, lamented the missionaries in 1901,

can a slave exercise his right to become ‘a new man in Christ Jesus’[?]. We can only hope and pray that as the ruling tribe receives Christianity its members may gradually learn to ‘give to their bond-servants that which is just and equal’ – namely, equality before the law, and the right to call their souls their own.¹⁴⁶

But as the next chapter will show, it was not the Lozi elite nor Christianity which gave the slaves their freedom. And that the process was not, at least formally, a gradual one. There, we shall see a dramatic transformation in the balance of power from the 1890s, when it was the

¹⁴⁵ E.W. Smith, ‘On the extension of the South-central African Mission’, Nanzela, 2/9/03’, Rev Edwin William Smith Papers, SOAS, MMS/17/02/05/02.

¹⁴⁶ *NfB*, 12 (April 1901), pp. 7-8.

Lozi elite who were masters in their own home and the mission who were in their power, to the early decades of the twentieth century, when it was the Company who held the reins.



Fig. 3. Public works in the 1890s overlaid on satellite image. After Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 69, fig. 11.

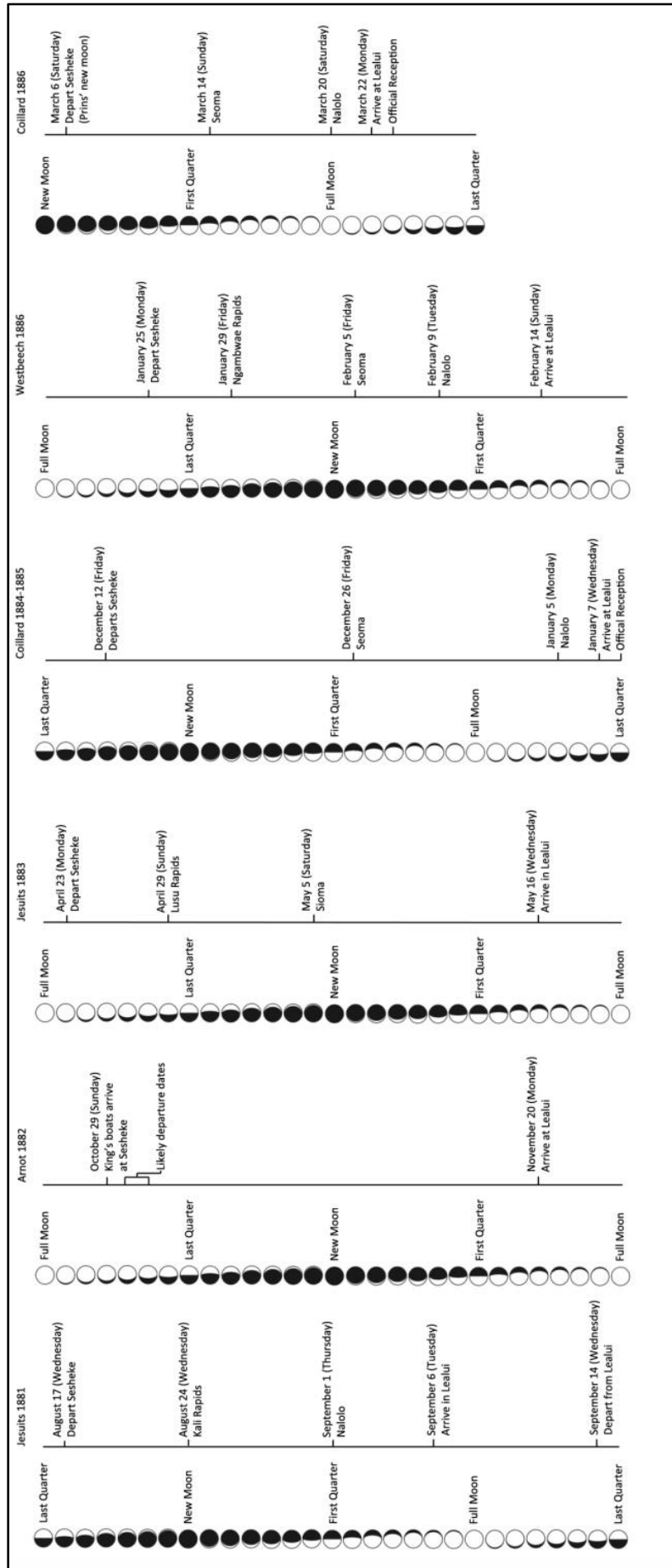


Table 1. Zambezi navigations 1881-1886 correlated to lunar cycle. Full sources may be found in the text.



Fig. 111.—GONHA CATARACT.

Illust. 3. Serpa Pinto's 'Gonha Cataract'. Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, vol. II, p.84, fig. 111.



Fig. 112.—CONVEYANCE OF THE BOATS AT GONHA.

Illust. 4. Serpa Pinto's 'Conveyance of the boats at Gonha'. Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, vol. II, p.87, fig. 112.



Illust. 5. Ngonye falls, Western Province, Zambia.
Author's photograph. November 2012.



Illust. 6. Course of Zambezi below Ngonye falls, Western Province, Zambia.
Author's photograph. November 2012.



Illusts. 7-9. Possible start and end points for Ngonye canal.

Illusts. 7-8 (above) correspond to Fig. 5, point F.

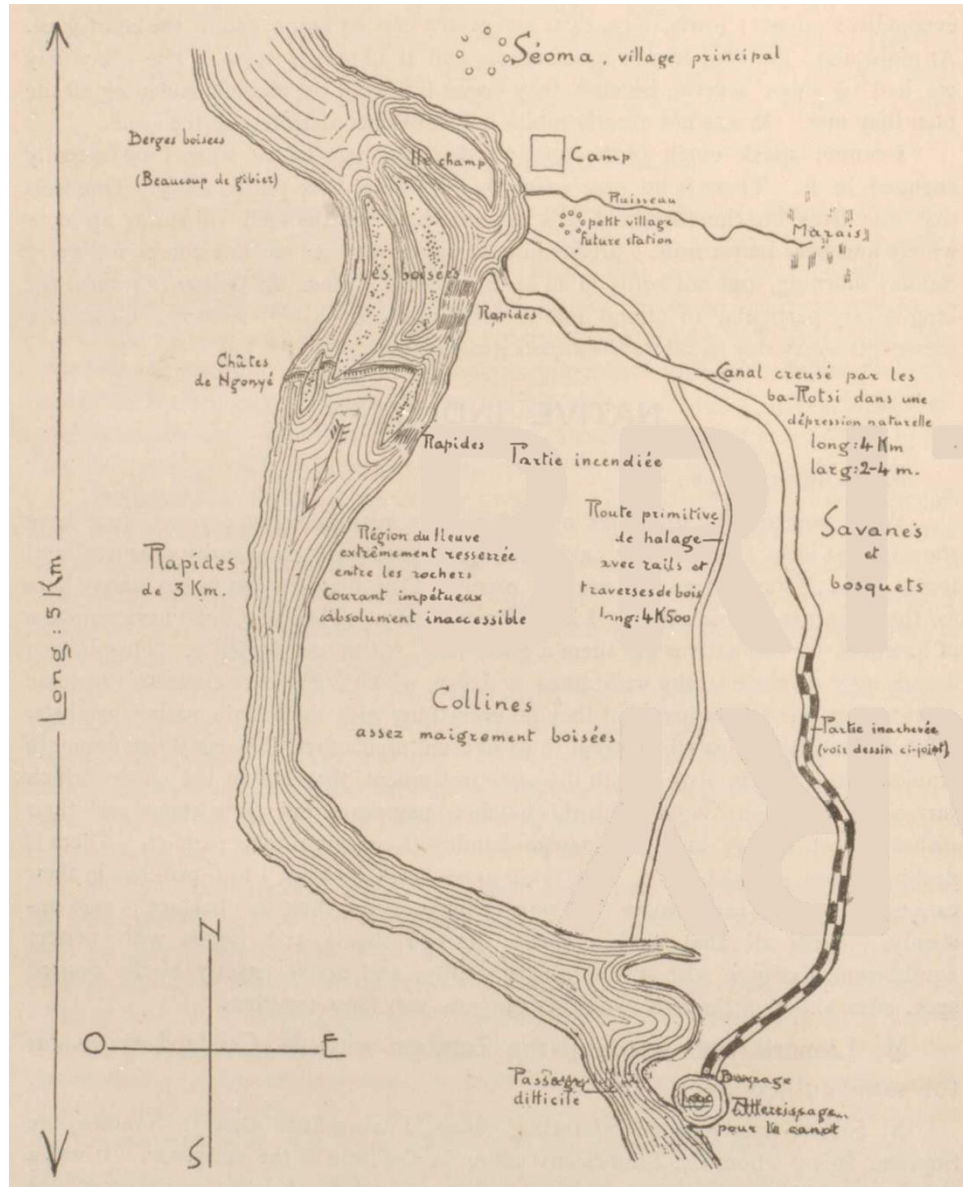
Illust. 9 (below) corresponds to point D.

Author's photographs. November 2012.





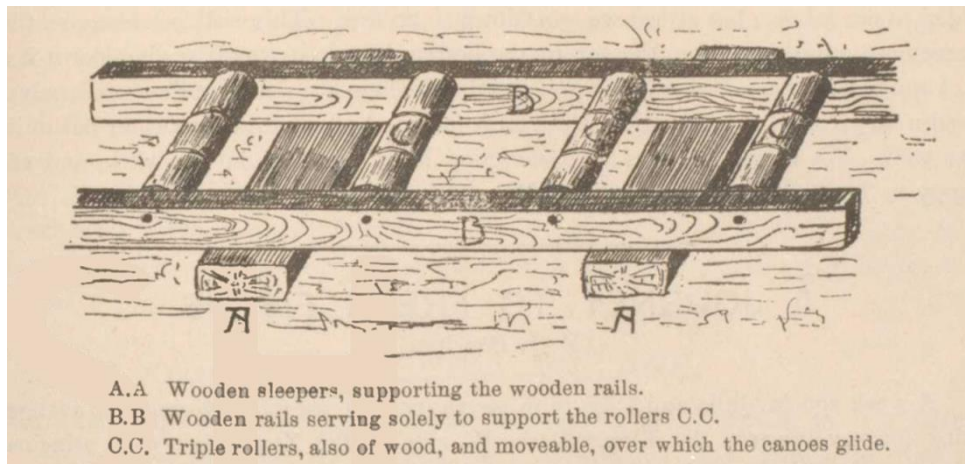
Fig. 4. Satellite image of Zambezi at Ngonye falls and lower course.
Compare with Illust. 10 and Fig. 5.



Illust. 10. Lienard's sketch of Ngonye canal (above).

Illust. 11. Lienard's sketch of Ngonye 'siding' (below).

Both from *News from Barotsi-land*, 3 (1899), p. 16.



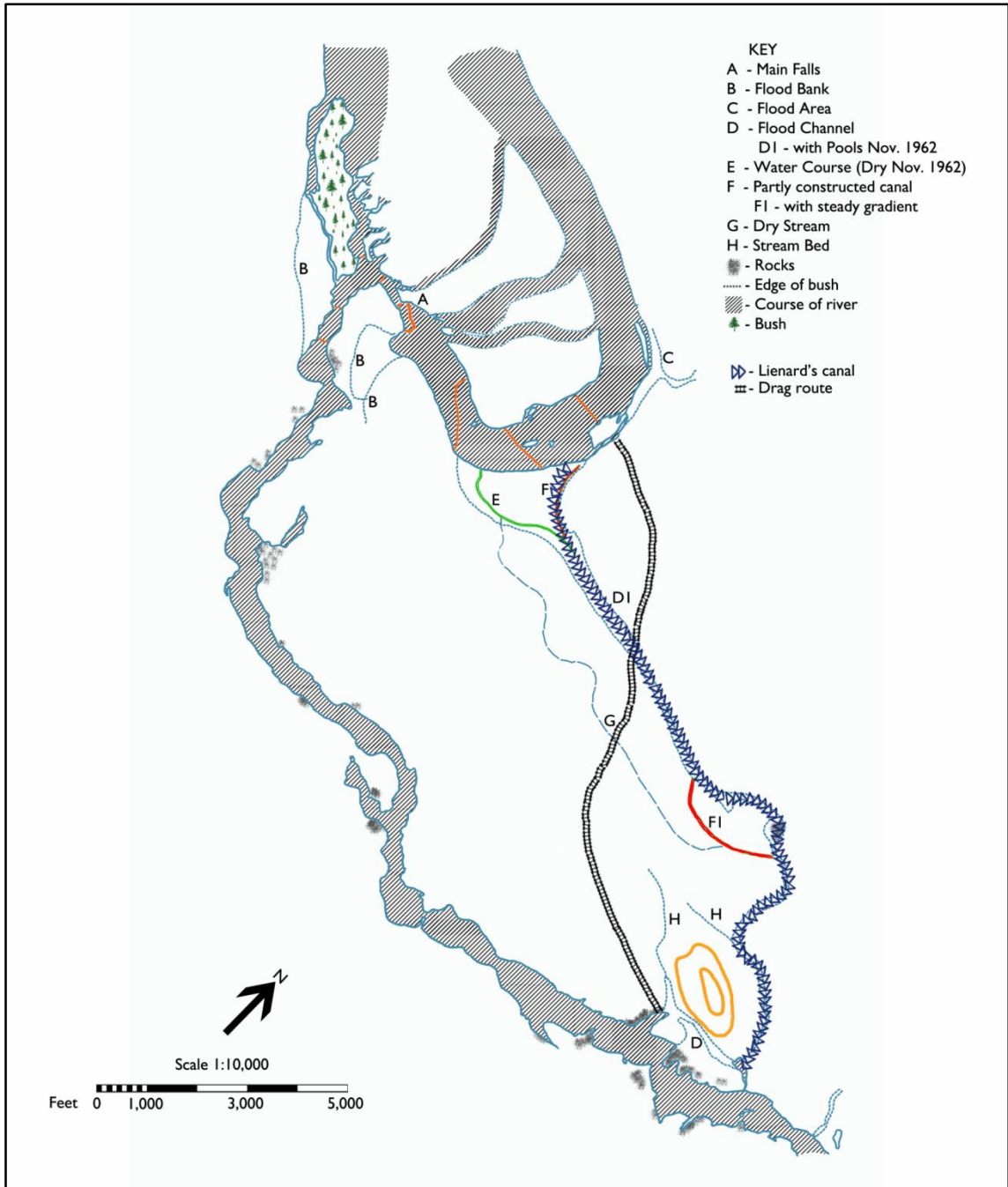


Fig. 5. Composite map of evidence for diggings at Ngonye canal showing distances and routes. Based upon Northern Rhodesia Director of Water Affairs, *National study of the Zambezi River (Barotseland)*. Sesheke (Katima Mulilo to Sioma (1962), Sheet 17. Corroborated by field survey in November 2012.

Outriders of a new era: relations of power, 1897-1906

The last chapter was concerned with the history of the Lozi kingdom from the accession of Lewanika through to the late 1890s. At its heart lay the strategy pursued by the king to secure his throne, crushing internal opposition, seeking external allies in the shape of both missionaries and the BSAC and finally bolster the kingdom's economy and his grip on patronage networks. But for all of Lewanika's successes, and everything he had done to ready his kingdom for the coming colonial encounter, he was already *hors de combat*. The realisation of this bitter new reality and the playing out of its consequences are at the heart of this chapter, which deals with the era from the arrival of the British Resident up to 1906. The period encompassed uncertainty and instability of borders and in the balance of political power, the introduction of taxation and the abolition of slavery. Crucial to this story is the shape of the early relationship forged between the BSAC and Lozi, and the motivations underpinning it. Slavery, and the Company's policy towards it, are central to this. In brief, the officials of the BSAC found it not only expedient but necessary to ignore slavery in Barotseland, lest they compromise their own positions and that of the Company in general. The extent and strength of Lozi slavery they could neither acknowledge nor, by the same token, act against. Throughout this short decade, the kingdom was in a state of political and economic flux. But for all this upheaval, some things move more slowly than others. Below the highly visible political and economic changes which marked these years, and away from the gaze of literate observers, a shifting web of social obligations persisted, which only occasionally become visible. One might expect that the systemic frustration of individual and collective agency, inherent in the limited prospects faced by slaves, would result in individual or collective resistance. Yet, as we have seen, collective resistance, the most visible and thus likely to be recorded, was rare. However, in the early twentieth century, we can for the first time begin to see something of how individual slaves thought and acted. This is the focus of the next chapter. Here we are concerned with the politics of the integration of Barotseland into North-Western Rhodesia and the sequence of events which led to the proclamation of the abolition of slavery. First, it is necessary to establish something of what was happening beyond the borders of the kingdom.

'My Lord, Is anything wrong with me that you see?': Barotseland and the broader picture

Thus far little has been said about Rhodes' motivation in sending the Lochner mission to Barotseland, although this certainly goes a long way towards explaining the caesura between the signing of the concession in 1890 and the much later arrival of the promised Resident. In

short, Barotseland was simply not part of Rhodes' goals. He had set his eyes further north. The purpose of the Lochner expedition was to secure a concession barring any Portuguese advance from the West, before continuing north, toward the mission Arnot had established since leaving Barotseland, at Garenganze, in mineral-rich southern Katanga. There, Rhodes' plan was to forge a treaty with Msiri's Yeke. At the same time, a concession hunting expedition under Joseph Thompson, coming from Nyasaland in the East, would secure, as Rhodes explained to Lochner, 'the whole stretch of country between the Nyassa, the Barotsi and Lake Bangweolo and Moero.'¹ Yet Rhodes' plan, which depended on keeping southern Katanga out of Leopold II's Congo Free State, failed. In 1891, Captain William Stairs annexed the region for Leopold following the murder of Msiri by a member of his expedition. Thus the securing of Barotseland was rendered, from the perspective of Rhodes at least, a hollow victory. Indeed, so little value was placed upon the kingdom that, in 1892, the BSAC Kimberley secretary, F. Rutherford Harris, wrote of the Ndebele that he hoped they would 'raid the Barotses...All these raids and deaths and murders ought to be entered into a book, so that we may always be able to prove justification and their being a cruel damnable race.'² The kingdom, then, was thought worthy only as bait. While, as Lewanika's fortification of the Lui river made plain, the threat was a real one, such a raid never materialised.³ For a further five years, the Company was to prove not only reluctant to take any further steps, but also otherwise occupied. It was this long pause that Lewanika put to good use in the construction of his canal network. Yet great as Lewanika's achievements were, he began to show clear signs of impatience.

Lewanika wrote a series of letters protesting the total absence of any positive action on the part of the British government and Company, and seeking clarifications of his position throughout the 1890s. By 1895, he was writing to both the High Commissioner for South Africa and to the Administrator of Rhodesia, protesting the delay. To the latter, Dr. Jameson, then Administrator before his fall from grace following his eponymous raid on the Transvaal Republic, Lewanika wrote requesting that his Resident come north.⁴ Lewanika wrote again in July, complaining that since the signing of the Lochner Concession, where a Resident had been promised, 'Five years have now passed, I have strained my eyes to welcome him all in

¹ F. Rutherford Harris to Lochner, 5 July 1890, Fol. I, p. 8, Mackintosh transcripts, National Archives of Zimbabwe, quoted in Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 216.

² Beach, D.N., 'Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power', *JAH*, 15, 4 (1974), p. 633, fn. 2, quoting 'F. Rutherford Harris to J.W. Colenbrander, 9 February, 1892, Hist. Mss CO 4/1/1, National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury', now the National Archives of Zimbabwe. I do not know if this material would now be found under a different reference.

³ See p. 138-139.

⁴ Lewanika to Jameson, n.d. (but before July 1895), NAZ, BS2 HC4/1/1 vol. IV.

vain.⁵ He also sent his son Litia with a party of *manduna* to speak to Jameson in person.⁶ Lewanika also wrote in protest to the then High Commissioner, Sir Henry Brougham Loch.⁷ Coillard, too, sent letters in much the same vein. 'Forgive me for being importune', Coillard wrote in July 1895, but 'the country, the people, the situation are not known to you, and whatever plans you may make at a distance you make them in the dark. Let me therefore urge prompt action.'⁸ Jameson responded to Lewanika's first letter, stating that the matter was 'receiving the attention of Mr Rhodes and Her Majesty's Government' and that it was hoped that a representative of 'Her Majesty's Government would go up this year accompanied by a representative of the British South Africa Company...if not this year, it will certainly be next year.'⁹ Jameson wrote again in September, explaining that he had no further news about a Resident and that he had said as much to Litia. In a coeval letter to Coillard, he explained that he thought it 'almost certain, that by the end of the next dry season, a Resident will be installed at Lewanika's capital.'¹⁰ Indeed, under Foreign and Colonial Office pressure, shortly thereafter, the BSAC decided to appoint Hubert J.A. Hervey, Acting Magistrate at Salisbury and a man of 'considerable experience in the Company's field of operations', for the job.¹¹ The spur to this was two-fold. First, the Colonial Office had decided that the Lochner concession, rump of Rhodes' grand plan, conferred no administrative rights and so a new concession was necessary. Second, it had become clear that the boundaries of the kingdom had to be put on a firmer footing.¹² This, too, was becoming clear to Lewanika, for the British were not the only recipient of the *Litunga*'s correspondence.

On the 20th March 1896, Jalla, on behalf of Lewanika, wrote to the Commandant of a Portuguese fort recently constructed in Luvale country. 'Hon. Commandant', the letter read,

I hear that since a few months you are encamped...at the village of Kakenge, my vassal. I hear that it is not only with trading purposes you are come, but that you pretend to have rights on the country you come into. I protest against it. You have no right at all to invade my country, since I have never made any agreement with you or any of your countrymen. The country is mine...In the name of justice and in the name of the

⁵ Lewanika to Jameson, 3 July 1895, *ibid.*

⁶ Lewanika to Jameson, 3 July 1895, *ibid.*

⁷ Lewanika to Loch, 3 July 1895, *ibid.*

⁸ Coillard to Jameson, 4 July 1895; Coillard to Loch, 4 July 1895, *ibid.*

⁹ Jameson to Lewanika, 13 August 1895, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Jameson to Lewanika, 5 September 1895; Jameson to Coillard, 5 September 1895, *ibid.*

¹¹ Anderson, Foreign Office to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 25 November 1895, *ibid.*

¹² Caplan, *Elites*, p. 57.

agreement I have made with the British government, I protest against your invasion of my country.¹³

Jalla's addendum to this letter, a copy of which he sent to Sir Hercules Robinson (later Lord Rosmead), Loch's successor as High Commissioner, pointed out that Lewanika was still 'anxiously awaiting for the British Resident whom both the Company's officers and Sir H. Loch had promised to send...without any more delay'. The King, Jalla wrote, 'feels persuaded that the Government of H.M. the Queen shall not fail to keep its promise any longer. Then only he will know of a certainty that he is under the protection of the "Great White Queen".¹⁴ But neither Jalla nor Lewanika were acting with full information at their disposal.

Under the 1891 Anglo-Portuguese Agreement, it had been agreed that the western boundary dividing the British and Portuguese spheres of influence in Central Africa would follow the Zambezi from the Katima Mulilo Rapids to 'the point where it reaches the territory of the Barotse Kingdom...That Territory shall remain within the British sphere; its limits to the westward...being decided by a Joint Anglo-Portuguese Commission.'¹⁵ In 1893 Britain and Portugal had agreed that, pending the final delimitation of this western boundary, the provisional *modus vivendi* line would follow the course of the Zambezi all the way from Katima Mulilo to its confluence with the Kabompo.¹⁶ This line, in effect, cut Lewanika's kingdom in half. Yet the king had never been informed of this agreement and, on that basis, believed that, under the terms of the 1890 concession, the Portuguese fort indeed represented an incursion into his rightful possessions. The British, of course, had no way of knowing where the boundary fell. It had therefore been decided, shortly before Lewanika sent his letter to the Portuguese Commandant, to send Major Goold-Adams, a Colonial Office official serving in Bechuanaland, to investigate the extent of Lewanika's territory.

On the 22nd of October 1896, Lewanika himself wrote to Hercules Robinson. According to the translation from Sesuto completed by prisoners at Cape Town's Breakwater Convict Station, Lewanika expressed himself 'glad to find the time to write' to Robinson, but not entirely satisfied.¹⁷ For Lewanika had on several occasions 'written to Government & I have had no answer to my letters: I ask you My Lord, Is anything wrong with me that you see?' He

¹³ Lewanika to Portuguese Commandant, Kakenge, 20 March 1896, NAZ, BS2 HC4/1/1 vol. IV.

¹⁴ Jalla to Robinson, 15 May 1896, *ibid*.

¹⁵ United Nations, *Reports of Internal Arbitration Awards, The Barotseland Boundary Case (Great Britain, Portugal)*, 30 May 1905, Volume XI pp. 59-69 (2006). This is a recent reprint of the original text.

¹⁶ Intelligence Division to Foreign Office, 19 May 1897, NAZ, BS2 HC4/1/1 vol. II.

¹⁷ Lewanika to Robinson, 22 October 1896 (original in same file), NAZ, BS2 HC4/1/1 vol. IV.

also had further news to report. 'I saw one of the commanders of your troops, he arrived here and his name is Major Goold-Adams; he told me that you sent him to come here...I have allowed him to go all around my boundary, anywhere he likes in my country.'¹⁸ Clearly, Good-Adams had enlightened the king, for he added that he wished the British Government to separate him 'from the Portuguese, because if the latter come into my land they will steal it...I would like your Government to rule all my country and to save my people...I would be very sorry if the Government divided it into two parts.'¹⁹ But it was clear that for all that Goold-Adams' arrival at last demonstrated action was being taken, he was not the man Lewanika had been waiting for. What was wanted, he wrote, was a

brave, obedient + strong man because my countrymen are still ignorant, they want teaching, perhaps they do not know the law or how you would rule them. I have a big country + different tribes + languages...I want to know what the Government say about my land. The Government must carry me as a woman carries a child upon her back.²⁰

What the Government, or at least Goold-Adams, had to say was that, so far as they were concerned, Lewanika's territory did run well to the west of the *modus vivendi* line.²¹ Clearly, it was time to assert some measure of control over what had become an unacceptably anomalous relationship.

'One hears a great deal of bosh about the poor down trodden native': the coming of the Company

In the event, the appointment of Hubert Hervey was not to come off as planned. Yet given the role the Company and its men would come to play in the later history of Barotseland, it is worth briefly reflecting on the history and character of their intended Resident and the men he wished to have with him. Hubert Hervey, Eton and Cambridge educated, took up a post in the London office of the Company in 1891. In 1892, so keen was Hervey to gain a post closer to the action that he took unpaid leave, and in December sailed for the Cape. He volunteered to serve as a Trooper during the First Matabele War, before holding a number of administrative posts in Rhodesia. In 1896 he took six months leave and, not long after his arrival in England, received the news of his Barotseland appointment, news which left him 'much pleased at the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The Major's report to this effect and a map can be found in Goold-Adams to Foreign Office, 7 February 1897, NAZ, BS2 HC4/1/1 vol. II.

prospect of this new and responsible work, and at the proof of confidence in him implied'.²² He hoped to persuade Robert Thorne Coryndon, his Sergeant in the first Matabele War, George Grey, a fellow trooper and brother to Edward Grey of subsequent ill-starred fame as Foreign Secretary in 1914, and Jesser Coope, later to cut the first road to the Victoria Falls, to accompany him to Barotseland. Perhaps with the exception of Hervey, a somewhat bookish and slight man, these were all by this time men of real up-country experience. They were also ardent imperialists. With Jesser Coope, who he met in Salisbury in 1894, Hervey would 'talk most brilliantly; generally on his favourite topic of British supremacy and the need of carrying on the government of Africa on the best possible lines.'²³ As George Grey recalled,

I had many long talks with him, and learnt that his ruling idea in life was Imperial extension, and that he was ready to devote his life to helping in Rhodes' big scheme of extending the British Empire in Africa. He was a firm believer in Rhodes and Jameson, and in the uprightness and disinterestedness of their aims, and was always very angry with those who imputed bad motives to these men, or who cast a slur on the work of the Government of the Chartered Company.²⁴

Hervey was, then, every inch the company man. If possible, Coryndon was even more so, for he had in November 1889 been one of the twelve men who had gathered outside a warehouse in Kimberley to be issued with horses, uniforms, funds and orders to protect Rhodes' pioneer column in the opening up of Mashonaland. As part of this group, variously termed Rhodes' Twelve 'Apostles', 'Young Men' or 'Lambs', Coryndon would go on to spend seventeen years in the service of the BSAC.²⁵

Hervey's hopes and preparations were, however, halted by the news of the Jameson raid. Cutting his leave short, Hervey sailed for the Cape on the 11 of January 1896.²⁶ In Salisbury the news arrived that the Second Matabele War had broken out, and Hervey volunteered for service. He also met Coryndon, by then risen to the dizzy heights of Major, who agreed to join the Barotseland expedition as a guide and hunter.²⁷ But Hervey was not to survive the war. On the 5th of August in the Matobo Hills, the force of which Hervey was a part found itself surrounded and under fire from a body of the enemy at short range. In order

²² Earl Grey, *Hubert Hervey: Student and Imperialist* (London, 1899), p. 121.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁵ Youé, C.P., *Robert Thorne Coryndon: Proconsular Imperialism in Southern and Eastern Africa* (Ontario, 1986), p. 8.

²⁶ Grey, *Hervey*, p. 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123-124.

to ‘put a stop to this, Hervey was ordered to occupy a ridge; and, dashing forward at the head of his men, fell mortally wounded as he led them up the kopje.’²⁸ Coryndon, meanwhile, had succumbed to pneumonia having only seen one action and was discharged in November to take up a post as one of Rhodes’ private secretaries. Following the hearings on the Jameson Raid, which saw the imprisonment of the former Administrator, Coryndon’s employer offered him a choice. He could either take up the management of one of Rhodes’ estates, or take up his fallen friend’s post as Resident in Barotseland.²⁹ He chose the latter.

Coryndon set out May 1897, alongside Frank Vigers Worthington, Sergeant Dobson, Corporal Macaulay and Troopers Aitkens, Bird and Leek. To a man, these outriders of a new era in the history of Buluzi were, like Coryndon, company men, ‘bred into South African traditions’ of direct intervention into the affairs of the colonised, with a clear idea of the proper relations between European administrators and African subjects.³⁰ As a fellow diner once recalled, ‘After dinner Coryndon expatiat[ed] on the injustice...in taking nigger’s word before a white man’s which is largely responsible for spoiling the natives.’³¹ Given the role Frank Worthington was to play in latter events, in particular the ushering in of abolition, his opinions of his Lozi allies and hosts are particularly revealing. Much as Hervey had been, Worthington was a deep admirer of Rhodes, later writing that he thought him ‘a man of great foresight and initiative’ with ‘an unshakeable faith in the future of the English-speaking peoples.’ Rhodes ‘was a scholar as well as an Empire-builder’, and a man who ‘delighted in all beautiful things.’³² This boundless admiration was not, however, extended to the Lozi, although he was of a sufficiently generous spirit to admit of Lewanika’s son Litia that he was ‘a well behaved man and generous for a nigger.’³³ Elsewhere in the same journal, which he wrote in the form of a letter to his father, Worthington was rather more candid about his habits. He recorded that he had ‘a cattle bell which I always carry with me whenever I go about the country. This bell when sounded is the signal for complete silence.’ It appears that this system had a salutary effect, for the ‘niggers know by this time that they can make what noise they like until the bell goes, and then they have to shut up. I had a little trouble with them at first, for niggers chatter

²⁸ Ibid., p. 138.

²⁹ Youé, C.P., ‘Coryndon, Sir Robert Thorne’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <accessed 4 September 2013: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/>>.

³⁰ Stokes, E. & Brown, R., ‘Editor’s Introduction’, in Stokes and Brown, *The Zambezi Past*, p. xxxiv.

³¹ Wallis, J.P.R (ed.), *The Barotseland journal of James Stevenson-Hamilton, 1898-1899* (London, 1953), p. 93.

³² Worthington, ‘Notes on Rhodes’, Typescript, n.d., ALM, LM2/4/19/12

³³ Worthington, ‘Journal of my Kalomo – Lebebe Trip from May 19th 1902 to July 30th, ‘02’, Typescript, ALM, LM2/4/19/4, p. 76.

like monkeys [sic] when a bunch of them gets together.’³⁴ As the account of his journey continues, Worthington becomes yet more candid.

I am getting to hate niggers more and more...One hears a great deal of bosh about the poor down trodden native in Africa. Curse him! I would shoot him to the last man, if I had my way, slavery is much too good for the reptile. Happy is the man who has never had dealings with him...He is good just as long as he fears you...Chaka, the great Zulu Chief knew this and brought his people to perfection, simply because his custom was kill! Kill!! Kill!!! for any offence, against his severe discipline.³⁵

Ensuring he sufficiently impressed upon the Lozi the fear necessary to ensure obedience, Worthington recalled

showing Lewainku [sic] an illustrated paper in which there were pictures of the work of some punitive expedition. I explained the text, which was to the effect that some white official or other had been murdered and the party sent to avenge his death. I drew on my imagination a little when I told him that these black people had killed but one Englishman and the Queen had sent an army to eat up the whole nation, in which they had been quite successful. The king was much taken with the idea and continually repeated “for one white man only”! I expect he wondered what would happen to a nation killing 7.³⁶

This bullying dimension to Worthington’s character seems to have driven many of his actions over the coming decade. But for all that the Company men may have had few qualms about the direct exercise of power and a deep seated contempt for Africans, Corydon’s remit and his initial statements when he arrived in October 1897 make it clear from the very first meeting with the *Litunga* that he had clear boundaries in mind when it came to his involvement in the politics and structure of the kingdom.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 82-83.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 80.



Illust. 12. **Litunga Lubosi Lewanika**. This photograph is not dated, but shows Lewanika in later life. Livingstone Museum Colonial Photographs Collection.



Illust. 13. **Rogues' Gallery**. This photograph was taken at Lealui c.1910. Those identified by an accompanying note are:

Standing: F.V. Dobson, Louis Jahat, F. Sykes

Seated: Litia, Lewanika, F.V. Worthington, R.T. Coryndon, F. Aitkens, Lt. Col. J. Carden

Livingstone Museum Colonial Photographs Collection.

'Rien n'est changé à nos mœurs ni à nos lois.' : the early colonial dispensation

Shortly after his arrival in Lealui, Coryndon was able to report to the High Commissioner, by this time Alfred Milner, that although he had 'arrived here only eleven days ago', he believed 'the king feels great satisfaction with the present state of affairs.'³⁷ In a letter forwarded by Coryndon alongside his own, Lewanika wrote that he hoped that nothing would 'disturb the peace & to destroy the friendship between myself and Her Majesty the Great Queen. I am her Majesty's servant, and I will be glad if she will be anxious for the welfare of my people & myself.'³⁸ A little over three weeks later, Coryndon reported that the King was 'much gratified' with the portrait of the Queen given to him by Coryndon, and that 'everything continues upon an excellent footing in this country and the king is dealing openly and well.'³⁹

Given that Coryndon had spent so little time in the kingdom, it is to the events following his arrival that one ought to turn to understand why the King was so gratified with his impatiently awaited guest. Following Coryndon's arrival, an official reception was held for him on the 25th October in Lealui. Jalla translated the message to the King and *manduna* of the 'vrai militaire' Coryndon, remarking that

le résident parla simplement, allant droit au but. Il dit qu'il était cet envoyé de la Reine qu'ils avaient réclamé à bien des reprises, et le représentant de la B.S.A.C.C. à laquelle une concession avait été accordée sept ans auparavant. Sa mission c'est d'aider le roi par ses conseils, de veiller à ce que la concession soit observée, de faciliter les rapports du roi avec les étrangers qui vont venir. Par lui le pays de Lewanika est définitivement déclaré Protectorat Britannique. Cependant il n'est pas venu se mêler des rapports du roi et de ses sujets, ni de leurs petites affaires. Le pays continu à appartenir au roi, il n'a été acheté par personne. Sa mission est toute pacifique, pour le prouver il n'a amené qu'une petite escorte.⁴⁰

The implication of this pronouncement was certainly unambiguous so far as the Lozi elite were concerned, and they made their reading of it crystal clear to those who had gathered at Lealui expectant of their emancipation. The *Ngambela* of Nalolo, the Sambu, was instructed to repeat the principal points of Coryndon's speech to the people gathered at the Kuta. As Jalla recorded, the message was rather different from that he had rendered for Lewanika. '*Voici la*

³⁷ Coryndon to Milner, 1 November 1897, NAZ, BS2 HC4/1/1 vol. II.

³⁸ Lewanika to Milner, 1 November 1897, *ibid.*

³⁹ Coryndon to Milner, 27 November 1897, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 236.

*substance de ce que a été dit: Rien n'est changé à nos mœurs ni à nos lois. Vous êtes encore nos esclaves, vous nous devez encore obéissance, et malheur à qui regimbe!*⁴¹ As we shall shortly see, though no mention had been made of slavery at the official reception, this was precisely the message Coryndon, and the Company more generally, had wished to impart. Jalla wondered : *'Quelles seront les conséquences de cette journée?'* In his estimation,

*Elles seront probablement grandes; mais cette séance en a déçu plusieurs. Là sur la place du Khotla des milliers d'esclaves avaient attendu la proclamation de leur émancipation, d'autres milliers plus nombreux en attendaient la nouvelle aux quatre coins du pays...Non, ce bienfait ils ne pouvaient l'obtenir si facilement, cela viendra par évolution, et l'Évangile en sera probablement le plus puissant agent.*⁴²

Coryndon informed the king that slave raiding and the giving of slaves as tribute had to stop, but took no further action against an institution which he would later describe simply as 'anomalous'.⁴³ One can well imagine the disappointment that attended this pronouncement, and Jalla was certainly right in thinking that change would not occur as rapidly as had been hoped. In the end, however, it was to be specie rather than the Gospel which proved the puissant agent.

From the first, the British had a clear understanding of the centrality of slavery to the Lozi economy. Worthington, reproducing notes from his early years in Barotseland several decades later, wrote of the Lozi then that it was clear

that without slaves they could not have reached their present state of development; they would have had neither the leisure nor the means. Without ample slave-labour at their disposal the canals could not have been dug and maintained; without slave-labour they could not build the immense State barges in which the Paramount Chief, the Indunas and Head-men make their annual exodus from Lealui to higher country; the official fields could not be cultivated and the population of Lealui and Nalolo would dwindle for the mere lack of men to carry firewood from the forests to the villages.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 236.

⁴² Ibid., p. 237.

⁴³ Worthington, 'Memorandum on Slavery in Barotseland and 1906 Lewanika Proclamation', Typescript, 13 July 1906, p. 2, ALM, LM2/4/19/3; Youé, *Coryndon*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Worthington, 'A Memorandum of Barotse Hierarchy by F. Worthington', Typescript, 1930, pp. 2-3, ALM, LM2/4/19/6. This memorandum was, according to the author, 'drawn from notes made by me over thirty years ago', that is to say, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

Slavery, Worthington noted, ‘even domestic slavery, cannot last very much longer, but it would be a pity if the *corvée* were done away with altogether.’⁴⁵ To condone slavery was not, of course, official policy. We are fortunate, however, to be able to get a glimpse of the essential problem posed by slavery in Barotseland, and the Company’s solution, in part of an unsent letter located among the papers of one of the BSAC’s directors. It is worth quoting this fragment at length, for it reveals a great deal about the thinking behind official thinking.

On ground of economy & policy I hope we may avoid the direct administration of the country as far as possible. It would be costly work to set up a White Administration over an exceptionally unhealthy country as large as the German Empire. What is to my mind more serious is that where we to (?) administer the law directly, & supersede Lewanika & his representatives, there we come face to face with Slavery, and from the moment the British Public & the C.O. [Colonial Office] realise the fact, we shall put ourselves in hot water. As things stand, there had been & is improvement, but the country is absolutely unripe for any sudden revolution abolishing the custom of Slavery. Yet no one can doubt that if our own Commissioners enforced the rights of the slaveowner or failed to treat the slave as a freeman, our Charter would be in danger. So long as we can keep Lewanika in power, we avoid serious responsibilities of this sort, & also postpone a heavy increase in our expenditure.⁴⁶

The Company’s escutcheon, to paraphrase Stokes, had been indelibly blotted by the Matabele War and rebellion, and the Jameson Raid. In consequence, from that time onwards it was under close scrutiny by the British Government.⁴⁷ It is this concern which, beyond questions of the cost of administration, we can clearly see in Lyttelton Gell’s letter. It was imperative to avoid the burden of administration, for in taking it up they would have to deal with slavery, upon which, as Worthington well knew, the entire social and economic structure of the kingdom stood. Thus the reluctance of the Company to acknowledge slavery was a direct consequence of its central place in Barotseland. It appears that this was the unacknowledged policy of the BSAC from the first.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Philip Lyttelton Gell, ‘Rue Broussais, Dinan (C. du N. France)’ to [?], Derbyshire Public Record Office (DPRO), D3287/BSA/9/200. Underlining as in original.

⁴⁷ Stokes, ‘Barotseland: the survival of an African state’, in Stokes and Brown, *The Zambezi Past*, p. 262.

This is virtually all that we have of this letter, and so the identity of its intended recipient and the date are unknown. From the fact that, elsewhere, Lyttelton Gell refers to Southern and North-Western Rhodesia, official designations following the Southern Rhodesia and North-Western Rhodesia Orders in Council of 1898 and 1899, respectively, and that Lyttelton Gell only became a Director of the Company in 1899, the letter cannot date to an earlier period than the latter year. The concession which Coryndon had been ordered to obtain from Lewanika was signed in 1898 and granted the company administrative and judicial powers and rights to grant land; it also reduced the King's annual stipend. The following year the Barotseland-North-Western Rhodesia Order in Council 1899 superseded it, requiring a further concession to legitimise the BSAC's rights. Yet even with the Order in Council and new concessions, a further problem prevented the Company from putting their house in order. Until the western boundary of the kingdom was definitively settled, the company's grip on the territory was not entirely secure. This did, however, mean that the question of the direct administration of the country could be, for a while, further delayed. As could the question of slavery.

For as long as the boundary was uncertain the imposition of absolute authority, if only in principle, was out of the question. On the one hand, this uncertainty militated against the maintenance of order, particularly in border areas. But, on the other, this lack of order also presented opportunities for those who would capitalise upon them. For the Portuguese, there was much territory to be won or lost. Their interests, as will shortly become clear, tended towards the mercenary. For the British, too, there was territory at stake. But the situation was complicated by the fact that instability, particularly in the form of slave raiding and trading across the *modus vivendi* line, threatened the very basis of their relationship with the Lozi. These depredations were invariably ascribed to the Mambari and Luvale.⁴⁸ In 1901, Colin Harding, then Acting Administrator, claimed that, although relations with the Lozi 'were never in a more harmonious condition than they are today', the Company could no longer

in justice to the Barotse people ask them to sit quietly, for an indefinite period, and see their cattle stolen, their villages raided, by people who were formerly classed as their slaves, without either allowing them to protect themselves or to ensure the protection which we have, without doubt, guaranteed. This is unfortunately the policy which we are compelled to adopt with reference to any disturbance, however heinous, in the Barotse Empire outside the present provisional line of demarkation [sic].⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Harding, *Remotest Barotseland*, pp. 124, 138, 161.

⁴⁹ Harding to High Commissioner, 1 October 1901, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/2.

Lewanika wished to take steps to stop these incursions, but was prevented from doing so by Harding. In response, through Coillard, Lewanika told the Acting Administrator that ‘As for me and my people we “Weep” because the white man...prevent us to fight. Even our slaves laugh at us. They say they may now do what they please to vex and provoke us for the Marotsis are not allowed to fight for their rights.’⁵⁰ Coryndon, feeling that in the absence of any definite information about the negotiations over the border, it was necessary to take strong measures, actually considered that ‘Lewanika should send his own impis down into the disturbed areas and settle the trouble himself.’ In the unlikely case that these forces tangled with a Portuguese trader, none of the Company’s men would be involved, besides which the disturbed areas were ‘a long way south from the Portuguese Forts’.⁵¹ The High Commissioner soon put Coryndon off an idea which could have ‘dangerous implications owing to the unrestrained & indiscriminate character of savage warfare.’⁵² The Lozi would just have to chafe at the bit, although this threatened to undermine Lewanika’s authority.

One of the key flashpoints in these disputes was the region surrounding the lands of the *Kakenge*, a hereditary Luvale chieftainship. As Aitkens reported in 1903, Lewanika was of the opinion that the Portuguese were doing all in their power to make an ally of the then Kakenge. It appears that this was not an office whose incumbents lasted very long. The first Kakenge ‘ruled one year and died’, the second ‘ruled for one year and was shot accidentally’, the third was ‘killed in 1892 by the Barotse’, and the fourth was appointed by Lewanika in around 1895.⁵³ It was close to the settlement of this last Kakenge that the Portuguese had established a fort, the Commandant of which had received the aforementioned letter from Lewanika in 1896. The death of this fourth Kakenge occasioned a further dispute, as the Portuguese sought to have their preferred candidate installed as successor. Lewanika, of course, took exception to this, writing to the Commandant that, as the boundary had yet to be decided, he had ‘no right to choose a new chief “Kakenga”’. He also warned him that, should the result be ‘trouble or fighting...amongst the Balubale, it will be your fault for forcing the people...and opposing their customs.’⁵⁴ Macauley, then DC at Lealui, wrote a letter of protest so similar that it is likely that the king’s was essentially a duplicate.⁵⁵ With an eye on the deliberations of the commission set up to adjudicate on the boundary, the Company

⁵⁰ Coillard to Harding, enclosed in Harding to High Commissioner, 1 October 1901, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Coillard to Walrond, 30 November 1901, *ibid.*

⁵² High Commissioner to Coryndon, 17 January 1902, *ibid.*

⁵³ ‘Barotse Eastern Boundary Report’, enclosed in Coryndon to High Commissioner, 22 June 1903, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/8. See also Coillard, *On the Threshold*, p. 468.

⁵⁴ Lewanika to Portuguese Commandant, Nyakatoro and Kakange, 6 January 1904, NAZ, BS2 A3/24/2.

⁵⁵ Macauley to Portuguese Commandant, Nyakatoro and Kakenge, n.d. (but January 1904), *ibid.*

recommended to Lewanika that he ‘refrain from taking further action’, which might have a ‘prejudicial effect on the decision’.⁵⁶ Once again, Lewanika had to sit on his hands and wait, leaving the border to the west not only in a state of unrest, but also extremely porous.

Beyond the threat to Lewanika’s authority, this porous border had other consequences. In the absence of any real means to control the movements of goods and people the long-standing trade in firearms with the Mambari continued.⁵⁷ More importantly for our purposes, so did the slave trade. In 1899 Harding reported this trade was not, in general, ‘carried on immediately’ at Lealui. To the north, however, a slave caravan had been reported crossing the river ‘near Kakengi only a few weeks ago.’⁵⁸ Slave raiding was also taking place among the Ila and Mashasha, and it would continue, Harding argued, until the boundary was settled. The lack of a decision rendered it ‘impossible to entirely obliterate this scandal.’⁵⁹ Slave caravans from the west travelled under Portuguese flags, reported Gibbons, who felt that Portuguese authorities encouraged the trade. Indeed, he reported that the slave trade was conducted on ‘a very much more extensive scale than I imagined possible’ in the northern and western portions of the kingdom, the areas under dispute, and that he had himself seen ‘a European Portuguese with a large following at Lialui, wither he had journeyed to purchase slaves from Lewanika, but am glad to say the Marotse King informed him that he did not buy and sell people like cattle.’⁶⁰ As we saw in the last chapter, and hear again in this echo of Mulambwa’s famous rebuttal, the continuance of the slave trade posed a serious threat to the Lozi economy. But unlike Mulambwa, Lewanika’s power was constrained by his reliance on the Company, and his willingness to acquiesce to their demands demonstrates how deep this reliance was. While the boundary dispute barred the Company from taking any steps in what might soon be a Portuguese possession, it did not prevent them from attempting to entrench their control in areas that were not at risk of subsequent excision, and over the person of the King.

In 1902, Lewanika was allowed to attend the coronation of Edward VII. The first major stop on his journey to England was at Livingstone, where he met with Coryndon. It was during these discussions, Coryndon later claimed, that the question of Tax ‘came up’. This Lewanika hoped to be permitted to collect himself in the valley, as ‘he and his indunas knew the neighbourhood thoroughly and would be well able to collect it.’⁶¹ Coryndon gave no reply,

⁵⁶ Acting Administrator to Lewanika, 20 February 1904, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Macola, ‘Reassessing the significance of firearms’, pp. 314-317.

⁵⁸ Harding to Administrator, Bulawayo, 22 December 1899, NAZ, BS2 A6/1/2.

⁵⁹ Harding to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 January 1901, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Gibbons to Director of Military Intelligence, 8 February 1900, NAZ, BS2 A6/1/3.

⁶¹ Coryndon to Secretary, British South Africa Company, 9 January 1903, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/6.

thinking it unwise to bind himself 'by a promise which would not come into operation for several years.' Lewanika raised the matter again when in London, and he communicated with the Board of the British South Africa Company on the subject, who provisionally agreed to allow the King to collect the tax himself. Coryndon believed this would prove a total disaster, tending to 'strengthen the uncompromising and arbitrary attitude' the Lozi were 'accustomed to adopt towards their slave races', and cause much resentment if not resistance.⁶² The best method that could be adopted, Coryndon wrote, was that the Collector, a post to be instituted for the purpose, would 'be accompanied on his tours by an induna appointed by Lewanika; the induna shall collect the people of the village, inform them that a hut-tax is to be paid, introduce them to the Collector, and instruct them on behalf of Lewanika, who he represents, to pay it to the collector.' Any other course of action would be 'a grave administrative error', opening 'a door to future trouble, and will seriously endanger our dealings with the Barotse for years to come. It would', Coryndon was convinced, 'be the wisest and kindest course to refuse at once the King's wish' that he be the one to collect the tax.⁶³ It was Coryndon's case that won out. The tax was not, however, to be collected immediately across the entire kingdom.

In August 1904, Coryndon and Worthington visited Lealui, bringing with them 'several hundreds of Indunas' from Kalomo, that is to say Ila and Tonga chiefs, in order to hear the discussion to be held on the collection of the tax, scheduled for the Batoka district that year.⁶⁴ It was to be a crucial moment. 'We have been here for some days now', wrote Worthington to his father, 'working hard to bring about some far-reaching reforms.'⁶⁵ 'Today', he continued, 'we have informed the Barotse nation that the British Government will not tolerate slavery in any of its forms and that slave-owners will, in future, be prevented from attempting to recapture runaways leaving for their homes...The payment of tribute to Lewanika by the subject tribes has also been abolished within the last few days.'⁶⁶ This news, Jalla reported, 'fell on the chiefs like a funeral knell.'⁶⁷ Thus the 'first steps towards the abolition of slavery' had been accomplished. A similar declaration was also made at Sesheke in 1905 by the Assistant District Commissioner (ADC), Dawson.⁶⁸ Now, in the place of the tribute he had once demanded, Lewanika was to receive a percentage of the hut tax collected by the company, the collection of which would begin shortly thereafter. What then followed

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Worthington, 'Extracts from a letter written to my Father, dated Lealui 21st of August 1904', ALM, LM2/4/19/1.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *NfB*, 24, January 1905, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Dawson to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 19 November 1905. NAZ, BS2 IN1/1/20 vol. IV.

was a long drawn out dispute over the percentage of the tax Lewanika was to receive. Having been beaten down from his demand for 50 percent, then 30, then 20, in the end Lewanika conceded to receiving only 10 percent of the tax, of which he would receive not more than £1,200. The remainder, were there to be any, would be paid into a fund for public works.⁶⁹

It was a total capitulation. But it was not yet the formal abolition of slavery. Nor did the subject receive any mention in the reports that Coryndon submitted to both the High Commissioner and the Company about the visit to Lealui. All Coryndon had to say was the ‘there were discussed in addition other matters of minor importance which I do not consider of sufficient interest to report to Your Lordship.’⁷⁰ It is clear that, at least as late as 1904, the men on the ground shared precisely the same view as Lyttleton Gell had expressed in c. 1899. The question of slavery in Barotseland ought to be kept as quiet as possible. But as Worthington wrote to Coryndon in December of that year, as ‘the time for the imposition of Hut Tax over the entire area of North-Western Rhodesia is rapidly approaching, it has become a matter of urgent necessity to clearly define...the future relations between the Barotse...and the many slave tribes which inhabit this territory.’⁷¹ The impetus for this decision, and for the exposing of the question to a much wider audience was, however, to come from an unexpected quarter. To understand how this came about, it is necessary to briefly reflect on the relationship between the Company and the Paris Evangelical mission.

‘His behaviour throughout has been most ungentlemanly’: the Company and the mission

In January 1898, a few months after the arrival of Coryndon and suite, Lewanika told the people assembled at the Kuta that there were ‘*trois espèces de blancs, ceux du gouvernement, les marchands et les missionnaires. Ceux du gouvernement, craignez-les, ils ont le pouvoir; les marchands, mangez-les, cars ils sont venus pur vous manger. Quant aux missionnaires, ils sont des nôtres, ils sont de chez nous.*’⁷² That the missionaries were the Lozi’s is surely a reflection of the ‘genteel bondage’ in which they had been held for so long.⁷³ This unequal relationship was mirrored by that between mission and Company. When, for example, the British were seeking material to support their case to the Anglo-Portuguese Boundary commission, the missionaries were directed to gather such evidence. Areas to report on were

⁶⁹ On this dispute see Caplan, *Elites*, p. 86, and for a fuller account Stokes, ‘Barotseland’, pp. 275-282.

⁷⁰ Coryndon to Milner, 11 October 1904, NAZ, KDE 2/44/4-21.

⁷¹ Worthington to The Secretary, 5 December 1904, *ibid.*

⁷² Jalla, *Pionniers*, p. 241. Caplan, *Elites*, p. 74, quotes Jalla’s *Lewanika, Roi des Barotsis* (Geneva, 1902), p. 14.

⁷³ See p. 133.

allotted, and instructions given to avoid giving ‘in native statements references to latitude, longitude’ but that ‘dates may be exactly indicated as having happened ten, twelve or thirteen years ago as case may be.’ Moreover, the missionaries were cautioned that ‘care should be exercised that various statement do not contradict one another.’⁷⁴ As Mainga has observed, while there is no evidence that the missionaries falsified this material, ‘the pressures on them to produce the answers the Company and the British Government required must have been very strong.’⁷⁵ Nor was it simply the missionaries’ local knowledge which was drawn upon. As late as 1908, with Lewanika still protesting the tax dispensation, the High Commissioner was asking Jalla to impress upon Lewanika ‘that the allocation of the 10 percent of the Hut Tax, including the amount to be paid direct to Lewanika, was settled by the Secretary of State, and that he must accept that allocation and decision.’⁷⁶ The relationship between the mission and Company was not always an easy one. But it is often moments of tension which can be the most revealing. They can also, on occasion, assume significance far beyond what their origins might warrant.

In February 1905, Dr. George Reutter, a PEMS missionary at Sesheke, wrote to F.W. Sykes, DC at Livingstone. He wished to lodge a complaint against F.W. Dawson, ADC at Sesheke. It was, Reuter wrote, a matter of his ‘medical honour’.⁷⁷ Dawson had officially accused Reutter of negligence and of being responsible for the death of one of his messengers. Dawson had summoned Reutter, a man not in Government employ, to attend one of his messengers who was gravely ill, but Reutter had sent a note to the effect that he himself was too ill to make the journey. Dawson then summoned the Doctor to conduct a post-mortem, as he suspected foul play, and again the Doctor replied in the negative, promising that if he were well enough he would come the next day. Dawson then sent the corpse to the Doctor, complained Reutter, ‘to oblige me to conduct immediately the examination’.⁷⁸ Sykes wrote to Reuter to apologise, putting Dawson’s actions down to ‘anxiety and the disturbed state of mind into which the death of a messenger must have thrown him’.⁷⁹ Sykes referred the matter to Hazell, acting Secretary for Native Affairs, who wrote to Dawson, expressing surprise that he ‘should be guilty of what I might term an indecent action’.⁸⁰ Dawson’s response was a lengthy account, forwarding correspondence between himself and the Doctor.⁸¹ The matter might, perhaps, have blown over, with Hazell writing to Dawson that

⁷⁴ London to Charter Bulwayo, Telegram, 15 December 1903, NAZ, KDE 2/7/5.

⁷⁵ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 167.

⁷⁶ Selborne to Jalla, 24 February 1908, NAZ, BS2 A1/1/4.

⁷⁷ Reuter to Sykes, 23 February 1905, NAZ, BS2 A3/31/2-3.

⁷⁸ Reuter to Sykes, 23 February 1905, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Sykes to Reutter, 10 April 1905, *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Sykes to Dawson, 10 April 1905, *ibid.*

⁸¹ Dawson to Hazell, 22 April, *ibid.*

I have from the first placed very little importance in this matter and have no doubt it was brought about by mutual irritability caused by too long a sojourn in this trying climate and feel sure that if my surmise is correct, that a change of scene would be beneficial, this in your case is assured in the near future as you are going on leave, from which I hope you will return full recuperated in health and spirits.⁸²

Much as the Company cared little for the independence of the mission, going so far as to instruct them on the sort of evidence they might submit to the Boundary Commission, a complaint was a matter that ought to be swept under the carpet.

Unfortunately for Dawson, it appears this conciliatory letter crossed one of his own, in which he requested that Hazell's letter calling his actions 'indecent' be withdrawn, or that the 'whole affair be submitted to the decision of H.H. the Administrator. I need hardly point out', Dawson continued, 'that I am not in the habit of allowing my conduct to be stigmatised as indecent without very good reasons being given.'⁸³ Following this provocation, Hazell duly forwarded the matter to the Administrator, as Dawson had suggested, his covering note pointing out that he took 'grave exception' to Dawson's bombast and that he felt 'constrained to express the opinion that his behaviour throughout has been most ungentlemanly and goes far to prove his unfitness to hold the position as Representative of this Administration.'⁸⁴ What had thus far been a case for internal discipline, however, soon grew to much more substantial proportions, implicating the Secretary for Native Affairs and bringing the subject of slavery to the fore, not only in North-Western Rhodesia, but at the Colonial Office.

The Administrator was in complete agreement with Hazell, and proposed that he not only be forced to withdraw his own letter, but be transferred to a different station.⁸⁵ Dawson first protested, then withdrew, but by this stage had effectively hung himself as further charges were then proffered against him. He was accused of not only 'a serious quarrel' with the PEMS, but of having caused several ruptures with Litia, chief at Sesheke.⁸⁶ Left with no other option, Dawson resigned. But he did not let the matter rest, instead protesting to the Colonial office.⁸⁷ His 'Native Policy', Dawson wrote, had been to 'make the natives...look on me as their protector...and to thwart Litia's policy which was to pose as a protector of his people

⁸² Hazell to Dawson, 25 May 1905, *ibid.*

⁸³ Dawson to Hazell, 21 May 1905, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Hazell to Secretary, Kalomo, 19 June 1905, *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Hazell to Dawson, 23 June 1905, *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Graham to Dawson, 12 October 1905, NAZ, BS2 IN1/1/20 vol. IV.

⁸⁷ Dawson to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 24 October 1905, *ibid.*

against the white Government.⁸⁸ This ran contrary to the policy of the Company from the outset of bolstering the position of the Lozi elite and avoiding administrative responsibility. To do otherwise would force the Company to acknowledge and address the existence of slavery. Dawson, by his own admission, had contradicted that policy, and had done so because

in this case there was a new factor which does not exist among any Bantu race south of the Zambesi. This factor was slavery – I saw “was” advisedly because...it has now been practically done away with in the Sesheke District – Till this slavery was done away with it was impossible to expect the people to pay hut tax. These facts were fully recognised by Mr. Worthington in a very strongly worded letter written to Letia in April 1905... in this letter he actually threatens Letia that, unless he does away with the horrible customs of slavery then prevalent among his people, ‘evil times will come on him’⁸⁹

We could hope for no clearer confirmation of the logic underpinning the Company’s policy than this. The reaction was biting, and is best summed up in the commentary on this series of letter by the man Dawson had implicated, Worthington. ‘Under other circumstances’ he claimed, ‘I would hesitate to make any reference to Mr. Dawson’s personal appearance, but the natives are only too apt to cling to first impressions. Mr. Dawson’s appearance did not, I am sorry to say, impress the natives...Unfortunately, Mr. Dawson’s personality did not come to his assistance.’ ‘An Official’, he added, ‘must command respect’. Given what we already know of the man’s character, one can well imagine what this sort of respect entailed. Worthington’s *ad hominem* attack, in reality an attempt to discredit Dawson’s accusation against him, only makes his bullying attitude clearer. Of Dawson’s ‘Native Policy Reports’, Worthington asserted they ought to be considered ‘rather in the light of literary efforts than anything else’. He did not deny that he had ‘many times drawn a vivid contrast between Free Countries, and Slave States, for the benefit, not only of Letia, but of Lewanika and his Council.’⁹⁰ As to Dawson’s claim that he had settled the question of slavery at Sesheke, Worthington remarked that he had mistaken the effect of ‘eight years of patient labour’ for ‘result of his two year’s residence at Sesheke.’ And these eight years notwithstanding, Worthington admitted, ‘it cannot yet be said that slavery does not exist.’⁹¹ This letter, and the serious admission it embodied, was forwarded to the High Commissioner in March 1906.⁹² By this time it made little difference. What Dawson had done, in contacting the Colonial

⁸⁸ Dawson to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 19 November 1905, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Worthington to Secretary, Kalomo, 16 February 1906, NAZ, BS2 IN1/1/20 Vol. IV.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Administrator to High Commissioner, 3 March 1906, *ibid.*

Office and making claims about slavery and maladministration, was to make it impossible for the Company to procrastinate or deny things any long. The time had come for the Company to put its house in order. But in order to do that, they would have to bring Lewanika even further under their control.

‘Several minor matters that required readjustment’: the coming of abolition

In March 1905 Colonel Harding, Officer Commanding the Barotse Native police, dispatched to Lealui a patrol consisting of 40 Policemen and a Maxim gun under the command of Major Carden and Lieutenant Watherston.⁹³ This patrol was the direct consequence of a report by Aitkens, DC at Lealui, of ‘rumours current at Lealui as to Lewanika’s unpopularity among the indunas and the people living in the Valley.’ The origins of this discontent seem to have been unclear. Nevertheless, Coryndon reported,

It was some time since I was at Lealui, August last year, and in view of several minor matters that required adjustment, as well as to discover the extent of the reported hostility, I sent Mr. Worthington back to Lealui with Mr. Aitkens to enquire as to the general position and use his discretion with a view to minimise the dissatisfaction and to strengthen as much as possible Lewanika’s position...At the same time I considered it advisable to send a small patrol to Lealui as a moral support to the constituted authority and to Lewanika himself...I do not consider that there is the slightest need for anxiety at all; the patrol may have some beneficial moral effect, and handled with discretion it can do no harm.⁹⁴

The ‘several minor matters that required readjustment’ in 1905 were hardly minor. Worthington received the agreement of Lewanika to the extension of the Hut Tax over the Sesheke, Mankoya, Kasempa, and Kafue Hook districts, and over the Ila living north of the Kafue in 1905, and in the Barotse Valley in 1906. Further, in connection with ‘the extension of the Hut Tax Area’, Worthing ‘pressed for the general abolition of slavery. It has often been pointed out to Lewanika that slaves could not earn the necessary money and at the same time render unpaid services to their masters.’ Lewanika, Worthington wrote, had ‘long since agreed to the justice of this condition.’ A number of other matters were discussed, and the king agreed to all that Worthington proposed. Yet when Worthington wrote that there seemed to be no conspiracy against the king, and that he had ‘no hesitation in saying that for the first time the

⁹³ Harding to High Commissioner, 10 March 1905, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/16.

⁹⁴ Coryndon to High Commissioner, 9 March 1905, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/15.

Administration possesses the native confidence to the fullest degree', one wonders how salutary an effect the presence of the armed patrol had upon proceedings, and what the real purpose of that patrol was in the first place.⁹⁵ Coryndon was much pleased with the results of this visit, although he felt it necessary to explain to the High Commissioner that, from his arrival in 1897, he had 'impressed strongly upon Lewanika the fact that domestic slavery could not continue, and since then upon every opportunity I have further emphasised the fact and explained my meaning.'⁹⁶ This was not, as we know, accurate. But given that Dawson's protest to the Colonial Office had not yet been made, Coryndon's dishonesty hardly comes as a surprise in the overall economy of the Company's approach to slavery.

Shortly after Worthington's return, in July 1905, the King of Italy, to whom Britain and Portugal had finally put the matter of the western border for arbitration, gave his decision. Portugal had claimed that the *modus vivendi* line, the Zambezi, ought to be the border. Britain and, through Britain, Lewanika had sought to have this placed on the twentieth meridian east of Greenwich. The decision of the King of Italy was a compromise between the two. The border would run along the twenty second meridian. For the Lozi this was a substantial loss of territory. Lewanika's was hardly pleased. 'It is not quite a good boundary', Lewanika wrote, 'not a boundary only a joke indeed...How shall we do, Sir, to be cutted half and half.'⁹⁷ When Coryndon visited Lealui in late 1905, he found that there was much dissatisfaction with this boundary, and that 'Lewanika and his chiefs were at a complete loss to understand why some of the subject tribes should have been cut in half...I am afraid the decision had had a bad effect upon what one may call our good name with the Barotse.'⁹⁸ Although he was unable to 'detect any specific reason as to why the local political atmosphere was not as clear as it should be', Coryndon was compelled to form that conclusion. The king seemed to have become increasingly unpopular. Coryndon suspected the root was alienation on the part of the people, who blamed him for the 'irritating restrictions which come with a white administration'. Moreover,

seeing that the days of his tyranny are coming to an end...he and one or two of his chief indunas have hurried through the execution of various work with practically slave or forced labour – many large houses in Lealui and Nalolo, a fleet of canoes, and a huge foundation (for a new house) measuring perhaps three acres and raised above the surrounding swamp area by thousands of unpaid workers.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Worthington to Coryndon, 7 April 1905, NAZ, KDE 2/44/4-21.

⁹⁶ Coryndon to High Commissioner, 8 April, 1905, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/16.

⁹⁷ Lewanika to Coryndon, 19 July 1905, quoted in Caplan, *Elites*, p. 89.

⁹⁸ Coryndon to High Commissioner, 19 December 1905, NAZ BS2 HC1/2/23 vol. II.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

If the writing seemed to be increasingly on the wall for Lewanika and the Lozi elite, they were at least determined to make the most of the labour they could still call upon. Clearly, even in 1905, this was substantial.

It was also becoming increasingly clear that the king was ever more in the power of the Company. Further evidence of quite how far he had begun to be disregarded can be found, paradoxical though it may seem, in the addition of territory to Lewanika's domains. In 1905, the BSAC was faced with the fact that, thanks to their concessions with Lewanika, in North-Western Rhodesia, 'our rights to minerals are very clear, but in North-Eastern Rhodesia our rights are founded upon a very large number of contracts made with personages whose existences today are somewhat mythical.'¹⁰⁰ The Administrator of North Eastern Rhodesia pointed out that this was preferable to the pretence that the concessions with Lewanika made any claims beyond the Kafue river: 'If you are going to hold your rights on a fiction they will rest on a less secure basis than at present'.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, by administrative device, the boundary was duly moved and the Copperbelt and line of rail became part of North-Western Rhodesia. Though Lewanika formally received this area, he did not control it, nor had he claimed it.¹⁰² He had become, for the company, simply a tool to be used in the securing of their own ends. The Company did, however, sugar the pill somewhat.

They agreed to establish a school, first promised in the Lochner concession. But this was largely in response to what Ranger has termed the 'Ethiopian Episode' in Barotseland. Willie Mokalapa, a Sotho evangelist of the PEMS had turned his back on the missionaries and established schools offering an education in English and technical subjects, in contrast to the missionaries' insistence on teaching Lozi and the Gospel. These Lewanika 'accepted with alacrity' and by 1903 these schools had attracted the majority of the PEMS' students.¹⁰³ But this movement collapsed in 1905 when Mokalapa, sent by Lewanika to purchase wagons, carriages and boats in South Africa, was cheated out of the funds entrusted to him. It was as a response to the desire of Lewanika, as expressed by his support of Mokalapa, to see a more useful system of education instituted and to avoid a repeat of this episode that the Barotse National School was established. In preaching what Coryndon called the 'pernicious' notion of 'the practical equality of white and black races', Mokalapa posed a threat to the Company's

¹⁰⁰ As quoted in Hall, *Zambia*, p. 86.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Caplan, *Elites*, p. 88. The device in question can be found as 'High Commissioner's Notice No. 88 of 1905', 29 September 1905, NAZ, BS2 HC/1/2/20.

¹⁰³ Caplan, *Elites*, p. 80; Ranger, T., 'The "Ethiopian" Episode in Barotseland: 1900-1905', *RLJ*, 37 (1965), pp. 26-42.

control of Lewanika and the Lozi elite.¹⁰⁴ Had Mokalapa not, by his loss of Lewanika's money, rendered his movement defunct, the administration would certainly have done so. This entire episode was also a measure of the receding influence of the PEMS. The almost wholesale abandoning of their schools had been bad enough, but the double blow of Lewanika's enthusiasm in supporting this was one from which the mission would never fully recover. Henceforth, their once prominent political role dwindled. The death of Coillard in 1904, in the midst of this episode, only reinforced the decline. But the establishment of a school was not the only thing that the Company decided was necessary to curry favour with the *Litunga*.

By late 1905 Coryndon decided that Lewanika should be supported in his efforts to improve the canal at the Ngonye falls. He had been 'always of the opinion that it was not worth while building this canal; transport by river will never be sufficient to pay for it, or I believe even for its upkeep. But Lewanika is very enthusiastic about it'. So he had 'let it go on', rather than give Lewanika the suspicion of any 'ulterior motive' in speaking too strongly against it. He instructed Worthington, who was shortly to go to Lealui, to see to it that W.B. Simpson, a young English artisan missionary working for the PEMS at Seoma and whom Lewanika had contracted to cut the new canal, was 'fair to the chief, since he has no business knowledge of this nature.'¹⁰⁵ Coryndon had also wrote to Dr. de Prosch, another of the PEMS missionary at the end of 1905, asking that the mission sell Lewanika timber cut by their saw mill at Seoma for the construction of lock gates.¹⁰⁶ Thus it seemed that Lewanika's hopes of opening up the Zambezi were to be fulfilled. The reason that Coryndon had decided to relent and ask Worthington to assist was not however a charitable one. Coryndon was about to depart on leave for England in advance of taking up the post of Resident Commissioner in Swaziland. In the same letter to Worthington, marked confidential, Coryndon thought it necessary to 'indicate somewhat the lines' Worthington was to pursue in Lealui. 'I think you understand thoroughly', Coryndon wrote,

the direction things should take in the Valley, the dangers to be avoided, the points to be emphasised, and those delicate matters concerning which care should be exercised...You should spend as little time as possible on your journey. You will bear in mind that in five weeks' time or less I shall have left Kalomo on leave, and that my acting successor will be necessarily ignorant of our native policy, and for this reason you should return to Kalomo as soon as you can in order to afford him that advice and

¹⁰⁴ Coryndon to Milner, 24 October 1904, CO African South 763, quoted in Caplan, *Elites*, p.80.

¹⁰⁵ Not signed, but undoubtedly a letter from Coryndon to Worthington, 22 May 1906, NAZ, BS2 A3/24/8.

¹⁰⁶ Coryndon to de Prosch, October 1905, ALM, LM2/4/1/1/5.

assistance in your departmental affairs which you have at all times placed at my disposal.¹⁰⁷

We need not look far to see what it was about ‘our native policy’ that Coryndon was anxious his successor would misunderstand. What Coryndon wanted, the ‘direction things should take in the valley’, was, as Worthington’s reply euphemistically put it, for Worthington to ‘re-arrange the conditions of labour in the Barotse Valley’.¹⁰⁸ This, put plainly, meant he was to put abolition into effect. Following his orders from Coryndon, Worthington journeyed to Lealui in July 1906.

By the 10th of July, Lewanika and his council were proving intractable, and talks had reached deadlock. Worthington resorted to bombast. Tearing the draft proclamation, he walked out. Later, he received a delegation led by the *Ngambela*, who informed him that they would relent.¹⁰⁹ It was, it appears, only through the chance intercession of F.Z.S Peregrino, a Gold Coaster, that Worthington’s arguments began to make themselves felt. Peregrino, from a family of returned Brazilian slaves living in Accra, had already had an extraordinary career before this moment. Educated in Sierra Leone, he was for a time employed in the iron industry in the Midlands and north of England, émigré to America, then to Cape Town via London and back once more to the Cape, where he established the Coloured Men’s Protectorate and Political Association.¹¹⁰ A political activist and newspaper editor, it appears he first made contact with the Lozi through Litia.¹¹¹ Peregrino was in Bulwayo on the 25th of June 1906, and so it could well be that his arrival in the valley exactly coincided with the discussions, although this certainly cannot have been intentional, given their confidential nature.¹¹² Even the missionaries had no idea they were taking place, and Jalla for one wished to know why. It was, Worthington replied, that the outcome had been uncertain and ‘I do not’, he explained, ‘like to fail in anything.’¹¹³ This is not, however, really an answer to Jalla’s question. Perhaps Worthington felt that the presence of the missionaries might interfere with his tactics or force him to moderate his arguments. In the event, he explained to Jalla, they both had to thank

¹⁰⁷ [Coryndon] to Worthington, 22 May 1906, NAZ, BS2 A3/24/8.

¹⁰⁸ Worthington to Secretary, Kalomo, 10 July 1906, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/61.

¹⁰⁹ Worthington to Jalla, 10 July 1906, ALM, LM2/4/1-5.

¹¹⁰ ‘F.Z.S. Peregrino’ in Sherwood, Marika, *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora* (London, 2012). I am indebted to Alcione M. Amos for sharing with me her unpublished paper, “‘Not Altogether of the Ordinary Material and Timber.’” The Life of F.Z.S. Peregrino, 1851-1919’.

¹¹¹ Peregrino to Madio, 3 June 1906, NAZ, BS2 IN1/1/15.

¹¹² Secretary for Native Affairs to Civil Commissioner Livingstone, 25 June 1906, *ibid.*

¹¹³ Worthington to Jalla, 11 July 1906, ALM, LM2/4/1/5.

the influence of Mr. Peregrino, the coloured editor of the South African Spectator who, arriving at a very opportune moment, threw the weight of his opinion in favour of abolition. Had it not been for the arrival of this very right minded man, slavery would in all probability have remained for years in the valley.¹¹⁴

High praise indeed, although Peregrino was not always to prove so helpful to the administration.¹¹⁵ Worthington asked Jalla to correct the text of the Proclamation, and wrote to inform Coryndon that the King and Council had ‘agreed to the abolition of slavery throughout Lewanika’s territory.’¹¹⁶ He would, he promised, ‘endeavour to surround the reading of the Proclamation with as much circumstance as possible, and shall request the Missionaries to make it known and comment upon it from the pulpits of each Mission church.’¹¹⁷

The following day, Worthington wrote informing the Acting Administrator that the Proclamation would be read at the Kuta on the 16th of July, and that ‘all the Indunas and headmen who can be gathered in the time available, will be present, together with as large a number of slaves as possible. Some twenty-five missionaries will also attend. The Sunday following the Proclamation will be read in the Churches.’¹¹⁸ He also prepared a memorandum on the entire question, giving his account of the situation on the ground. ‘For years past, ever since 1897 in fact’, he claimed, ‘individual slaves have, when opportunity offered, deserted their masters and returned to their homes where they enjoy a secure and peaceful life.’ The consequence of this was that those slaves who remained ‘pay heavier tribute than any outside subject tribe; their contribution in labour never ceases from Year’s end to year’s end.’ But these slaves, according to Worthington, were ‘anxious for the collection of Native Tax to commence’, and ‘openly stated that with the imposition of the Tax all obligation to their masters will of necessity cease, for had not Lewanika agreed that with the payment of Tax, tribute ceases. Their tribute was their unpaid and unfed labour.’¹¹⁹

But there was a problem, for the Lozi elite ‘feared that with the imposition of the Tax, their slaves would leave them in a state of destitution’. What Worthington decided were ‘the points I had to keep in view’ were that slavery had to be abolished, ‘yet the Barotse saved

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ He became, in fact, something of a thorn in their side. See Caplan, *Elites*, pp. 92-93, 100.

¹¹⁶ Worthington to Jalla, 11 July 1906, ALM, LM2/4/1/5; Worthington to Secretary, Kalomo, 10 July 1906, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/61.

¹¹⁷ Worthington to Secretary, Kalomo, 10 July 1906, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ ‘Extract from Letter from Secretary for Native Affairs to Acting Administrator’, 11 July 1906, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/61.

¹¹⁹ Worthington, ‘Memorandum on Slavery’, pp. 4-6.

from starvation; for without their slaves little cultivation would be undertaken.’ All this Worthington explained to Lewanika and the *kuta*, who were faced with a choice ‘between two evils’. Through inaction, their ‘slaves would free themselves unconditionally’ once the tax commenced. Or they could seize the initiative and abolish slavery on their own terms. Worthington urged the ‘the advisability of freeing the slaves, with certain conditions attached to their freedom, before the position became too acute.’¹²⁰ The method for ensuring that the slaves would not desert their masters was a simple one. A clause was inserted in the Proclamation that required slaves to pay £2 to their masters, or rather their former masters, to secure their redemption. Worthington also remarked that ‘Out of respect for Lewanika’s amour propre I added the Preamble and Epilogue, and insisted that the Proclamation should emanate from him.’¹²¹ We have no account of what passed between Worthington and Lewanika during the negotiations, or how Worthington explained all of this to the *Litunga*, except Worthington’s. The fact that he chose not to inform the missionaries is, however, suggestive that he did not want them to see this abolition for what it was or how it was concocted. What we can see it that it was not a free exercise on the part of Lewanika and his council. Nor, as we shall see in the next chapter, did it actually free the slaves.

‘The old rules of the nation have still to be kept’: the proclaiming of abolition

On the morning of the 16th of July 1906, Captain J.J. O’Sullivan, Officer Commanding Barotse Native Police at Lealui, accompanied by Lieutenant Ingles, Worthington and Aitkens, at the head of 45 Barotse Native Police marched from Mongu to Lealui to a bugle march. All morning people had been coming from the surrounding areas, all headed in the same direction. A crowd, about 2,000 strong, had gathered in the capital before the *kuta*, summoned for the announcement. Men went to and fro, carrying reed mats and chairs, marshalling the crowd. Others rendered the praises of the king. A group of missionaries arrived and were taken to their seats to the left of Lewanika’s gilded chair.

The police detachment, amidst a cloud of dust, marched into the centre of the circle left by the spectators who squatted around them in the loose sand. The officials, greeted in the same fashion as high-ranking Lozi, were met with a general clapping of cupped hands. Worthington and Aitkens dismounted, and the Barotse Native Police formed up in front of the assembly. Lewanika, resplendent in the court uniform he had received on his visit to England, advanced a few steps to greet the officials and then received the general salute from the police, raising his plumed hat in acknowledgment. The police then formed up behind the crowd.¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² O’Sullivan to Harding, 17 July 1906, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/61.

They had been gathered for an announcement which, for the 22 missionaries who had also made the journey to Lealui, had come as ‘quite a surprise – a delightful surprise too.’¹²³

The *Ngambela* spoke first, exhorting those gathered to listen carefully to the proclamation, telling them that ‘as the tribes subjected by the Marotsi had taken many manners from their masters, so now they were all called to take the manners of the British, as they were under their rule. Therefore they would give slavery up.’¹²⁴ Then Worthington, with Jalla acting as translator, congratulated Lewanika and his council on the proclamation and said that he ‘trusted they would yet fulfil all the possibilities of such a great event.’ Jalla then read the text of the proclamation to the crowd in Sesuto. Worthington then spoke again, reminding the liberated slaves of their duties to their masters. Jalla, in turn, spoke of the ‘three greatest curses of the Marotse’. He spoke against wars, civil wars, *razzias* and murders; ‘all that was abolished by the Gospel’. Then against slavery, reminding the crowd that in 1897, ‘God had used [the missionaries] to prevent the last slave raiding expedition. And now He had used the Secretary for Native Affairs and the King’s Council to abolish slavery officially’. Finally, he spoke of the hard fight yet to be won against Polygamy. Kalonga then spoke, telling the crowd, in the name of the king and his council, that they truly gave them their freedom. The *Ngambela* then spoke again. He explained to the people that ‘they all had the duty to serve the King and their headmen in accordance with the rules of the Proclamation’, and that the ‘old rules of the nation have still to be kept’.¹²⁵ The people gave the royal salute, or *shoalela*, ‘yoo shoo, yoo shoo’, and once again clapped hands. The sound, one observer wrote, ‘resembled the approach, fall, and backwash of a mighty breaker on a pebble beach.’¹²⁶ Then the *maoma*, the great drums of the Lozi, were beaten, and the large square became the scene of a great sham battle.¹²⁷ Worthington reported that, given the ‘exceptionally large number of white men present’, it was likely that ‘the matter will be reported in many papers’, and that there had even been a professional photographer present. More importantly, from Worthington’s perspective, was that on the 17th of July the census of the Valley, which laid the way for the collection of the Hut Tax, began.¹²⁸

More than anything, it was the imperative to collect tax which had driven officials to finally take action, although the potential of a damaging exposure of Coryndon and

¹²³ *NfB*, 29, October 1906, pp. 6-7.

¹²⁴ ‘Lealui. From the Rev. Adolphe Jalla. Lealuyi, 24th July, 1906’, *ibid.*, p.11.

¹²⁵ ‘Lealui. From the Rev. Adolphe Jalla’, p.12.

¹²⁶ ‘How freedom came to Barotsi-land. King Lewanika’s gift. From a Correspondent’, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 1906.

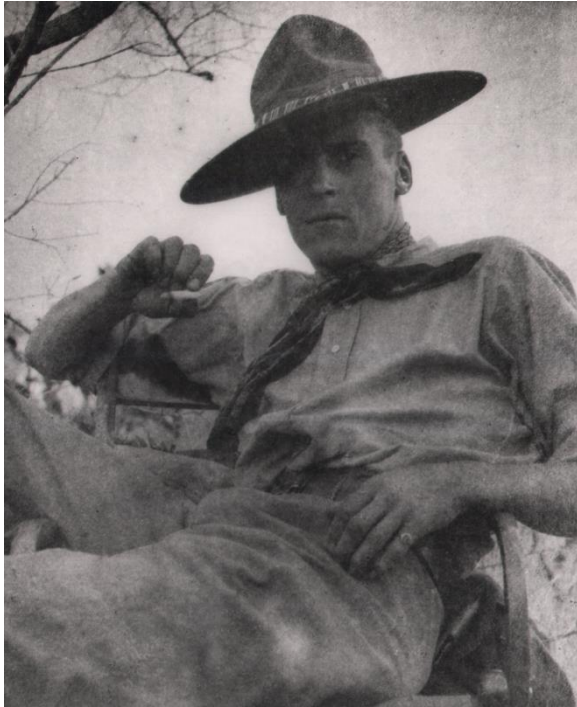
¹²⁷ ‘Lealui. From the Rev. Adolphe Jalla’, p. 13.

¹²⁸ Worthington to Newton, 17 July 1906, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/61.

Worthington's 'native policy' certainly put the spur to this. They clearly recognised that, for as long as the Lozi elite exacted tribute from the population, this would stand in the way of their ability to harvest taxes. This concern is nowhere clearer than in the text of the proclamation itself. Of a total of eleven clauses only one, restricting the movement of those it purports to set free, is not concerned with labour. Out of some 800 words, slavery is mentioned twice, in the preamble and epilogue which Worthington inserted out of 'respect for Lewanika's amour propre'.¹²⁹ Thus the proclamation begins by declaring that 'I, LEWANIKA...with the advice and consent of my council...of our own free will, in the cause of JUSTICE and PROGRESS, set free all SLAVES'. 'WE have made these rules', reads the epilogue, 'trusting that by their means SLAVERY will become a thing of the past in our country,' Finally, it concluded, 'Especially are WE anxious to put a stop to the exchange or gift of Human Beings, where by a Father may be separated from his Family, a Husband from his Wife, a Mother from her Child.'¹³⁰ The rest of the proclamation is given over to tribute labour, setting out a series of rules governing what could, and could not, be demanded. Thus 12 days labour per year was specified for the *Litunga*, but no such limit placed on work done for *manduna* and headmen, barring that they should be for 'exclusive benefit of the Community or Kraal'. As we shall see, these rules were clearly open to abuse. For in reality this proclamation was not what it purported to be. It abolished nothing at all. What mattered was that abolition had been seen to be done and tribute had been, to all appearances, restricted sufficiently not to interfere with the introduction of the hut tax.

¹²⁹ See above.

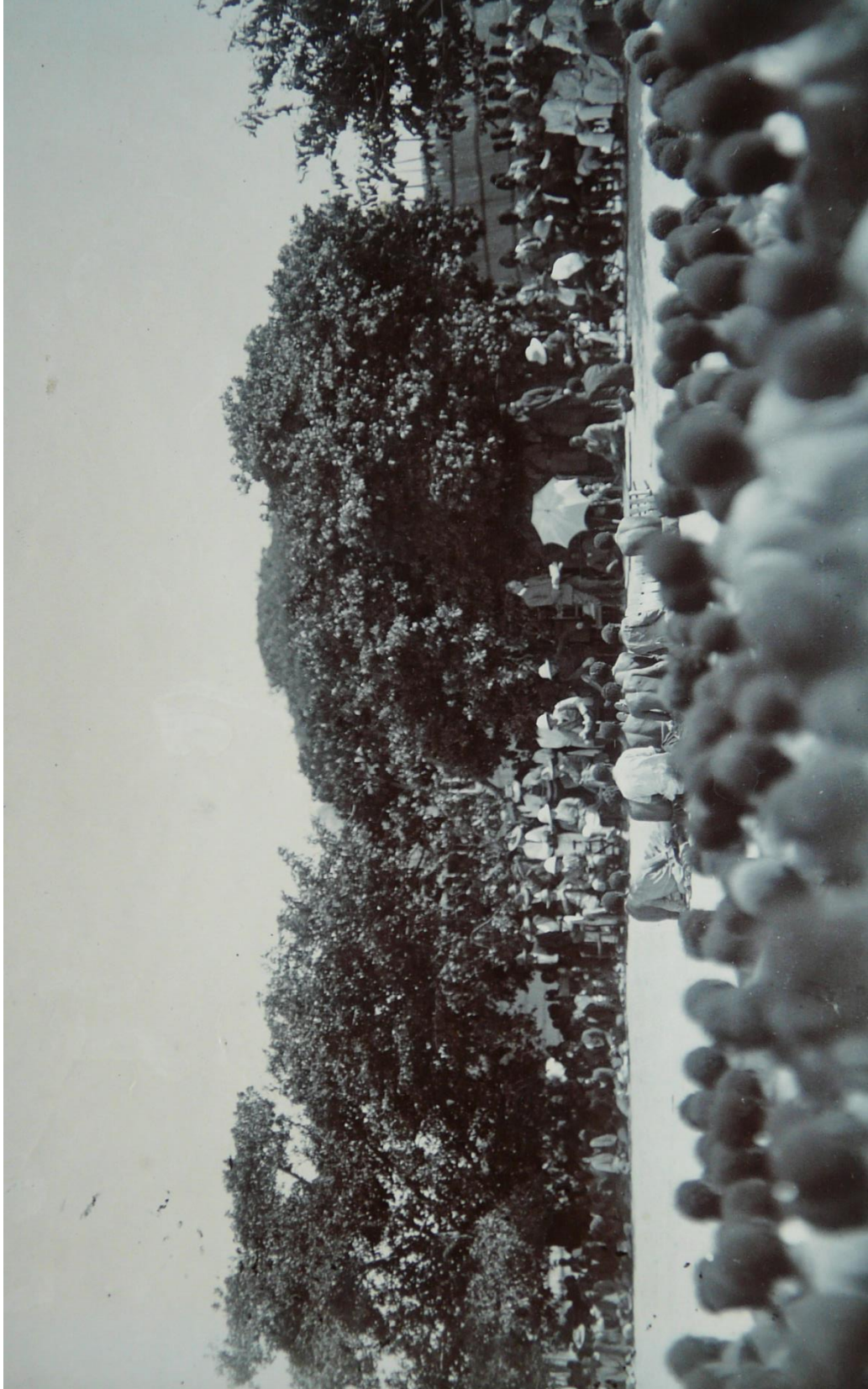
¹³⁰ See Appendix I for this proclamation. Orthography in original.



Illust. 14. **Frank Vigers
Worthington.**
Livingstone Museum Colonial
Photographs Collection.



Illust. 15. **Robert Thorne
Coryndon.**
Livingstone Museum Colonial
Photographs Collection.



Illust. 16. **Lealui, 16 July 1906.** This photograph in the Livingstone Museum's collection bears no title, but when compared with Illusts. 17-19 it is clear that this is a photograph of Worthington speaking on the day of abolition.
Livingstone Museum Colonial Photographs Collection.

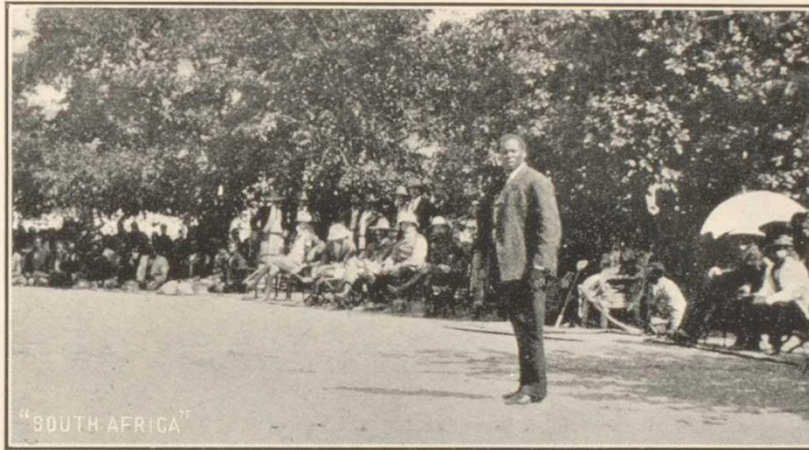


KING LEWANIKA
ON HIS THRONE.

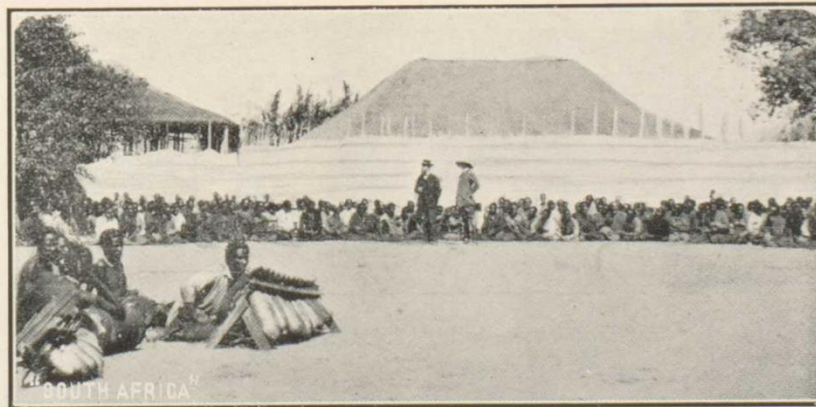
REV. L. JALLA
REV. E. BEGUIN.

THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN BAROTSI-LAND, REV. ADOLPHE JALLA INTERPRETING THE PROCLAMATION.

Illust. 17. Proclaiming abolition I. Reproduced from *News from Barotsi-land*, 29, October 1906.

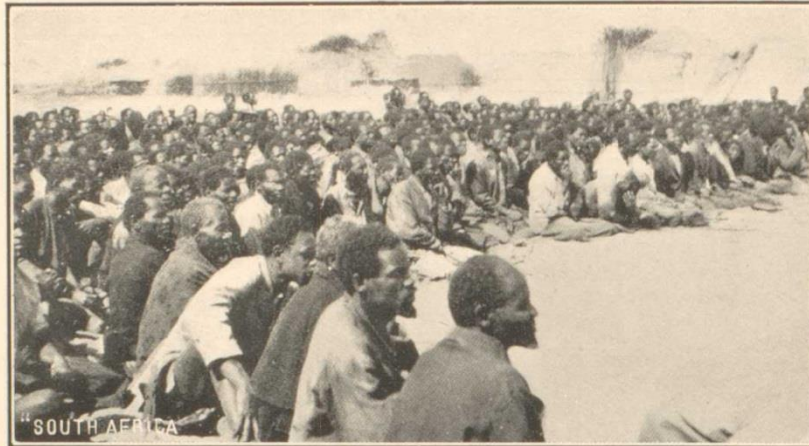


THE GAMBELLA (PRIME MINISTER), ADDRESSING THE PEOPLE.



MR. WORTHINGTON SPEAKING AND M. JALLA INTERPRETING.
MUSICIANS IN THE FOREGROUND.

Illust. 18. **Proclaiming abolition II.** Reproduced from *News from Barotsi-land*, 29, October 1906.



THE AUDIENCE.



THE KING'S BUGLERS.

Illust. 19. **Proclaiming abolition III.** Reproduced from *News from Barotsi-land*, 29, October 1906.

**‘I don’t know why this state of affairs has been allowed to continue’: after abolition,
1906-1925**

The first narrative chapter of this thesis charted the Lozi elite drawing on the labour of their slaves to harness the wealth of their kingdom. There, while the mission intruded, the power of that elite remained preeminent. The second narrative chapter charted the colonial moment, observing the tilting balance of power between the Lozi elite and the interlopers who, under the guise of an alliance affirming Lozi rights, asserted their own. There we saw, in the ‘native policy’ of Coryndon and Worthington, the refusal by the BSAC to confront the realities of slavery, and that action was in the end forced upon them by changing circumstance. And so abolition was, with caveats, proclaimed.

This chapter follows the playing out of this story for the better part of twenty years. We begin with the immediate aftermath of abolition and the contest for control that followed. Pursuing a series of slavery cases tried in colonial courts and internecine conflict between the Lozi and Company, this chapter demonstrates that the contested ends of slavery in Barotseland in reality meant that for many slaves their bondage continued. The abolition proclamation long remained a dead letter. Indeed, the Company had an initial interest in ignoring the enduring importance of slavery. In the battle to maintain not only the form but also the functions of a pre-colonial polity, the Lozi relied, as they had for decades before, on their control of labour and tributary networks, and it was this that served to put the lie to emancipation. Time and again the Administration deflected the question. It was only as the colonial penetration into the fabric of the kingdom deepened, particularly in the years following the First World War, that it became necessary for the Company to deal once and for all with the residual power of the Lozi elite. The achievement of this goal, which amounted to the final destruction of pre-colonial networks of labour and tribute, only came in the dying days of Company rule. It is on the verge of this final defeat that this chapter ends. The epilogue which follows tells the end of that story.

A ‘growing disregard for any law or order’: the aftermath of abolition

Worthington was right in his speculation that abolition would be reported in the Press. A little over two weeks after the issuing of the Proclamation, *The Rhodesia Herald* reported on the great triumph of the Government of Northern Rhodesia, the ‘outcome of the Secretary for Native Affairs’ advice’.¹ As we have seen, while it was certainly a triumph for the Company,

¹ ‘Barotseland, Abolition of Slavery’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 31 August 1906.

it was the result of rather more than advice. Nevertheless, just as Worthington, sensitive to the *amour propre* of Lewanika, had insisted that the Proclamation should appear to emanate from the Paramount Chief, letters of congratulation flowed in to commend Lewanika's seemingly high-principled deed. On the 9th of August, Newton, the Acting Administrator, lauded Lewanika for having acted 'in accordance with the best principles of humanity and civilization'.² High Commissioner William Palmer, 2nd Earl of Selborne, deemed it a 'wise and humane step...an example to those countries where human beings still continue, unhappily, to be treated as goods and chattels.'³ Privately, as Selborne admitted a few days later in a draft letter to Elgin, Secretary of State for the Colonies, he found it 'somewhat difficult from the information so far furnished to judge what the considerations were which led up to the issue of the Proclamation.' He rightly suspected it was connected with the extension of the Company's administrative rights, but still felt he ought to express 'emphatic approval of an act which however motivated is in itself of the highest merit and cannot be undone.'⁴ Thus the stage was dressed.

In many respects, from the Company's perspective, the year following abolition gave much cause for satisfaction. The census returns showed a population of 84,000, although Courteney, DC at Lealui, thought it probably nearer 100,000, in possession of 60,000 head of cattle and cultivating 200,000 acres bearing an 'excellent harvest' that year. And the collection of tax had been completed without 'the slightest trouble'.⁵ It was the first time the Company had been able to penetrate so widely in Barotseland, and put some sort of figure on the material wealth of the kingdom. Yet there were signs that all was not as calm as it might be. Lewanika requested of the High Commissioner and the new Administrator Codrington, who had replaced Coryndon, that they 'look into the matter of the people who, since the Proclamation of Freedom, do refuse to help their former masters and headmen and for whom these are expected to pay tax.'⁶ *Manduna* were reporting they could obtain no labour for public works or carriers for Officials. At Nalolo the *Mukwae* was unable to summon those who, under the terms of the proclamation, she had every right to. Most striking of all, during the *kuomboka* Lewanika had been humiliatingly forced to request PEMS schoolboys from Lwatile mission to row the *Nalikhanda*.⁷ This was but a part of a larger problem, for, as Lewanika wrote to the High Commissioner,

² Newton to Lewanika, 9 August 1906, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/61.

³ High Commissioner to Lewanika, 5 September 1906, *ibid*.

⁴ High Commissioner to Secretary of State, Draft, 10 September 1906, *ibid*.

⁵ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1906-1907', NAZ, KDE 8/1/1. Aitkens had by this time been invalided home, 'grey and lined and broken in spirit', Worthington to Secretary, Kalomo, 28 September, 1906, NAZ, BS2 A3/31/1.

⁶ Jalla to High Commissioner, 30 September 1907, signed by Lewanika, Litia and the *Ngambela*, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/46.

⁷ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1906-1907'.

Now we have been deprived of the yearly tributes that were brought into our capitals from all the tribes that are under our power; our former slaves feel no more obliged to help their headmen we have to pay for the least service they render us how are we to live?...[A]re all the headmen to give up their duties as rulers and judges of the nation in order to dig their gardens and build their houses, with their own hands. We sometimes are caused to feel as if we were a conquered nation while we have made an agreement which was said to be just like an Alliance between our nation and the Imperial Government. When we say so, those off the B.S.A.C. ask: Do you want to be conquered?⁸

The High Commissioner instructed the Administration to make enquiries into the complaint.⁹ They laid the blame squarely at the feet of the Lozi elite. 'It is true', Worthington admitted, 'that the former slaves refuse to do some of the work demanded of them', but the fault lay with their masters who refused to assist Lewanika. Their slaves merely followed suit.¹⁰ Moreover, he considered that the 'position is by no means serious and improving rapidly.'¹¹ Yet how are we to reconcile this with Courteney's report in the same year that, although no-one had expected the 'complete upheaval and destruction of the foundations of the domestic economy of the Marotse... in reality little difference in the status of the slaves is manifested'?

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On the one hand, the *Litunga* and *Mukwae* were apparently unable to muster any labour, yet on the other hand the conditions of life for slaves were reportedly no better than they had been before. How could both of these be true? For what Courteney, the man on the ground, saw was that the *manduna* had 'found it to their interests to pervert the clauses of the proclamation till nothing is left of the original text.'¹³ To make sense of this we must return to the distinction already made on several occasions between slave labour and tribute labour. Let us not forget that all labour, slave and free, was organized through the *makolo* to serve the king and was called in as tribute. The fact that the majority of the population of the plain were slaves had not altered this crucial tributary mechanism. And whether they laboured as part of their *likolo* or outside of it, slaves were still slaves. Outside of their *likolo* their labour was still

⁸ Lewanika, Litia and the *Ngambela* to High Commissioner, 1 October 1907, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/46.

⁹ Selborne to Lewanika, 20 September 1907, appended to 'Minutes of the proceedings at a meeting with Lewanika at Sesheke, 30 September 1907', *ibid*.

¹⁰ Quoted in Carden, Acting Administrator to High Commissioner, 25 October 1907, *ibid*.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² 'Barotse District Annual Report 1906-1907'.

¹³ *Ibid*.

demanded from them as slaves *tout court*. Thus what seems to be so strange in these reports - the *manduna* were perverting the proclamation, yet labour was not forthcoming - is no real mystery at all: the proclamation had attacked tribute labour and hence the *makolo*. But it did not emancipate slaves, at least so far as their masters were concerned. Their ability to control their slaves seems, however, to have been uneven, for while at Lealui Lewanika found he could not muster any labour, of Sesheke Jalla reported 'There is no freedom...as obtains in Lealui. Everything is different.'¹⁴ Clearly, from the perspective of the Company and Lozi elite, the situation in the year following abolition was not entirely satisfactory. As we shall see, both soon resolved to do something about this. But this is only half of the picture, for we need a sense of what life was like following abolition for those it was supposed to have liberated.

A number of court cases tried in 1907 give us the opportunity to hear, however modulated, the voice of people outside of the Lozi elite. And what these records make clear is how little attitudes and behaviour had changed. Particularly interesting in these cases is that the fact that people were being abused because they were slaves appears to excite no interest whatsoever in the Magistrate. For instance, in the case of the fatal shooting of a slave boy, Molele, by his master, Fanyangu, one witness testified that, before firing, Fanyangu had said 'the little animal, I will kill it.'¹⁵ Another witness said she thought the boy had been killed simply because he was a slave, and she had seen him beaten before for the same reason.¹⁶ Another particularly unpleasant case was that of *Rex. v. Sinyama*, who was tried for attempted rape.¹⁷ According to the victim, Sinyama beat her and then raped her. The defendant opened his brief statement with a telling explanation. 'I admit beating the woman because I thought she was my father's slave.'¹⁸ In her evidence the victim said something even more telling. The passers-by who intervened had asked Sinyama 'why he had beaten me. He replied that I was his father's slave...I do not know why the accused said I was his father's slave. I do not know him. I am slave of Lewanika.'¹⁹ This statement appears to have gone completely unchallenged. Perhaps the worst case involved the prosecution of five men for a series of brutal abductions.²⁰ One of the victims recounted that he and others with him had been seized by the accused, along with 'a white man called Chindele (McLuskie).'²¹ They had been tied

¹⁴ Jalla to High Commissioner, 30 September 1907, signed by Lewanika, Litia and the *Ngambela*, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/46.

¹⁵ Evidence of Moendabae, *Rex v. Fanyangu*, Case 25/1907, NAZ, KDE 3/2/1.

¹⁶ Evidence of Namasiku, *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Rex v. Sinyama*, Case 40/1907, NAZ, KDE 3/2/1.

¹⁸ Evidence of Sinyama, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Evidence of Namasiku, *ibid.*

²⁰ *Rex v. Havana (alisa Tafane), Kabinda, Sabiamba (alias Mangwa), Sebwasewwa and Chikoi*, Case 36/1907, NAZ, KDE 3/2/1.

²¹ Evidence of Kafutela, *ibid.*

to long poles, beaten, urinated on, forced to pound cassava. One victim, Muyoza had been tied too hard to the pole; thus unable to move, he was badly burnt by the fire he had been too close to during the night.²² Another victim reported they had all been ‘beaten to make us work harder.’²³ All of the accused were found guilty. What is strange about this case, and the trial of Mcluskie, who was convicted of robbery and manslaughter by the Acting Magistrate, is that at no point was the obvious accusation put. To what end were these people abducted, beaten, humiliated, ‘always kept tied up’ and ‘kept short of food and water’?²⁴ More than anything, this reads like an attempt to break those kidnapped with the intention of selling them as slaves. Kasempa, where these crimes took place, was notoriously lawless, and appears to have been heavily frequented by slave traders and raiders from Angola.²⁵ McLuskie presented no evidence at his trial, nor at the appeal he lodged, which was eventually dropped, ‘convict McLuskie having escaped from Gaol’.²⁶ In this case, as in the cases of Fanyangu and Sinyama, the Magistrate nowhere seems to have demurred on the subject of slavery, nowhere pointed out that it had been abolished, nowhere wished to point out that a white man appears to have been slave-taking. And while these might be taken as isolated cases, too extreme or particular to give any sense of the general position of slaves in 1907, there is other evidence that clearly demonstrate that abuses continued unabated.

In 1906 the Rev. Burnier, PEMS missionary at Lukona station, recorded that during that year, the first of the station’s existence, it had become ‘a place of refuge’ for slaves. He had been happy to intervene, for he found ‘the cowardliness of the Marotse’ hateful. He reported women being brutalised as a punishment for their husbands ‘missing one royal corvée’ and children raided ‘to stock their courts with small slaves.’ The people around his mission ‘frequently only spent the night at their place, remaining hidden in the forest during the day to avoid the detested corvées’. On one occasion, ‘the Marotse were able to kidnap two small girls, school pupils, before I was made aware of it.’ Burnier found these girls en route to Lealui, and took one of them with him to remonstrate with Lewanika. ‘The king’, Burnier wrote, ‘was very annoyed with my intervention, but he knew not how to reply.’²⁷ Two years later in June 1908, Burnier once more had to intervene. He requested and received from

²² Evidence of Kafutela, *ibid.*

²³ Evidence of Chimwanga, *ibid.*

²⁴ Evidence of Kalipa, *ibid.*

²⁵ See for example Coryndon to Milner, 18 May 1903, NAZ, BS2 HC1/2/7; M. Teixeira de Matteos to Codrington, 14 October 1907, NAZ, BS2 A3/28/3. See also Macola, ‘Reassessing the significance’, pp. 316-317.

²⁶ ‘In the Matter of the Appeal of Henry McLuskie against the decision of the Acting Magistrate, Lealui.’ NAZ, BS2 H/1/2/1 vol. IV.

²⁷ Burnier, ‘Rapport for la marche de la station de Lukona pendant sa première année, 1905-1906’. This is one of a series of station reports I found uncategorised amongst the holding of the Livingstone Museum.

Lewanika the release of a girl who had been ‘taken by his chief and taken to Namikelako’; he also prevented two further children from being seized because they were pupils at his school.²⁸ In 1906, the missionaries at Sefula reported that large numbers of people were rebuilding Lewanika’s houses, damaged by a fire. They at first thought the people were rendering the ‘12 days stated in the Proclamation and we kept quiet, but the game continued and people began to grumble and complain to us.’ When the missionaries confronted the *Ngambela*, he pleaded ignorance, but expressed himself to be ‘very saddened by the abuses committed by the chiefs.’²⁹ The following February, the ‘*corvée des bois de construction*’ began, and not a man escaped. This continued on into March and April, and again people complained to the missionaries. ‘It’s obvious’, wrote the missionaries, ‘that big changes do not take place in few days only, but it is sad to realize the extent to which the king and his council exploit the naivety and ignorance of the people.’³⁰ On the face of it, this appears to fly in the face of earlier statements to the effect that people were refusing to render labour to the *Litunga*, for these missionaries observed people working for months at a time. It appears, then, that the Lozi elite had somehow managed to regain control. How they did so is simple enough. As the District Commissioner explained to the missionaries, when they wrote to inform him of what was happening, the government was aware of the abuses. But it had been decided to turn a blind eye to it for the moment, especially since people were already becoming conscious of their rights and were refusing all unpaid service.³¹ What this amounted to was the continuation of the Company’s policy before abolition. They would simply turn their face away, for the problems that had come in the wake of abolition had not only threatened the position of the Lozi elite.

For the Company, the formal abolition of slavery emanating from Lewanika had been envisioned not only as a matter of administrative regularity, a tidy way to draw a veil over nine years of evading the reality of Lozi slavery, but also as a means for ensuring the more effective imposition of their power. We have seen how little it appears to have done to change Lozi attitudes towards slaves. The lives of slaves at the village level were, to put it simply, as bad as ever. However, in certain areas at least, abolition served to undermine the authority of the Lozi elite. Slaves had not been truly emancipated, but networks of tribute and obligation, in effect networks of power and control, had been disrupted. This had been one of the aims of the exercise, but its consequences gave the Administration no cause to rejoice. As Courteney observed, the people of Barotseland appeared to ‘consider that they have been freed from all

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ ‘Rapport de la Station de Sefula 1906-1907’. This was similarly uncategorised.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

restraint altogether', having by the abolition of tribute, 'thrown off the control of the Paramount Chief' and, by the payment of their first tax, 'fulfilled all their obligations to the government'.³² The consequence had been a 'growing disregard for any law or order'.³³ Worthington had regarded abolition as a necessity 'if peace was to be maintained in the Barotse Valley'.³⁴ Yet precisely the opposite was happening. The Company was faced with a choice. They could risk a further break down in order, or they could support the authority of the Lozi elite. Small wonder the Administration decided it best to turn a blind eye to the abuses. It was the simplest and most effective way to achieve their aims. This, then, is what Worthington meant when, following Lewanika's complaint to the High Commissioner, he described the position as 'by no means serious and improving rapidly'.³⁵ The notion that all obligations had ceased with abolition had to be overcome, for it threatened to undermine the central purpose of the whole exercise: the collection of taxation. But the Company would not interfere in the relationship between the Lozi elite and their 'former' slaves.

The drift in the colonial centre of gravity away from Barotseland, first discussed in chapter 7, had further accelerated in the opening decade of the twentieth century, as the entire upper Zambezi region increasingly became an adjunct to the colonial economy to the south and east. For the Lozi elite, *manduna*, headmen and those in possession of cattle, money for tax could be raised easily enough by selling stock to administrators, missionaries or traders. But for people with no such resources, the introduction of taxation was the moment when they began to feel the teeth of the Company's intention to get them out to work. Punishment for default was harsh, and some of Caplan's informants 'talked vividly of arrests, handcuffs, miserable prison food, ticks in blankets, men often enchained, sometimes being forced to carry buckets of excreta on their heads'.³⁶ There was little work in Barotseland itself, reserved from prospecting and land grants to farmers. The prospects of growing food for markets to the south and east were slight, given the difficulties of transport. As Wallace, Administrator in 1909, observed, 'the Barotse...would like some easy work to be found for them near their homes or would prefer to be left unmolested by an offer of work or demand for taxes'.³⁷ It was a vain hope. By 1911, the District annual report voiced concerns over the 'appaling [sic] death rate amongst natives of the District working as labourers in Southern Rhodesia', though much more space was given over to explaining the awkward fact that there had been a slight decrease

³² 'Barotse District Annual Report 1906-1907'.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Worthington, 'Memorandum on Slavery', p. 4.

³⁵ See p. 192.

³⁶ Caplan, *Elites*, p. 87.

³⁷ Wallace, Acting Administrator to High Commissioner W. Hely-Hutchinson, 10 September 1909, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/1.

in tax revenue.³⁸ The weight of the integration of the Lozi economy into the wider structures of colonial rule thus fell unevenly on the population. Were this not bad enough, the policy pursued by the company of ignoring the endurance of slavery only increased the burden. Unrest was the sure consequence.

This came to a head in 1911, and centred on a putative plot against Lewanika revolving around Mboo, also known as Fuabi, a son of former *Litunga* Sipopa. At an enquiry held into the matter, Mboo abused Lewanika for only taking care ‘of his own children, as for us children of Sepopa we have no servants even to paddle us...I have only an old man servant...All my cattle are dead, that is all that I have to say.’³⁹ The life of an old man with no cattle and but one servant, for which we may read slave, must have been a hard one. Though the enquiry established that Mboo was nothing more than a figurehead, it was decided to banish him and, to avoid any repetition, to secure the line of succession.⁴⁰ Litia was duly announced as Lewanika’s successor later that year. But something more interesting emerges from this enquiry. Worthington, clearly regarded as the expert on the subject by the Administration, prepared a memorandum on the history of political unrest in Barotseland. Opening with the arrival of Coryndon in 1897, Worthington remarked that it had been expected by the ‘Barotse and subject tribes’ that upon his arrival he would abolish slavery. This we know to be true. Both slave and master were disappointed, however, for though raiding was stopped, slavery continued. When in 1906 abolition was proclaimed, even slaves born in the valley with ‘no knowledge of kith and kin’ believed ‘freedom had come to them at last’, for the 12 days labour would be no hardship. But soon, Worthington asserted, slaves found that ‘the prescribed number of days was much exceeded’, and items such as mopani wood poles for construction, canoes, hoes, wooden pots and dishes and other things, formerly supplied as tribute, were likewise being demanded.⁴¹ They ‘pay the tax and tribute is still demanded from them surreptitiously.’⁴² That this could happen at all was the direct result of the Administration’s own policy. They washed their hands of it in the simplest way possible. They declared that the Company had ‘no jurisdiction in purely native cases.’ The abolition proclamation had, after all, apparently been the work of Lewanika and not emanated from the Company. It was thus not their law to enforce. What this amounts to is the recognition that abolition had not resulted in real emancipation, and while the elite could no longer draw on

³⁸ ‘Barotse District Annual Report 1910-1911’, NAZ, KDE 8/1/2.

³⁹ Evidence of Mboo, Rex v. Mboo, alias Fwabi, Ikasia and Others enclosed in McKinnon to Administrator, 26 March 1911, NAZ, BS2 A2-1-5 vol. 1.

⁴⁰ Acting Administrator to High Commissioner, 31 March 1911, *ibid*.

⁴¹ Wood from ‘mopani’ trees, more correctly *Colophospermum mopane* is heavy and difficult to work, but termite resistant and so valuable for construction.

⁴² Worthington, ‘Mboo and the recent unrest in the Barotse Valley’, 20 April, 1911, enclosed in ‘Mboo, Review of Evidence with Memorandum, Glossary and Index’, NAZ, BS2 A2/1/5 vol. 1.

tribute labour as they had done in the past, they still extracted tribute in kind. What the Company were prepared to recognise in private, for Worthington's memorandum was clearly only for internal consumption, and what they would acknowledge in public were two entirely different things. But nothing had altered the fact that slaves were still there, and though the Administration could generally avert their eyes, there were others looking.

'Hardships...more sentimental than real': the benign projection of Lozi slavery

The first such intrusion came in 1910, when Charles Wigan, Clerk of the Rebecca Hussey Slave Charity, wrote to the Secretary of the BSAC. He had been instructed to 'enquire into the position of the Natives of Barotsiland and other parts of South Africa.' This he duly did, going so far as to visit 'one of the Mission Stations on the Zambezi.' There, he learned that 'although the actual status of slavery no longer exists there are tribal obligations, such in the nature of slavery, remaining' which the Trust thought desirable to free people from. What Wigan wished to know was whether he correctly understood that even following the payment of the £2 specified in the proclamation, 'there are still some obligations savouring of slavery which would remain and for which no money redemption can be tendered.'⁴³ The Secretary in turn forwarded this letter to the Acting Administrator to deal with. From there it passed onto the desk of Worthington. Bearing in mind his memorandum for the Mboo enquiry, penned only nine days later, his response to Wigan is a model of dissembling. 'Slavery, in its original form,' he wrote, 'has undoubtedly ceased to exist in North Western Rhodesia...Certain obligations remain...of a nature similar to those which all natives, living under the tribal system, impose upon themselves and cheerfully fulfil... it would be very wrong to sweep away the mild form of feudalism which is the sole remnant of the once ruthless despotism.' The fact of the matter, according to Worthington, was that 'natives enjoy full freedom, curtailed only by such restraints as they themselves have imposed upon themselves.'⁴⁴ This, then, was the rationalisation the Company was able to present to the world for the continuation of slavery in Barotseland. It may merely have 'savouring' of slavery in London, but was altogether less bland for those who endured it.

The second intrusion came from an official channel, the High Commissioner. In 1912, a dispute arose over the proclamation when a slave from the Sesheke District, without the payment of £2, moved to and settled in Livingstone. The Native Commissioner at Sesheke had then requested that the Magistrate, Livingstone, return this man pending either payment

⁴³ Charles Wigan, Rebecca Hussey Slave Charity to the Secretary, BSAC, 13 January 1911, NAZ, BS2 A1/2/5.

⁴⁴ 'Memorandum, Rebecca Hussey Slave Charity', F.V. Worthington, Livingstone, 16 February 1911, NAZ, BS2 A2/2/6.

of the £2 or permission from his headman to move elsewhere. The Magistrate had declined, for he 'did not consider Lewanika's Proclamation as law'. The matter was then referred to the High Court and Legal Advisor, who pronounced the Proclamation 'valid according to native law.'⁴⁵ Lewanika had protested to Wallace, the Administrator of the new amalgamated Northern Rhodesia, that he had heard from the Native Commissioner at Sesheke that 'the Document drawn by Mr. Worthington and I reliecing (releasing) slaves ... will not be looked upon as a firm and strong Document...If that document did not worth the paper on which it was written then the writers as well included also myself. [sic]'⁴⁶ That the question of slavery was being raised at all in 1912 required some explanation on the part of the Administrator to the High Commission, to whom he reported. Slavery 'exists only in a very mild form of domestic servitude', he wrote, and simply to declare a slave free would be of little use as 'the Status of slave in most places would stick to him in every ceremony from marriage to burial.'⁴⁷ This was the purpose of the £2 clause, for no slave would consider himself free unless he made a payment to 'relieve him of his obligation'.⁴⁸ In support of this, Wallace enclosed a memorandum prepared by the Company's foremost authority on the subject. Having defended the insertion of the £2 on the grounds that it would have been 'unfair to deprive a man of standing of all his servants at the stroke of the pen as it were', Worthington, in a particularly choice example of his exculpatory passages, claimed that

until the £2 were paid, the domestic slave remained in much the same position towards his master as a "fag" at school holds towards the elder boy. He must fetch and carry for his betters and could not, by right, participate in many enjoyments to which his industry largely contributed...should he be so fortunate as to secure an antelope whilst hunting, some portions of the meat he could not eat. The carcass indeed was the property of his master who, if he is so minded, could dispose of the whole. There were certain fish he might not eat. Honey he could not touch, although he himself had cut the bees' nest from the tree.⁴⁹

Even when the £2 was paid, a former slave would 'out of respect to his former master, willingly render many of the services which, as a slave, were demanded of him.' In reality, therefore, the hardships that slaves bore were therefore 'more sentimental than real'.⁵⁰ But this was not the final intrusion into the question of slavery in Barotseland. On the next occasion,

⁴⁵ Worthington, 'Memorandum. Domestic Slavery in Northern Rhodesia', encl. in Wallace, Administrator to High Commissioner, 28 March 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/4.

⁴⁶ Lewanika to Administrator, 10 August 1912 enclosed in Wallace to High Commissioner, 20 November 1912, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/2.

⁴⁷ Wallace to High Commissioner, 30 November 1912, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See fn. 45.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

it would not be the clerk of a charity or the High Commissioner who needed to be fobbed off, but also the Secretary of State and Parliament.

Quite how the news reached the ears of members of the Commons is unclear. Whatever the source, on 15 July 1913, Ian Malcolm, Conservative MP for Croydon, asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Parliament whether he could state or if he would ascertain ‘how many slaves were bought from or sold to the Portuguese slave traders found guilty and punished in Barotseland in February last for slave trading?’⁵¹ Thomas Edmund Harvey, Liberal MP for Leeds West, also asked a series of questions of the Secretary of State on the subject.⁵² The Secretary of State, Harcourt, replied that he was still waiting for information regarding the incident.⁵³ The following day Henry Chancellor, Liberal MP for Haggerston, weighed in with further details and questions.⁵⁴ Harcourt was forced to again reply that he had ‘not yet received a report’ but was ‘in communication with the High Commissioner on the subject.’⁵⁵ A series of reports on slavery had been received from the Northern Rhodesia Administration earlier in the year, but these had painted a rather different picture. J.M.F.C Pound reported that ‘slavery as I first knew it when I first came to the [Lunda Sub-]District has ceased’.⁵⁶ D.E.C. Stirke reported that the ‘seizing of people, that was formerly universal on the Western and Northern border of [the Balovale Sub-]District, for the purpose of sale is practically extinct’.⁵⁷ McKinnon, Resident Magistrate at Lealui, reported Lewanika had told him ‘that formerly a good many slaves used to be sold by the people living near the border and bought by Portuguese Agents, but that now this does not happen to his knowledge...slaves that may be bought now, are bought by Mambari traders...with guns and powder’.⁵⁸ With this series of reports from the Administration to hand, the High Commissioner, and in turn the Secretary of State, could have reasonably assumed themselves briefed on the question. The questions raised in parliament blindsided the government. The reasons for this we shall return to, but it is the cases in question, all tried at Mongu by McKinnon, that are of real importance in the history of the ends of slavery in Barotseland for three reasons. First, they demonstrate that, contrary to what the Company reported, the slave trade was still being carried on in Barotseland. And by the Lozi, not the Mambari. Second,

⁵¹ HC Deb 15 July 1913 vol. 55 c1061.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ HC Deb 15 July 1913 vol. 55 c1037-8.

⁵⁴ HC Deb 16 July 1913 vol. 55 c1227.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ ‘Extract from the quarterly report of the Native Commissioner, Lunda Sub-District, for the Quarter ending December 31st 1912.’, encl. in Administrator to High Commissioner, 22 March 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC 1/3/4.

⁵⁷ D.E.C. Stirke, Assistant Native Commissioner, ‘Slavery’, 24 November 1912 encl. in *ibid.*

⁵⁸ McKinnon, Resident Magistrate Mongu, to Secretary for Native Affairs, 23 December 1912 encl. in *ibid.*

given the limited jurisdiction and comparative blindness of officials to much of what was in train in their Districts, and all that we already know of the persistence of slavery up to this point, the few cases which were actually tried can be safely assumed to represent the tip of an iceberg. Finally, the evidence adduced in these cases allows us once more to hear the voices of slaves themselves and paint a vivid picture of the lives they lived. These voices, more real and meaningful in many ways than so much of our other evidence, illuminate the reality of the lives of at least a fraction of those still in slavery seven years after abolition.

'In my country they are always selling people': the 1913 Mongu slave trials

On the very day in January 1913 that Stirke and McKinnon's reports on slavery were forwarded to the High Commissioner, McKinnon composed a letter to the *Ngambela*. 'It has come to my knowledge', McKinnon wrote, 'that some people from Nalolo bought slaves at the Mashi. I spoke at Nalolo about this and I wish you also to make the fullest enquiries into the matter and report.'⁵⁹ In fact it was Stirke that had brought this to his attention.⁶⁰ The *Ngambela* replied that he had made unsuccessful enquiries but would persist.⁶¹ Two days later, Lewanika also wrote to McKinnon. 'I am sorry to report to you that since the time I told you' - presumably referring to his earlier account that the slave trade was largely a thing of the past - 'the Portuguese natives have tried to [sell] slaves to my people...The people which I did send out found that people (Barotses) have bought some slaves and have send to me a report that they have found out some bad men who have bought slaves [sic].' This had emerged when a count was made of Lewanika's cattle, 'and it was found out that the missing cattle have been sold slaves thus it is found out. I am very sorry this to happen.'⁶² To this McKinnon replied, 'My Friend...Yes this is very serious...Such things are a great disgrace in this territory, this is why I wish to see you on Tuesday and speak to the Khotla as the matter is serious for all.'⁶³ In this address, McKinnon made the position, and his displeasure, unambiguous. 'This country is under the King of Britain... King of the greatest Empire ever known, and in no part of his Empire is slavery allowed. Slavery was abolished in Barotseland in the year 1906 but now I hear they are buying slaves.'⁶⁴ He warned the *Litunga* and *kuta* that 'if evils such as slave trading are permitted it will show that you are not able to govern your country well and it may

⁵⁹ McKinnon to *Ngambela*, 15 January 1913, enclosed in Worthington to Imperial Secretary, 30 August 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/13. Enclosed later is dated at 15 December 1913, but as covering letter notes, this is 'evidently a clerical error.'

⁶⁰ McKinnon to Wallace, 4 February 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/6.

⁶¹ *Ngambella* to McKinnon, 15 Jan 1913, *ibid*.

⁶² Lewanika to McKinnon, 17 January 1913, *ibid*.

⁶³ McKinnon to Lewanika, 17 January 1913, *ibid*.

⁶⁴ Enclosure in McKinnon to Wallace, 22 January 1913, *ibid*.

mean that some of the authority may be taken from you.’⁶⁵ He closed his address with a very revealing suggestion. He thought that, in future, it might be ‘a good thing if advice be sent to the Native Commissioner or Magistrate of the former slaves who have been released by the payment of £2, so that he can keep a record of their names.’⁶⁶ That the Administration kept no record of names, let alone of figures, is surely a clear indication that they had taken no interest whatsoever in the outcomes of abolition. McKinnon duly reported to Wallace what had taken place and waited to see if the people accused were brought to his court as had been promised at Lealui.⁶⁷

For three days, between the 30 January and the 1 February 1913, McKinnon heard thirty one cases, all charges of slave dealing, at the Magistrate’s Court in Mongu. McKinnon heard a further three cases on 8 February; then, on 1 March, he reopened a case adjourned a month earlier. Finally, on 3 April, two further cases were heard, all presumably remnants from the earlier mass of cases. What follows is a small selection from the evidence adduced in court.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ McKinnon to Wallace, 22 January 1913, *ibid.*

Table 2. 1913 slavery cases – evidence.

Source: Criminal Cases – Magistrate Court 1912-1913, NAZ, KDE 3/7/7-8.

Case 2/1913: Rex v. Kozo: Charged with buying a woman named Pemba

Sentence: Six months - Slave freed and to go back to her people

Pemba's statement:

I come from Kandambo's village, very far away...I was brought here two years ago. I was brought here by Kozo, as Kozo made friends with Kandambo & Kandambo gave me to Kozo...I was a slave of Kandambo. I had no husband. I was only a slave. I had no children. I have no brothers and sisters. All my people are dead. I work here for my master. I do not want to go back home – all my people are dead.

Kozo's statement:

My village is Ngoma, in Lukona. This woman was brought home by Kandambo, who is a woman. Her husband, Pigi brought this woman to me – I gave him a small ox which he killed at my village. Kandambo is a big chief.

Case 3/1913: Rex v. Moya: Charged with buying a woman named Nangula

Sentence: Six months – Slave freed and to be returned to her people

Notes: Woman with child.

Moya's statement:

Moya: I went to Silimia to shoot game & I gave Silimia meat. When I returned to Barotse, Silimia gave me this woman & she came with me. That was about 8 years ago. Chambo, my nephew, married her. Chambo is not censured. The name of their village is Mazeka and the headman is Lisulo. I reported to Noyo that I had brought this woman, when she arrived.

Nangula's statement:

My name is Nangula – I come from Bakwengali which is on the other side of the Mashe, in German Territory. Some time ago Moya went to Silimia's village & I do not know if he gave anything to Silimia. When Moya returned to Barotse, Silimia gave me to him, as he was his friend. I have been in Barotse 8 years. This child belongs to Moya's hut tax. I work for Moya. When I came here I was big enough to be married. I had no children in my own country. I have no relatives in my own country. My mother is dead, but my relatives are in another place, further away. I was the slave of Silimia. I now work for Moya. I do not want to go back. I know the Barotse & I should like to stay. My husband is Chambo – I have been married about 4 years. Chambo married me when I came.

Case 4/1913: Rex v. Lezazo: Charged with buying a child Kalungu

Sentence: Three months hard labour – slave freed to be sent back

Notes: Very small child 6 or 7....states she does not know where her mother is she was alive when she left. Mabanji is 8 days from Border.

Lezazo's statement:

I bought this child at Mabanji, the other side of the Kwando. I bought this child from Mabanji, the master of the child. I bought her with a small ox. I bought her about 2 years ago.

Case 8/1913: Rex v. Sisinya: Charged with buying Matalaing, with child on back, and Mbaba, with child on back

Sentence: One year – slaves released

Notes: Bad case. Headman. These women has 2 small children on their back.

Sisinya's statement:

I am the headman of my village in Ngoma: I got these two women from the Mukwengalu: I gave two cows for them. I bought them this year. I did not tell any induna that I had bought them. I was afraid to tell anyone, because I knew it was against the law.

Matalaing's statement:

We came from the same village. We want to go back to our parents. Our headman is Chalungula – chief is Seyabi. Our country is this side of the Quito. We have husbands in our country & and they are the father of our children.

Case 18/1913: Rex v. Kabika: Charged with buying a woman, Nangula

Sentence: 2 months and slave freed

Notes: Woman with child three years old, such are only brought as slaves not to marry

Nangula's statement:

I came from Amatwe – My master Amatwe gave me to Kabika. Amatwe is a Makwengali. I was given last year. I brought the child with me – his father is a Makwengali. I do not want to go back as I do not know where I came from. In my country they are always selling people.

My other children are dead.

Kabika's statement:

Last year, when I returned from Sesheke, I found this woman had been bought by my friend – my friend had returned. I did not tell Sambe – I was sick. But I was afraid to tell Sambe. I did not give him anything though I meant to give him something when he came back.

Case 33/1913: Rex v. Mulako: Charged with buying a woman, Kamba and a child

Sentence: 6 months – mother and child freed

Notes: Woman and child of 5 years.

Mulako's statement:

I live at Nalolo, where I have my own village. I bought this woman and her child last year from Kaneka, whom I met as I was going towards the Mashe. I was going there to get a slave. I did not report to any induna. I gave one cow for the woman.

Kamba's statement:

I do not know where I come from. Kaneka bought me when I was a little child. The father of my child is Mushonga who lives at Kanenga village. He is my husband, but I do not want to go back to him. Kanenga will sell me again.

From this evidence, it appears that many of these slaves had come from the Makwangali but this is unsurprising given that the initial report had been of people buying slaves at the Mashi. In his report, McKinnon expressed that it had come ‘as rather a shock to find that the people were actually buying slaves.’⁶⁸ By sharply punishing those convicted with prison terms, he thought he had made ‘a great impression on the people, as of course it must get known all over.’⁶⁹ He suspected that the Nalolo *kuta* had known what was afoot. But the Lealui *kuta* could not have known of it, he argued, for ‘the Missionaries also knew nothing.’ This is evidence only of the ignorance of the missionaries, or rather the ability of the population to conceal much from their eyes. McKinnon freed the slaves and directed Lewanika to, as far as possible, return them to their homes, ‘a difficult question to deal with, as some of the children are so young that they do not know where they came from’. There was thus the real risk of ‘sending them back to worse slavery.’⁷⁰ As the evidence collected in court makes clear, many of the slaves clearly expressed their wish not to be ‘returned’. But many of them were. This was a dilemma not limited to these slaves alone, for a crucial barrier to the whole notion of slaves returning to their homes and families, as envisioned in the abolition proclamation, was simply that many slaves had nowhere to go. McKinnon spoke again against slavery at Lealui and publicly thanked Lewanika, the *Ngambela* and *manduna* for their help. He cautioned those assembled that he understood ‘at Nalolo some people are very angry with the Ngambella there for the help he has given. This is very wrong as he did what was right and in the interests of the people.’⁷¹ In particular, McKinnon laid blame on the headmen, for had they been reporting the arrival of strangers as was their ‘duty’, then ‘all this disgrace could not have come upon the nation.’⁷² Thus the elite escaped any blame, for through their alacrity to cooperate and pleading of innocence, they were able to wash their hands of the matter. And it seemed that McKinnon’s handling of the matter quickly and quietly dealt with a potentially embarrassing problem.

Here the matter rested until the 12th of July, when, in advance of the tabled question in Parliament, Harcourt telegraphed the High Commissioner requesting information on the cases. Only then was any information regarding McKinnon’s actions sent.⁷³ Harcourt, unsurprisingly, wished to know why they had not been reported earlier.⁷⁴ Gladstone was as perturbed as Harcourt, remarking that it had not been ‘the first time I have had to complain

⁶⁸ McKinnon to Wallace, 2 February 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/6.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ McKinnon to Wallace, 4 February 1913, *ibid.*

⁷¹ Enclosure in McKinnon to Administrator, 18 February 1913, *ibid.*

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Telegram, Secretary, Livingstone to Imperial Secretary, Pretoria 15 July 1913; Worthington to Imperial Secretary, 19 July 1913 and Worthington to Imperial Secretary, 19 July 191, all in *ibid.* See also Worthington to Imperial Secretary, 30 August 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/13.

⁷⁴ Harcourt to Gladstone, 25 July 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/5.

of...secretiveness.⁷⁵ The reason, of course, for Wallace's failure to inform the High Commissioner was precisely the same as that which had obtained in the Dawson case.⁷⁶ The Administration had no wish for information that would draw unwanted attention to reach the wrong ears. Now that this information had got out, the Administration, and the Administrator in particular, were in hot water. Then, on the 25th of August, Worthington tendered his resignation. He had previously had some problems with his health, but no worse than many other officials suffered. In his letter of resignation, he wrote that 'after a long period of service in a country which, until recently, was regarded on all sides as unhealthy, I can see no prospect of advancement.'⁷⁷ It may not be entirely coincidental that his action came at precisely the time when the Administration's handling of slavery was under the closest scrutiny it had ever faced.

For his part, Wallace attempted to escape blame by making a rather extraordinary distinction. The problem was simply a matter of definition. The difference, he argued, between slave trading and 'domestic slavery' was enormous, and he had taken these to be cases of 'domestic slavery'. For this reason, he had not connected them with the earlier reports he had provided. The cases were, of course, undoubtedly serious, in that slaves had been bought, and were taken so by McKinnon for this reason. McKinnon had likewise, wrote Wallace, not connected the cases with "slave trading" as we understand it, but more with domestic slavery.' Moreover, Wallace asserted that 'in Barotseland we have a special agreement with Lewanika (his 'Proclamation' of 1906) which we administer as law.' This was, therefore, not a question of slave trading per se. Given that all the cases were tried as 'Slave Dealing', contrary to the 1824 Slave Trade Act, this claim stretches the truth somewhat. Wallace then indulged in the sort of vague blandishments about 'native life' which Worthington, now retiring, was not in a position to advance.

The state of domestic slavery exists throughout the whole country – it can only be broken down by time, no law or declaration of freedom will obliterate it, it is too deeply imbedded in the native mind and constantly appears in some form in every Court. The slaves themselves do not consider themselves free unless they or their near relations purchase their freedom, and this they are not often willing to do as the harsh conditions of slavery have almost disappeared and they know that our courts are always open to them.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Gladstone to Harcourt, 25 August 1913, *ibid*.

⁷⁶ See pp. 173-176.

⁷⁷ Worthington to Administrator, 25 August 1913, NAZ, BS2 A3/31/8.

⁷⁸ Wallace to Gladstone, 6 September 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/13.

He concluded apologetically, further excusing himself on the grounds these cases were the first that 'have come before the Courts of actual purchase of slaves', and promising that henceforth 'any reports that come about slave dealing or trading will be sent to you at once.'⁷⁹ McKinnon's final report added little more, barring the assertion that slave trading was not a 'custom of the Barotse', but a 'sudden recrudescence', consequent upon the 'lack of administration' in Portuguese West Africa. In so far as the selling of slaves goes, there was, as we know, a long tradition of prohibition, motivated by sound economic logic. But to say that the Lozi had never bought slaves was hardly accurate. He also thought it noteworthy that these cases occurred in Barotseland, not in other Districts 'where administrative control was complete'; in Barotseland, 'owing to the fact that the majority of cases, civil and criminal, were tried by the Khotla, the officials had not the same full knowledge and control over the people under them.'⁸⁰ This argument, also presented by Worthington, does have some merit, for only in serious cases and those involving whites did colonial courts have jurisdiction. As Coryndon had promised when seeking Lewanika's consent to the establishment of these courts in 1904, it was not their purpose to 'interfere in the small matters which concern only native custom and tradition.' On this basis Lewanika had consented.⁸¹ And on this basis the Company had absolved themselves of any legal responsibility for dealing with slavery except, it seems, where slave-trading was involved. As for Lozi slave holding itself, McKinnon thought 'time alone can solve the question', for he was unsure if it would be a 'wise policy to grant all a liberation warrant on payment of a nominal sum. This in a sense would be to acknowledge slavery which the Administration does not, but might in the end be the best solution of a difficult question.'⁸² Taking McKinnon's statement, and what we know of the realities of power in Barotseland as a whole, it would be difficult to find a clearer statement of the fundamental contradictions and failings of the abolition of slavery in Barotseland.

At this stage, it is worth reflecting on what has been established so far about the playing out of abolition in Barotseland. From the initial unsettled moments which followed abolition, when both the Company and Lozi elite were faced with a growing disregard for their power and authority, a new dynamic had emerged. The Company, realising that more than anything control had to be re-established, took the only course open to them given their own limited powers. For the most part, officials settled into a pattern of wilful ignorance. Time and again, intrusions revealed that little had changed for slaves. The Lozi still held slaves, still traded in slaves, still treated them as slaves. Time and again, the Administration threw dust

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ McKinnon, 'History of the Slave Trading Cases in Barotseland', 20 October 1913, encl. in McKinnon, Acting Administrator to High Commissioner, 21 October 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/9.

⁸¹ Lewanika to Coryndon, 18 November 1904, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/2.

⁸² McKinnon, Acting Administrator to High Commissioner, 21 October 1913, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/9.

into the eyes of those looking: slavery had lost its objectionable features; slavery was ingrained in the minds of the native; slavery was a hardship more sentimental than real. Worthington, the architect of abolition, ranked foremost amongst those who connived in all of this. Of course, the Company undoubtedly faced great difficulties in going any further than this, but their fundamental imperative had ever been the collection of revenue and the maintenance of order. Emancipation thus fell by the wayside. No clearer example of all of this can be found than the 1913 slave cases and the web of secrecy, sophistry and shamming that went with them.



Illust. 20. **Litia in 1916.** Litia before his accession as Yeta III.
Livingstone Museum Colonial Photographs Collection.

A ‘truly “Mwaka Mui”’: the passing of an era

In many other respects, however, 1913 had been a satisfactory year from the point of view of the Administration. Tax receipts were up, with £70,562 collected over the whole territory, of which £18,019 was made up of a record collection in Barotseland, the highest paying District by nearly £7,000. Approximately 12,000 men had been recruited for work in Southern Rhodesia, a figure that did not include those who had made their own way to seek work.⁸³ Lewanika, for his part, found much to dislike, ‘as it is seeming that the Chartered Company is trying as much as it can to take all matters in its hands than our agreement was made. I will be objectioned to these matters always and I can say it is better to me and my Indunas to know now what have left to us or to the Charter Company.’⁸⁴ And Lewanika did more than protest. He once more turned to his dream of opening up the Zambezi for navigation as the way to integrate the Lozi and colonial economies and undo the increasing relegation of Barotseland to the status of labour reserve. J. Soane Campbell recalled that in 1913 he had been contracted by Lewanika to excavate a

canal at Sioma...for the Chief with the idea of permitting boats to cross from the upper reaches of the river to the lower without the laborious traction by hand overland. A distance of 3 miles... Lewanika had been advised that locks could be utilised quite cheaply. I advised him that such structures would entail a very large expenditure and suggested another and a cheaper method. This, unfortunately, did not appeal to the Chief and he obtained the services of another European who erected two enormous lock gates on the veld, filled in my canal with the rocks I had laboriously blasted out and disappeared.⁸⁵

Clearly then, the plan to install lock gates, advocated by Simpson in 1905 had come to nothing.⁸⁶ It would be incorrect to suggest that this hiring of European experts implies Lewanika was not longer able to muster labour when required; rather, he had realised that the necessary works to effect navigation on any scale around the falls would require engineering beyond his capabilities. As for the *Litunga*’s ability to command labour, this would shortly be demonstrated.

⁸³ ‘Annual Report upon Native Affairs in Northern Rhodesia’, 5 January 1914, NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/15.

⁸⁴ Lewanika to Willis, Acting RM, 19 March 1914, BS3 B1/2/2.

⁸⁵ Campbell, J.S., “‘Barotse Reminiscences 1934’ by J. Soane Campell, Mankoya’, typescript, 4 April 1934, ALM LM2/4/108/1, pp. 6, 8.

⁸⁶ As Figure 9 shows, large quantities of sand are deposited by the river when in full spate during the flood. This may have covered earlier works. No trace remains of the lock gates, nor any knowledge in the area of the existence of such structures.

Almost immediately after the news of the outbreak of the First World War arrived in Northern Rhodesia, Lewanika wrote to McKinnon that he was eager ‘to call in all our people and...make ready for the war to help the Government.’⁸⁷ Told that Africans were not wanted as soldiers, and that sufficient porters had already been recruited, Lewanika instead gave £200 ‘as a material support.’⁸⁸ By 1916, however, the Administration was finding it difficult to enlist porters in the Eastern districts, and so J.H. Venning, McKinnon’s replacement, received instruction to recruit not less than 2,000 men. As Venning explained,

Recruiting men was not a difficult matter in Barotseland for they had an excellent system for calling out men in emergency or when required for large communal work such as digging canals. The country was divided into provinces (Selalos) and each Selalo Induna was responsible for assembling the people of all the villages under him. The headmen had to take their men to the Selalo Induna and, when all were assembled, he would go with them to Lealui. Any headman or villager who disobeyed the call-up was severely punished.⁸⁹

Clearly, forms of labour mobilisation of long standing were not only still in operation, but also highly effective. But it appears that the *makolo* had been folded into the *silalo* system, merging the functions of the two. As the Mongu-Lealui District Notebook explained, there were 39 ‘Silalos...each controlled by an Induna, who has the power to settle all trivial cases arising within his boundaries. This...organization was used by Lewanika when...he, as Paramount Chief, desired to call on large bodies of men to labour in his lands, or on his canal or irrigation works.’⁹⁰ Thus Lozi institutions had been adapted to face changing circumstances. In the event, this calling out of men to serve in the war effort was to be one of Lewanika’s final acts.

Rev. V. Ellenberger, in his report on Lukona Mission Station for 1916, wrote that the ‘year has been a very heavy one for the Barotse nation.’ The tribulations of the kingdom had been many. First, there had been a dry flood season, indeed ‘no flood at all, which had not occurred within memory of living men’. Then a ‘severe outbreak’ of pleuro-pneumonia. Then ‘quite a large proportion of the male population of the country was raised...to take its share in the difference of the country’, or the war, carrying loads ““somewhere” on the North Eastern

⁸⁷ Lewanika to McKinnon, 26 August 1914, NAZ, KDE 2/31/1.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Venning, J.H., ‘Mwanawina III and the First World War’, *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 4, 1 (1959), p. 84.

⁹⁰ ‘History of Barotseland (Based on entries in various District Note-Books)’, n.d., NAZ, KDE 2/44/4-21.

boarder [sic].’ Finally, the death of Lewanika and another drought. All of this, Ellenberger wrote, had ‘produced a truly “Mwaka Mui” as the natives term it (or: detestable year).’⁹¹

Lewanika had been ill for some time, suffering from ‘a rather weak heart’ and ‘chronic cystitis’ which had left him partially incontinent.⁹² He had endured bouts of illness before, but in early 1916 relapsed.⁹³ Finally, after a few days in extremis, at 11.40 on the night of the 4th of February 1916, Lewanika died.⁹⁴ His death certificate gave the cause of death as ‘Uraemia - Cardiac Syncope’, that is to say, Lewanika’s heart and kidneys failed him.⁹⁵ His death was a great blow but caused no unrest, for with the lines of succession secured his son Litia acceded to the throne as Yeta III. A far greater threat to the future came from cattle sickness.

Sickness among cattle had been reported in March 1915 at Lukona, thought possibly to be the pleuro-pneumonia which had been prevalent for years across the border in Angola.⁹⁶ Generally the cattle trading season had been ‘a bad one owing to the war. The natives have been reluctant of despising [sic] of their cattle for current prices which are considerably below those offered last year.’⁹⁷ But trade at Lukona had been ‘quite up to the average’ until early 1915, when reduced prices had cramped sales.⁹⁸ Taking advantage of the fact there had been no flood, the Resident Magistrate had ‘allowed cattle to remain in the Valley later than usual’ in an effort to assist the traders.⁹⁹ At Sesheke, and presumably elsewhere, there had probably been ‘a large increase as it has been a good year for stock.’¹⁰⁰ These factors - increasing stock numbers, cattle remaining concentrated in the plain far longer than usual and the fact that that Lukona, where cattle sickness had first been reported, had done a brisk trade for much of the year - made for excellent conditions for the spread of epizootic disease in Barotseland.

The consequences of this outbreak were profound, for it had ‘affected the entire life of the Barotse, in stopping any movement of cattle and nearly all the trade of the country.’¹⁰¹ The stopping of the cattle trade ‘decreased very considerably’ the openings for labour in Barotseland itself, and it was estimated that ‘approximately 1,000 natives cannot now find

⁹¹ V. Ellenberger, ‘Report for Lukona Mission Station April 1st 1915/March 31st 1916’, reproduced in ‘Barotse District Annual Report 1915-1916’, NAZ, KDE 8/1/7.

⁹² Colyer to Acting Resident Magistrate, 11 November 1913, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/4.

⁹³ Colyer to Acting Resident Magistrate, 20 November 1913, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ ‘Wire from R.M. Mongu to H.H. the Administrator, Livingstone’, 5 February 1916, *ibid.* On his last few days, see Boiteaux to McKinnon, 2 February 1916; Boiteaux to McKinnon, 4 February 1916 and *Ngambela* to McKinnon, 4 February 1916, all in NAZ, BS3 HC1/3/28,

⁹⁵ ‘Certificate of Death, Northern Rhodesia, Chief Lewanika, 9 February 1916’, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/4.

⁹⁶ ‘Barotse District Annual Report 1914-1915’, NAZ, KDE 8/1/6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ ‘Lukona Sub-District Annual Report 1914-1915’, *encl. in ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ ‘Sesheke Sub-District Annual Report 1914-1915’, *encl. in ibid.*

¹⁰¹ V. Ellenberger, ‘Report for Lukona Mission Station April 1st 1915/March 31st 1916’, reproduced in ‘Barotse District Annual Report 1915-1916’.

work owing to this reason'.¹⁰² Though some 95,000 head were inoculated, it appears this was hastily done, and cattle continued to die.¹⁰³ But in the midst of this disaster, the Company saw opportunity. At Lukona, epicentre of the outbreak, the stoppage of the trade would impress 'the necessity of work upon the community, and also by elevating the worker above the loafer who has happened to inherit a few head of cattle'.¹⁰⁴ Now the population's one hope to earn money was 'to look further afield – to the South'.¹⁰⁵ The potential for social levelling was profound. As the Lukona Native Commissioner observed, 'I have heard an Induna of more than average intelligence say "the servants will then be the master: we shall be the servants"'. As the official observed, 'These two events, Llewanika's [sic] death and the cattle sickness, should have far-reaching effects on the whole of the Barotse nation.'¹⁰⁶

By the following year, 1917, these far reaching effects were being felt. The rains had been good and the flood 'enormous', all making for a good harvest.¹⁰⁷ The district recorded a total increase in tax revenue of £7,417:10:0, all sub-districts showing substantial increases. Most importantly, from the Administration's perspective, 'Barotse natives have turned out to work in large numbers for the first time.' A system of deferred pay had been adopted, and the remittances afforded traders and officials ample opportunity of collecting arrears on migrant labourers' return.¹⁰⁸ Particularly interesting is the increase in tax revenue in Lealui of about £3,000. Not only did Lealui have the greatest population concentration in the plain but, as the seat of power, it had a disproportionately high number of people of wealth and social status. Unable to realise any revenue from their primary investment, cattle, other sources of income were perforce necessary. While the *manduna* and other members of the elite were unlikely to have gone out to work themselves, their dependants certainly would have.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, despite the number of cattle lost to pleuro-pneumonia, in 1917, officials were reporting no 'appreciable diminution of the number of cattle in the Barotse Valley.' This may, in part, be accounted for by a substantial 'natural increase'.¹¹⁰ It also suggests that stocks were much larger than the Administration estimated, and were merely being concentrated in plain. As some herds were depleted, room was made for others on the rich pasturage in the valley. The

¹⁰² 'Barotse District Annual Report 1915-1916'

¹⁰³ 'Nalolo Sub-District Annual Report 1915-1916' encl. in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ 'Lukona Sub-District Annual Report 1915-1916' encl. in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1916-1917', NAZ, KDE 8/1/8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

inoculation program was renewed in March 1917, though Yeta had earlier been chary of consenting to this.¹¹¹

This vacillation on the part of Yeta was not limited to the problems of inoculation, but was a sign of a deeper mistrust between the Administration and the new *Litunga*. The Resident Magistrate thought that Yeta was ‘apt to let himself be swayed and his ideas modified by the opinions of the last person...with whom he discusses any subject.’¹¹² There is of course another explanation for this. Yeta must have been under intense pressure from his *manduna*, and indeed from his subjects more widely. Not only did he have to fill the role which his father had for the better part of four decades, but in circumstances where challenges to his rule were far greater in some respects than they had ever been in the past. In 1911, Worthington had argued that the dissatisfaction of both people and elite with Lewanika had led some to imagine that ‘a new Chief would introduce a new order of things more to their liking.’¹¹³ Yeta was that new chief. By 1917, the Resident Magistrate believed that when Yeta felt ‘his position more assured’, he would increasingly assert himself ‘along the lines of progress, and for the benefit and upraising of his people’. A solution would, he opined, ‘be difficult to find, but I think it will be arrived at eventually.’¹¹⁴ But Yeta would not be more assured until he arrived at a solution that would satisfy those who could challenge him. This, first and foremost, would be the elite. A potential reversal of fortune posed the greatest threat, and so the solution Yeta arrived at was not the one the Administration had hoped for. To bolster the position of the elite Yeta turned, like all predecessors, to the slaves. But in this he would find himself opposed by the man who had replaced Mackinnon, invalided to England in the summer of 1916. From the outset the new Resident Magistrate, George Lyons, found that the situation of the supposedly liberated slaves was not at all clear. With Worthington retired, it appears no-one supplied Lyons with the well-worn explanations the Company had long presented. Lyons set about investigating the matter for himself.

‘Lewanika’s slavery Proclamation I found to be unknown’: the coming change

At an interview with Yeta in August 1916, Lyons sought some clarification. First, he wished to know whether those children who had been slaves at the time of the Proclamation, and had since grown up, were liable to pay the £2 redemption fee. This was answered by Yeta and the

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Worthington, ‘Mboo and the recent unrest in the Barotse Valley’, 20 April, 1911, enclosed in ‘Mboo, Review of Evidence with Memorandum, Glossary and Index’, NAZ BS2 A2-1-5 Vol. 1.

¹¹⁴ ‘Barotse District Annual Report 1916-1917’, NAZ, KDE 8/1/8.

Ngambela 'in the affirmative.' This was, according to the terms of the Proclamation, entirely correct. But so confusing, apparently, was the entire question that Lyons wished for a further clarification: he wanted to know whether the children of slaves 'born after Proclamation 1906 releasing all slaves in Barotseland' were similarly required to pay the £2 'before they can leave the Indunas.' Considered in isolation, this seems a very odd question to ask. Again, if one follows the terms of the Proclamation, there seems to be absolutely no basis for the £2 being enforced in such cases. This begs the question: why would Lyons make such an enquiry? There are two possible answers. Either Lyons was an incompetent, or he had reason to believe that there were children held as slaves who had been born after the Proclamation, that is to say, children who had inherited the status of slaves from nominally emancipated parents. As we shall see, while there is evidence that the latter conclusion is the right one, Lyons certainly made a blunder here. The *Ngambela*, with no clear-cut answer, 'asked for time to answer this question.' When the three met again on the 21st of September, Lyons asked again. 'The Paramount Chief and Ngambela', he noted, 'seemed very undecided and asked for more time to consider the question.'¹¹⁵ In effect, what Lyons had done was to offer Yeta the opportunity to start further muddying already murky waters, and potentially vastly expand his revenues.

Yeta's answer, which arrived in early October, was deeply revealing. He posed a simple question. 'Now if the children born after the Proclamation are exempted from the payment of £2 compensation, will they not accordingly be exempted from the rest of the rules?'¹¹⁶ The intended answer was pointed to with the following rationale. In 'our Native Law', continued Yeta, 'no provision is ever made for children not born at the time of any Proclamation of any Law...it applies to every person whether born or not born...and such a Law may remain for a very long period of about a hundred or more years.' There was, he asserted, 'no practice of slavery at present going on in the country, and all the children whom we keep are looked after at our best ability.' Were the rules laid down in Lewanika's proclamation not to apply, 'the natives will never understand it, and they will be quite unruly and will be moving and roaming in the country from place to place and giving much trouble both to the indunas and to the Native Commissioners.'¹¹⁷ On this basis, then, Yeta was arguing that all the children of supposedly emancipated slaves were liable to pay the £2 redemption clause, and did in fact inherit the status of slaves. Without any figures, it is impossible to estimate what the potential windfall Lyons had presented to Yeta was, but one may safely assume that it would have been substantial. Seizing the opportunity of the rather confusing situation, Yeta felt able to make unprecedented claims.

¹¹⁵ Enclosure in Lyons, RM Mongu to Legal Adviser, Livingstone, 13 December 1917, NAZ, U2/1.

¹¹⁶ Yeta to RM Mongu, 6 October 1917 encl. in *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

It was precisely this confusion which, just over a month later, P.J. Macdonnell, the Administration's Legal Adviser, sought to clarify in a circular. 'In North-Eastern Rhodesia', he observed, slavery 'was never recognised', for under the North-Eastern Rhodesia Order in Council of 1900, 'native law and custom' were only recognised where 'not repugnant to natural justice or morality.' In North-Western Rhodesia the question of 'natural justice' could not arise, for the Order in Council recognised 'native law and custom', except where "incompatible with the due exercise of Her Majesty's power and jurisdiction". Though in 1913, the High Court ruled for the amalgamated territories that 'native law and custom' would only be recognised when not repugnant 'to natural justice, equity and good government', this did not apply to Barotseland.¹¹⁸ There, 'civil suits between natives belong to the Khotla [*kuta*] and the Khotla is not... required to see that its customs accord with "natural justice"'. All Macdonnell could suggest was that officials not enforce redemption payments outside of Barotseland, but might forward payments if ex-slaves or their families paid willingly. But all the potential difficulties, Macdonnell optimistically concluded, were 'only temporary and will disappear in time...once natives realise, as they will have to, that slavery is a thing of the past'.¹¹⁹ The situation on the ground suggests that this was all rather too optimistic. Nothing was so simple, as a series of cases and queries McKinnon and other officials dealt with in 1917 demonstrates.

First, in June 1917, Morgan, Native Commissioner at Nalolo, received a letter from Gibson Hall, Assistant Magistrate at Namwala, to the effect that 'two natives of your district have settled in this district without obtaining a Removal Permit'. Both men had asked for the protection of Gibson Hall, for they could not return home unless they paid their masters, Kayingo and Pulani, compensation. They wanted to know if their wives and children were seeking emancipation and to join their men.¹²⁰ Morgan duly wrote to the *Mukwae* asking her to find the men's families. On the 9th of August, she replied that 'Kainga [Kayingo] has come to enquire about his people which his boy Monakalonga [Mwanakalonga] wants.' Kayingo, she reported

said his boy has no right to transfer the people from Barotse –Nation, as Monakalonga been caught by him at the time of war with Mashukulumbwe, so it is very hard for him to have these three people without bringing any money for them, even the father is right to bring money before he will be freed from Kaingo...how could this man

¹¹⁸ These changes were made after the date of the 1913 Slave cases, and therefore did not bring about those prosecutions.

¹¹⁹ P.J. Macdonnell, Legal Adviser 'Law Department Circular No. 6 of 1916', 7 November 1916, NAZ, U1/2.

¹²⁰ Gibson Hall, Assistant Magistrate Namwala to Native Commissioner, Nalolo, 30 June 1917, enclosed in Lyons, RM Mongu to Legal Adviser, Livingstone, 11 December 1917, *ibid*.

Monakalonga will be allowed to have his sons to be taken out from Barotse, because we had a big fighting with the Mashukulumbwe as you know. Then it is impossible indeed, for him to have the said people, without an[y] reason.¹²¹

When Morgan informed the *Mukwae* that Mwanakalonga was under ‘no obligation to pay the £2’ for his own liberty, as per Macdonnel’s circular, she replied that she had ‘heard nothing as to the change of law’ and was writing to Lealui.¹²² Morgan then referred the question to Lyons, who replied that there could be no question of Mwanakalonga and Lubasi being forced to pay the £2 on their own account as they were outside of the Barotse Reserve.¹²³ In October, Lyons received a letter from Ingram, Native Commissioner at Mankoya. Ingram reported that he was ‘sometimes asked by the owner of a so-called slave who has left him’, either openly or by stealth, without having paid the £2 to return the slave. What Ingram wanted to know was whether he ought to return the slave, or even if he had the power to do so.¹²⁴ Lyons replied that ‘we cannot help the owners of slaves to recover their property... the government cannot send back the people asked for as it would be countenancing slavery.’¹²⁵ Morgan then wrote again, forwarding details of another case. Katengabaru, an ‘elderly native...in 1913...handed to the Native Commissioner at Livingstone a sum of two pounds’ to free himself from slavery under the *Mukwae*.¹²⁶ Again, the man sought to discover the whereabouts of his wife and children. And, wrote Morgan, the aforementioned men were now intending to come and fetch their wives. Once more, he asked whether the £2 ought to apply.¹²⁷ Now Lyons replied that as all the slaves in question, presumably barring Katengabaru who had paid the redemption fee, were within Barotseland, the £2 applied in all cases. Clearly dissatisfied, he also informed Morgan he would be referring these cases to the Legal Advisor.¹²⁸

This Lyons duly did, sending the cases from Nalolo and Mankoya, along with notes of his August 1916 interviews with Yeta. To this he added his own interpretation of the ‘existing state of things in Barotseland.’ Lyons was

quite convinced that the interpretation of Lewanika’s Khotla Proclamation releasing slaves, to include children, born after the publication of the Proclamation, amongst those liable to pay the £2 compensation is wrong and I also think those who were children at the time of the publication of the Proclamation should be exempt from this.

¹²¹ *Mukwae* to Morgan, NC Nalolo, 9 August 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

¹²² *Mukwae* to Morgan, NC Nalolo, 10 September 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

¹²³ Lyons, RM Mongu to NC Nalolo, 11 September 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

¹²⁴ Ingram, NC Mankoya to Lyons, RM Mongu, 24 October 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

¹²⁵ Lyons, RM Mongu to NC Mankoya, 2 November 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

¹²⁶ Morgan, NC Nalolo to RM Mongu, 22 November, 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*.

¹²⁸ Lyons, RM Mongu to NC Nalolo, 26 November 1917, encl. in *ibid*.

As the Barotse interpret it now Lewanika's Proclamation is simply one to fix the price of slaves in the District'¹²⁹

Like Lyons, Macdonnell felt it could not be defended that 'parents who have been made free themselves can yet transmit the slavery to which they are no longer subject, to children born after they ceased to be slaves.' But striking to the heart of the matter, he doubted the Company could 'effectively stop the Khotla enforcing their interpretation'. And children born before the Proclamation, he observed, were certainly liable to pay for their redemption. Macdonnell also dealt the question posed in Yeta's letter of October 1916. In Macdonnell's opinion, children born after abolition were exempt from the rules of the proclamation, 'in so far as "those "rules" are based on a former slavery', but not from the 'duty of every commoner to his chief'. An important distinction, he argued, had to be made; 'our refusal to recognise slavery in any way does not mean we wish to destroy the social structure of native tribal society, very far from it. Is this distinction too subtle for Yeta III and his Khotla to grasp?'¹³⁰ But what Macdonnell and McKinnon could not see was that there was no distinction at all to be made here, for to do away with slavery *would be* to destroy one of the central dimensions to Lozi society. But without any jurisdiction over the vast majority of cases tried in Lozi courts, the only option open to the officials was to do nothing. They would simply have to 'pretend to know nothing of' the enforcing of 'certain "rights" and liabilities to certain payments that we cannot countenance'.¹³¹ What this comes down to is a continuation of the old policies of Worthington and others by new officials less aware of the history of slavery and its handling. They had come to the same conclusion – as things stood, there was little to be done. But the Administration did quash the claim that children born after the Proclamation to slave parents ought to pay the £2.¹³² Yeta then changed tack, for if the £2 did not apply to the children of slaves, some other means would have to be found to control this nominally emancipated population.

In October 1918, Yeta presented a petition to the Administrator, Wallace, at Mongu. It at once pleaded the poverty of the elite and suggested steps which might assuage the problem. The case it presented is of real interest, for it sought the Company's agreement to a modification of the terms of the abolition proclamation to reflect things that had not been made explicit in the text but 'were then thought implied.'¹³³ The £2 payment, it began, had been imposed to act as a 'restriction to unnecessary movements of natives from their former villages

¹²⁹ Lyons, RM Mongu to Legal Adviser, Livingstone, 13 December 1917, *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Macdonnell to Lyons, 17 January 1918, *ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Lyons, RM Mongu to Secretary for Native Affairs, 2 March 1918, NAZ, BS3 B1/1/17.

¹³³ 'Petitions and Matters', enclosed in Wallace, Administrator to High Commissioner, 29 October 1918, NAZ, BS3 A2/1/25.

or masters.’ But, in ‘the light of civilisation’, the petition continued, this had wrongly become ‘a compensation to masters of villages and therefore...the value of every person who requires to go away from his former master.’¹³⁴ It had therefore, the petition declared, been decided to ‘abolish altogether the payment of £2 compensation on adults and children.’ In its place a law would be made which would restrict ‘unnecessary movement of natives from their former villages or master’ in the interests of order and discipline. There were, moreover, certain ‘National Free Services’ not mentioned in the proclamation, such as free labour for the upkeep of royal houses, the *nalikwanda*, mounds, canals and roads, and the ‘customary rule’ that the *Litunga* and his *manduna* could ‘employ boys or girls from their respective villages in household service’. In return for rendering ‘certain light services’, they were provided the ‘necessaries of life to the best ability of the masters’ and were at liberty to leave, ‘subject to the approval and consent of the master.’ Most importantly, the petition argued that, ‘owing to circumstances necessitated by the change into civilisation’, the hardships caused by the ‘loss of our cattle’, the ‘decrease of young men’ who had become migrant labourers and the necessity ‘to pay big National works which before used to be done by the people freely’, the Lozi elite required a larger share of tax revenues. All of this would ‘compensate to a certain extent’ what the elite had formerly received, ‘before the introduction of Tax and before the Emancipation’. There was one other matter the petition raised: the question of how Yeta might style himself. The Company objected to his use of the title ‘King of Barotseland’ but, the petition averred, Yeta could ‘not understand why there should be such objections...Lewanika was called and addressed by the title “King” on many occasions’, not least by ‘His Majesty late King Edward VII at the time of the Coronation.’¹³⁵ What this petition aimed at, then, was to turn back the tide and see the powers and prerogatives of both *Litunga* and elite restored. Its object, the enforcing of ‘National Free Services’ and increased share of the tax, amounted to a restoration of both the command over tribute and powers of patronage that had been undermined by abolition. Indeed, its essential purpose was reinforcing the control of the elite over their ‘ex-slaves’.

Wallace, for his part, immediately recognised that ‘under the guise of doing away with all the remnants of slavery’, a law controlling movements “‘of natives from their former villages and Masters”...would leave those who had been slaves nominally free but in reality as much slaves as ever.’¹³⁶ Wallace could see that labour migration was beginning to pose a serious threat to the entire social and economic system of Barotseland, for men ‘who go away to seek work object, on their return, to work for headmen without pay’. As these ‘quondam

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Wallace, Administrator to High Commissioner, 29 October 1918, NAZ, BS3 A2/1/25. Underlining in original.

slaves become more accustomed to the idea of the abolition of slavery', the position is made more difficult for the elite, who were 'accustomed to demand and receive a great deal of personal service and whose gardens were cultivated by their people.'¹³⁷ Short shrift was given to Yeta's petition, and indeed, for once, the limits of the Administration's jurisdiction were to prove useful. 'You ask the Government to Help', wrote Wallace, but 'I am afraid the Government cannot do so as the Native Commissioners have no jurisdiction in such matters.'¹³⁸ That is not to say that the colonial state was not penetrating deeper than ever before into the kingdom. Tax revenue continued to rise, amounting to £18589:5:10 in 1919, and officials now estimated Lozi herds to be in the region of 150,000 strong.¹³⁹ However, when, in 1920, tax revenue decreased slightly, the Company felt intervention was required.¹⁴⁰

Two reasons for the decrease were advanced. First, growing numbers of 'young able bodied males' were leaving and settling elsewhere. Many had first left as migrant labourers, 'and finding the surroundings more congenial outside Barotseland have remained away. The Native Commissioner [at Sesheke] reports over 1,200 from his Sub-District alone during the years 1908/1915.'¹⁴¹ Clearly, the conditions of life in Barotseland were sufficiently bad to warrant people permanently removing themselves. This is hardly a surprise. A population, the majority of which had once been slaves, had been promised emancipation and yet found itself for the most part still as bound as it ever were. It had been the outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia that had first forced many men to become labour migrants. Once drawn into the colonial economy, for all its hardships and dangers, it seems that increasing numbers preferred the life of the migrant worker to the life of the village. What encouraged this, and the second reason advanced for the decreasing tax revenue, was that tribute collection by Yeta was on the rise. *Manduna* sent out for this purpose were collecting not only 'skins, honey, grain or other produce of the country' but also 'money and articles of considerable value brought back by natives returning from work in other territories as well.' This practice was reported to have become much more noticeable since Yeta's accession. And the reported cases were, Lyons thought, but a fraction of the whole for 'the people are often afraid to give evidence'. Alongside this, Yeta continued to extract labour from the population. People complained that 'they have been kept at work by the Paramount Chief for months without receiving any payment or even food, and in consequence of having to do this work, they have no time to cultivate food for sale, or earn money by other means for their Tax.' It was decided that the best remedy for this situation was 'a direct order to Yeta' to desist from this 'the practice

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ 'The Administrator's reply to the Petition, 20 August 1918', encl. in *ibid.*

¹³⁹ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1918-1919', NAZ, KDE 8/1/10.

¹⁴⁰ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1919-1920', NAZ, KDE 8/1/11.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. On labour migration more generally, see Van Horn, 'The Agricultural history'.

which is nothing but a form of slavery', and to likewise encourage 'natives who do complain, by taking up their case and insisting upon adequate payment being made for the work they have done.'¹⁴²

It was this combination of Yeta's self-aggrandizing agenda and his growing exactions upon the population which lay at the root of the Company's refusal to give Yeta leave to make a journey to England in October 1919, 'a dream he had cherished since his father's journey in 1902.'¹⁴³ Lyons set out a series of 'existing evils' which first had to be addressed before the trip was sanctioned. It included the enforcing of tribute payment, evasions and delays by the *kuta*, forced labour and the 'compulsory entrance of young girls into Silalo Induna's Compounds'. The latter, while 'an old Barotse custom', was one which should have been abolished by the proclamation. Yeta, Lyons wrote, maintained that these girls 'voluntarily enter the service of Indunas' with their parents' consent.¹⁴⁴ This had been flatly contradicted by a recent case, 'Rex v. Muyumbana', one of the 'Principal Indunas in the Barotse Valley', who had been fined £5 for enslaving a girl. The girl was returned to her parents.¹⁴⁵ In fact this was not the only example, for there were in total three convictions for slave dealing and four for extortion, which were 'generally against people of the higher classes'. Lyons had 'a shrewd suspicion' that the instances of extortion 'were committed with the connivance of the Paramount Chief and Khotla.'¹⁴⁶ In the case of Kunga, an Mbunda headman in the Lealui sub-district, the girl in question, Katungu, had been returned to the guardianship of her father, and Lyons had instructed the Native Commissioner to tell Katungu that 'she is not a slave and is at liberty to live where she pleases.' Lyons, however, advised that unless 'other natives mentioned as slaves in the evidence...ask for their releases' no steps should be taken, for it appears there was some doubt whether 'all the people in question really are slaves.'¹⁴⁷ The general course of action Lyons then proposed would have been entirely unremarkable 14 years before. That it was posited in 1920 is striking. Lyons recommended that 'that the idea of absolute emancipation should be allowed to sink slowly into the minds of the natives', bringing about the 'gradual release of all slaves rather than direct instant and concerted action by all officials in charge of Sub-Districts', which would likely cause 'sudden upheaval... [and] tend to drive the bulk of the population to the other extreme of open disregard of, or even open defiance to, their former rulers.'¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Lyons had clearly decided that some action

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Caplan, *Elites*, p. 152

¹⁴⁴ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1919-1920'.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Lyons, RM Mongu to Native Commissioner, Mankoya, 5 June 1920, NAZ, BS3 B1/1/17.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

needed to be taken in the face of what he considered to be the flagrant abuse of the abolition proclamation.

At Kalabo in May 1920, Lyons addressed a meeting of approximately 300 people, attended by a number of *manduna* and headmen. According to the minutes, those assembled were ‘reminded of provisions of Lewanika’s Proclamation’, for ‘certain ex-slave-holders appeared to have forgotten the terms of proclamation and were still treating their people as slaves.’ Lyons then informed them that he wished the Lozi and Administration to work together, and that the people did have obligations to the *Litunga*, and the elite had authority over the people. The *manduna* replied that they knew ‘the law and would endeavour to keep it.’¹⁴⁹ This was followed by another meeting, on the 1st of June at Lealui. There the *Ngambela* and others complained, referring to the meeting at Kalabo, that ‘it was not good that the Resident Magistrate should...speak to the people without first consulting the Paramount Chief, the *Ngambela* and the *Indunas*.’ It might create ‘very wrong ideas’. At Kalabo people had ‘run away with the idea that Lewanika’s Emancipation Proclamation had been changed’ and that they need not provide labour ‘in anything except in such works as digging of wells, cleaning villages, moving villages or cattle kraals.’ That is to say, works for the benefit of the community, as defined in the Proclamation. Lyons replied that he had not spoken of any new law, but had merely explained the Proclamation, a step necessary because, in his view, ‘the present attitude of the *Indunas* shows that they want to, or do, conceal the law from the people.’ In turn, the *Ngambela* replied that they ‘do not wish to, nor ever do, conceal the law to the people’. The Proclamation, he continued, had been ‘declared and proclaimed publicly before the whole nation assembled’ in 1906, and all its rules were read and carefully explained to the people. Some disagreement followed, until finally Lyons retorted that ‘if the people have run away with wrong ideas his speech must have been misinterpreted or misunderstood.’ Lyons then agreed, at the *Ngambela*’s request, to ‘correct this misunderstanding’ at another meeting to which he would ‘call all the people into Lealui and have the whole Proclamation fully explained to them’. The meeting then turned to a discussion of the proclamation. Finally, and most interestingly, Lyons was ‘informed that the word Mohlanka in the Sesuto Copy of the Proclamation in question is not the proper translation of the word Slave, the exact meaning of which in Sesuto is Lekhoba and should be changed in the Sesuto Copy of the Proclamation. The word Mohlanka means Servant or Subject.’¹⁵⁰ In view of the linguistic evidence discussed in chapter 6, this can only be described as a very clever sleight of hand. It seems to have been

¹⁴⁹ ‘Indabas (Contd.)’, enclosed in A Lewanika, Secretary to P.C.B.N to RM Mongu, 20 July 1920, NAZ BS3 B1/2/1.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Extract from the minutes of the official interview between the Resident Magistrate Mr. G.G.P. Lyons and the Paramount Chief The *Ngambela* and some of the principal *Indunas* held at Lealui on the 1st June, 1920’, NAZ, BS3 B/1/2/1.

aimed at entirely altering the meaning of the proclamation. By replacing *mohlanka*, the Sesuto equivalent of the very general Silozi word for a slaves, *mutanga*, with *lekhoba*, or *likoba*, the term for a slave captured on a raid, Yeta and his *manduna* were trying to turn a proclamation which liberated the Lozi's slaves as a whole into one which would emancipate only a small proportion them.

At the second meeting at Lealui, held on the 2 July, Lyons told the crowd 'I have come here at the request of the Paramount Chief, the Ngambela and the Indunas to come and read your old Proclamation...and to explain anything that is not clear to you. This is not a new Proclamation, but it is your own old Proclamation of the late Paramount Chief Lewanika.' Jalla was also present 'to check the interpretations' given by Lyons' translator as he read the proclamation in English. Once he had finished, the *Ngambela* invited the people to ask questions, which Lyons answered in turn. During this questioning, Yeta spoke for the first time, to draw the assembly to an abrupt close in the following terms.

The Emancipation Proclamation is the same as it was made in 1906, and it is our own Proclamation and we made it of our own free will as you may observe that it is called Lewanika's Proclamation. I have given chance this morning to you common people to answer for yourselves and to make any questions necessary...now the time is gone for me or for the Indunas to explain to you more so that you could understand well as there are many explanations which do not agree with our living or customs, and were not given at first.¹⁵¹

He then wrote to Lyons, objecting to the Resident Magistrate's explanations as 'contrary to our customs', which the proclamation could not be, for 'we could not have made rules contrary to our customs.' He claimed that he and others who were there 'during the framing, writing and promulgation of the Proclamation' were now 'surprised to see that you assume to know the Proclamation better than us', for his explanations differed from those 'made by us and by the Officials of the time.' Yeta then set out his objections: no time limit had been set on work for *manduna* and headmen in the Proclamation, it being explained at the time that their 'lands and houses should be cultivated and built by the people under them in such a time as would allow the completion of such works', and that they could call people 'under them (i.e. according to Barotse custom) not necessarily people living in their villages'. This was 'according to Serotse custom and system and this was left like that by the Officials of the time.' Yeta is here, clearly, referring to the *makolo*. So far the as £2 clause went, it was inserted to 'maintain order and to restrict unnecessary movements of natives.' This having been

¹⁵¹ 'Minutes of the Official Interview held at Khotla Lealui 2nd July 1920 between the Resident Magistrate and the Paramount Chief.', NAZ, BS3 B1/1/17.

abolished, Yeta reiterated that a new law to the same effect was required.¹⁵² As previously observed, we do not know what interpretation was given to Lewanika by Worthington of the proclamation. But from this, and all of the above, it seems clear that the Lozi interpretation of it was simple enough. Slaves were still slaves. Their children were slaves, even if born after the proclamation, for they inherited this from their parents. They were not at liberty to come and go as they pleased. They still owed their labour to their masters. And, moreover, this was the concern of the Lozi, not the Company, for 'contraventions of any of the rules of the Proclamation' were by rights to be dealt with by the *kuta*. A *nota bene* to this letter read that if Yeta's view were not accepted, he would go over Lyons' head, and submit the matter to the Administrator.¹⁵³

This was more than Lyons could stomach. Four days later, he sent his reply. 'I went to considerable trouble...at your request to give the Indunas and people what I considered to be a correct interpretation'. To this he would 'most strictly adhere' until the matter was placed by Yeta before the Administrator.¹⁵⁴ Yeta's sharp reply asserted that not only had no law ever been enforced without the consent of the *Litunga* and *kuta*, but in this case 'the Proclamation is ours...and therefore the English Copy a mere translation. We are in the position to explain and interpret our Law and not you to assign interpretation which you merely consider to be correct.'¹⁵⁵ The letter that was then sent to the Administrator is a remarkable document. It began, for 'purposes of clearness and correctness', with a brief review of 'the old system of slavery in this country.' A masterpiece of misinformation, it subtly plays on and distorts distinctions to present a fundamentally benign, incorporative vision of Lozi slavery.

Strictly speaking there was very little or no slavery practiced at all in Barotseland in the proper and strict meaning of the word nor the real usage as was being practised in other countries such as in America or in other parts of Africa...As you may know from traditional history that the tribe of the Marotse or Alui worked its supremacy gradually by means of tribal wars and victories...From these conquered tribes captives were taken and made slaves, but the entire population of such a conquered tribe was left to enjoy the fruits of their native land but were subject to the supreme power of the Marotse to whom they paid homage and annual tribute of all stuffs and necessaries of life procurable in those countries. The captured slaves...acquired, after certain limited period, freedom as was enjoyed by the pure Barotse...and were then respected in exactly the same way as the pure Barotse.

¹⁵² Yeta to Lyons, 19 July 1920, NAZ, BS3 B1/1/17.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Lyons to Yeta, 23 July 1920, *ibid.* Underlining in original.

¹⁵⁵ Yeta to Lyons, 27 July 1920, *ibid.* Underlining in original.

Yet we know that this projection of Lozi slavery diverges from reality. Lozi slaves were institutionalised as outsiders, which justified their treatment. In no way were they respected as ‘the pure Barotse’. If we take this argument, presented in the context of a bitter dispute over the prerogatives of the Lozi elite and the realities of abolition, to be the first flinging of the stone, then the implications of the rippling out of this vision into the work of later scholars is rather disturbing. It – as has been argued in chapter 2 – places them in the direct line of inheritance, not only of mealy-mouthed Administrators, but the slave owners themselves.

From the ‘old system of slavery’, the letter turned to questions of tribute. It was, Yeta claimed, ‘in the minds of the former Rulers of Barotseland that their people should pay something for the rights of holding their lands’. On this basis, a ‘system of free labour was practised’. The terms of the Proclamation, the letter continued, ‘were being carried out generally satisfactorily up to the present time; and we are now surprised to find Mr. Lyons complaining that the way in which we used to carry out the terms of that Proclamation is not right and the explanations of the terms by the Officials of the time and us were still instituting slavery.’ This was driven home with another clever, if somewhat craven, submission. The problem with Lyons, so that argument ran, was the ‘state of freedom’ he wished to introduce, one ‘rather too high for a Nation which is still so low in the scale of civilization as Barotse.’ His country was ‘still very backwards’, Yeta continued, ‘and if such a state of freedom is introduced...it will also be necessary to introduce some other corresponding measures of civilization that will help to uphold the chieftainship and authority of the country.’ This ran its own risks, for ‘the natives are still in darkness and cannot distinguish the difference between slavery and authority’. Thus whatever measures would be taken would likely cause them ‘to complain that they are being treated like slaves.’ Given, the letter argued, that the Lozi elite gave the people as much land as they required for ‘all their agricultural and pastoral requirements without charging them a single penny... Does all the above allowance mean a practice of slavery?’ Thus the matter was laid before the Administrator. But the final line of this letter is the most telling of all, for it reveals what lay behind this painting of an arcadian past and present. ‘If’, the letter concluded, ‘the present system is not satisfactory we beg Your Honour to approve the introduction of rental systems.’¹⁵⁶ At the very last gasp, we see that the root of this entire protest was money. And while this dispute between Yeta and Lyons was bubbling over into a much wider argument about the fundamental power and authority of the Lozi, it appears that the effects of this dispute was beginning to be felt on the ground.

The Native Commissioner at Nalolo, Simey, received a complaint from the *Mukwae* that certain women were refusing to work in her gardens. Investigating the matter, Simey took

¹⁵⁶ Yeta to Administrator, 10 August 1920, *ibid.*

a number of sworn statements from the women in question and the *induna* responsible for overseeing their work. One of the women, Namangolwa, explained that ‘We hear that it was said at the Lealui Khotla in July last that people should work for 12 days for their Indunas that we should not have to work all the year. We wish to work 12 days only...the Induna in charge of us Sitondo reported this fact to the Mokwai.’ She went on to say that she had begun working for the *Mukwae* in the cold season, and had since then ‘hoed in 4 different gardens. I have been incessantly at work hoeing for the Mokwai up till now.’ There were 30 other women working alongside her, who had all worked as she had, and ‘only worked for the Mokwai and not for any other induna.’ As she explained, the work was ceaseless.

The first work we did was in mealie gardens hoeing and plating for an early crop, just above flood level. After this we went to hoe “Litondo” also mealies, after this “Kwalimena” also mealies and then “Nakatama” (mealies). Now we are at...Kaffir corn gardens. This work will go on till next March and then it will soon be time to start again on Litondo.¹⁵⁷

She had been working like this since she was ‘a little girl some 10 or 12 years ago’, that is to say, from somewhere between 1908 and 1910. She had not complained before, she added, ‘because it was only this year that we heard of the 12 days work.’ Similar accounts were given by Kawanga and Musheniwa, who both worked alongside Namangolwa. The statement of Sitondo, ‘induna of the women’, gives some sense of the scale of work being performed. The women began work, under ‘Induna Anaba’ at Nalolo, then moved five miles east and began to work under his control. Altogether, Simey reported, there were ‘about 300/400 women working for the Mokwai...These women made a complaint to me...Previously they have always worked in this way.’¹⁵⁸ This was rather a difficult problem for Simey to solve, for, as far as he could see, ‘Except the abolishment of all forced labour throughout Barotseland, it seems difficult to find any other remedy which will put an end to conditions such as those mentioned in the attached statements.’¹⁵⁹

Early the following year, during Lyons’ absence on leave, Yeta had a meeting with P.E. Hall, the Acting Resident Magistrate. Minutes, customarily taken by Yeta’s secretaries, were not kept. This might have something to do with the apparently rather frank nature of the conversation. Hall made his own from memory on his journey back to Mongu. The familiar topics were rehearsed once more. Hall, in reply to the question of a new law regulating the ‘Movement of Ex-slaves’, followed official policy, stating that ‘the Khotla has the right to

¹⁵⁷ See chapter 4 for more on these garden types.

¹⁵⁸ Statements encl. in Simey to R.M. Mongu, 15 December 1920, NAZ, BS3 B1/1/17.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

control movements, but the law must not be used to retain people in a state of slavery.’ The discussion continued, but then the *Ngambela*, according to Halls’ notes, said something rather extraordinary. He proposed that all ‘ex-slaves’ should be expelled from Barotse District, for ‘that will prove both to them and to the Administration that they have really been set free...By our custom, ex-slaves thus expelled would have to relinquish all their property, which would revert to the Khotla.’ Hall demurred, pointing out that the Administration would hardly be likely to sanction this. The *Ngambela* then put a further, deeply revealing question. ‘These foreigners are using our land, the property of us Barotse: surely we have the right to turn them out?’ Hall retorted that they had been ‘forcibly brought in and settled here by yourselves long ago’. The *Ngambela* then asked whether if ‘ex-slaves absolutely defy the authority of the Khotla, can we not expel them?’ Yes, Hall replied, ‘but you must not use that authority to retain people in a state of slavery.’ Again, the *Ngambela* made a revealing counter. ‘But a man’, he argued, ‘may be poor and unable to pay wages; how then can you call his people slaves? It is not his fault that he does not pay them.’ Hall’s response, though reflecting a rather wrong-headed understanding of the nature of slavery, is a fair summary of the points being driven by the Administration under Lyons. ‘If they stay of their own desire, and work for him willingly, then they are not slaves, whether paid or not. If they are, by any means, kept in his service against their will then they are slaves.’ The meeting concluded with Hall requesting that formal notification be sent to him of the *induna* who was to be left in charge at Lealui during the absence of the Yeta and the *Ngambela* on their forthcoming visit to Cape Town.¹⁶⁰

This visit of Yeta to the Cape to meet Prince Arthur of Connaught was part of a much wider process by this point being set in motion. As we have seen, as the balance of power between the Administration and the Lozi elite began to shift definitively in the former’s favour. The methods of administration which had persisted in Barotseland since the early twentieth century were coming under increasing scrutiny. Now slavery was becoming an ever more pressing question. In 1924, Lyons recalled that, when he took up his office as Resident Magistrate in 1916,

The terms of Lewanika’s slavery Proclamation I found to be unknown to the large majority of natives of the District. I have put no new interpretations on this Proclamation, but I have made its terms known...and that is what upset Yeta and his party in 1920, who very much resented my action which interfered with the employing of large numbers of natives by both the ruling family and Indunas for indefinite periods and without payment. I don’t know why this state of affairs has been allowed to continue

¹⁶⁰ ‘Visit of P.E. Hall Acting Resident Magistrate, accompanied by Capt. Withers and escort of Northern Rhodesia Police, to the Paramount Chief at Lealui on February 25th, 1921.’, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/1.

by previous officials in charge of the District, but I certainly found it in existence when I came, and it was one of the abuses which I attacked at once. The much talked of Proclamation seemed to have been published with the object of misleading the Administration as to the slavery question in the Paramount Chief's Reserve, in affect it was non-existent.¹⁶¹

Lyons' argument was that, in effect, the 1906 abolition had been an attempt by the Lozi elite to deceive the Company and the outside world in their pursuit of wealth and power. Thus things had, by a strange circumlocution, come full circle. As we have seen, in reality, the abolition of slavery in Barotseland was itself conceived of by the Company as a means of setting appearances in order in pursuit of revenue and, ultimately, power. What the Company had set up, they now wished to pull down. By this strange process, Lyons played his part in the growing question which hung over the Administration. But this was not happening in Barotseland alone. In the aftermath of the First World War, the entire administration of the Company in both of the Rhodesias was being challenged. As the issue of the future direction of Northern Rhodesia began to assume real significance, it increasingly overtook questions relating to the kingdom that had once been so vital to the very foundation of the colony. The moves toward the institution of Northern Rhodesia as a Crown Colony have been dealt with by other scholars.¹⁶² What the following epilogue does is trace the connections between this process and the ends of Lozi slavery, for even in the dying days of Company rule and the inception of the Crown colony, the question of slavery in Barotseland was never far from the surface.

¹⁶¹ Lyons to Goode, Acting Administrator, 10 January 1924, NAZ, BS3 A3/8.

¹⁶² See Caplan, *Elites*, pp. 127-132; Gann, *Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 180-192.

Epilogue and conclusion

At Cape Town, on the 31st of March 1921, Yeta laid before Arthur of Connaught, the High Commissioner, a petition rehearsing once more the grievances he had with the Company. But it was also a projection of a new future for Barotseland, as a 'protected native state' under the Protectorate his father had sought in the late nineteenth century. His argument was simple. The Company and Lozi had signed a series of agreements and concessions. But the Lozi had been duped, for if 'the present explanations are the right meanings of the terms of the Concessions and Agreements then it appears to us that the true meaning were concealed to us.'¹ This is strikingly reminiscent of Yeta's position in the dispute about the abolition proclamation. As a whole, in the context of the debate over the future of Northern Rhodesia, Ranger described this petition as 'the only coherent African view contributed to the debate on the political future of Rhodesia in the immediate post-war years.'² But it was also part of Yeta's vision for a restoration of the power and prerogatives of the Lozi elite. He was turned down flat, the High Commissioner also expressing concern over 'reports which I have received as to the present condition of affairs in the Barotse District'.³ These conditions the Secretary for Native Affairs put succinctly to Yeta. People were complaining of '(a) working too much for the Chief and (b) what is called slavery.'⁴

It seems that for a time Yeta and his *manduna*, recognising that these complaints were likely to bar their wider ambitions, 'resigned themselves to abandon all further ideas of slavery or enforced labour.'⁵ But by November 1922, taking advantage of a miscommunication between the Company and *kuta*, a concerted effort was made by the Lozi elite to 'enforce the return of all freed natives to the villages of their former masters.' And exactions of tribute in kind were on the rise.⁶ By 1924 the dispute between Lyons and Yeta was deepening, not least because January saw the conviction of 18 people from Kalabo for slave dealing.⁷ Yeta remained combative, but Lyons was unbowed. As he put it to Yeta in February, two months before the inauguration of Crown Rule, 'I quite realize that you think that you have certain

¹ 'Petition and Grievances to be laid before His Royal Highness Prince Arthur of Connaught, Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, King's High Commissioner for South Africa', 31 March 1921, NAZ, KDE 2/34/12.

² Ranger, T., 'Nationality and Nationalism: The Case of Barotseland', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4, 2 (1968), p. 233.

³ Arthur Frederick to Yeta, 26 September 1921, NAZ, KDE 2/34/12.

⁴ 'Note of the Proceeding at an Interview between His Honour the Administrator and Yeta III Paramount Chief of the Barotse at Government House, Livingstone, on 9th April 1921.', BS3 B1/2/1.

⁵ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1921-1922', NAZ, KDE 8/1/13

⁶ 'Barotse District Annual Report 1922-1923', NAZ, KDE 8/1/14. Underlining in original.

⁷ Cases 2/1924 to 17/1924, Magistrate Court Criminal Cases 1924-1925, NAZ, KDE 3/2/18-19.

wrongs to be righted, but you must not expect to be allowed to practice slavery, exact tribute, enforce labour etc.’⁸

The Company gave way to the Crown in April, and in his first interview with the new Governor, Herbert Stanley, Yeta took the opportunity once more to air his wrongs. Once more, though Stanley was conciliatory, Yeta’s even broader petition got short shrift. As Stanley reported to the Colonial office, the petition had not been the major concern of the discussions which followed. He had been ‘chiefly concerned to secure the permanent elimination of an evil which has lain at the root of much of the misgovernment complained of in Barotseland, and much of the past trouble between the Administration and Yeta.’ While, ‘on paper at any rate’ it appeared ‘comparatively innocuous...the system of compulsory unpaid labour’ had ‘opened the door to grave abuses...and the maintenance of a state of affairs akin to a form of slavery.’⁹ Yeta admitted that the Lozi had not kept strictly to the terms of the proclamation but asserted: ‘If there is a mistake, it was from the beginning of 1906, we have been doing this from that time, we have altered nothing.’¹⁰ In the end, Yeta agreed to accept £2,500 per annum as compensation and decree that tribute labour in all its forms would cease. On the 3rd of April 1925, Yeta’s proclamation was read at Lealui.¹¹ Though shortly thereafter, Yeta and the *Ngambela* would deplore ‘the inadequacy of the £2,500 to meet all claims and to enable those who formerly enjoyed labour rights to live in their accustomed way’, the *Ngambela* emphasising ‘the state of poverty into which many of the ruling class must fall under the new conditions’, the deed was done.¹² This proclamation marks our terminal point. It is with this proclamation, abolishing tribute labour in all forms, that the crucial tributary mechanisms long at the heart of Lozi power were broken. It is also remembered as the end of slavery in Barotseland itself. As Bo Lubasi, quoted at the outset of this thesis, explained to me, ‘it was started by Lewanika, that now there is no more *butanga*. Yeta, even him, when he came he finished that again, no one could be counted as a *mutanga*, all the people who are here, all of them are my children.’¹³ *Ufumu kulya ubika*, the Lozi say.¹⁴ Wealth eats slavery. We have, in one sense, seen the truth of this, for it was the pursuit of wealth which finally brought an end to slavery in Barotseland. To know whether for those finally freed in 1925 wealth too ate their

⁸ ‘Official Interview held in Resident Magistrate’s Court House, Mongu-Lealui on Friday, 22nd February, 1924’, enclosed in Goode, Acting Administrator to High Commissioner, 24 March 1924, BS3 HC1/3/76.

⁹ Stanley to Thomas, Colonial Office, 18 September 1924, NAZ, BS3 B1/2/11.

¹⁰ ‘26th August, 1924’ in ‘Report of proceedings at the Interviews between His Excellency the Governor and the Paramount Chief of the Barotse’, *ibid*.

¹¹ Reproduced in full as Appendix II.

¹² ‘Notes of the Visit of the Paramount Chief to Mongu on Monday, April 6th 1925’, NAZ, KDE 2/34/12.

¹³ Mubita Lubasi, Interview, Mongu 11 November 2011.

¹⁴ Mupatu, *Silozi se lu bulela*, no. 243.

slavery leads us beyond the aim of the thesis, for it would no longer be an economic history of slavery in Barotseland.

Conclusion

The fundamental purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate the centrality of slavery to the Lozi kingdom. It began with the valley, the land and the place of people in it, the rhythms of life and forms of production, all inextricably linked. The vital importance of labour to the shape of the kingdom was made clear and the argument advanced that it was through the harnessing of labour that the harnessing of the rich Zambezi floodplain became possible. This was shown to be at the heart of the formation and elaboration of the Lozi state, and its subjection and incorporation of the margins of the plain. The second substantive part of the thesis also explored the ultimate meaning of slavery in pre-colonial Barotseland. By the late nineteenth century, ran our argument, who was a slave and who was not, who was Lozi and who was not, had become essential to the organisation and maintenance of Lozi society.

Having established the scale and importance of Lozi slavery, and having set it in the context of the economic, social and political history of the Lozi as a whole, the third part of the thesis turned to a focused exploration of the ends of slavery in the region. From its apogee in the 1890s during the reign of Lewanika, when Barotseland was at the height of its power, we followed the struggle consequent to the colonial moment, and at the root of abolition. This was an extraordinary event in the colonial history of territory, for nowhere else in Northern Rhodesia was slavery formally abolished. And we saw that abolition for what it was: a dead letter. Crucial to this was the policy adopted by the BSAC, which had long resisted taking any action against slavery. Even after it had finally been forced to act in 1906, the Administration continued to pursue a policy of wilful ignorance for the better part of a decade. Only with the coming of both a new *Litunga* and generation of officials did things begin to change. In the final decade of this thesis, we saw how bitterly contested the ends of slavery in Barotseland could be.

Throughout, slavery has been shown to have been much more prevalent, much more important and far more exploitative than historians of both Central Africa, in general, and Barotseland, in particular, have commonly believed it to have been. This has been the thesis' challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy of a benign, incorporative Central African slavery. But it has also shown that the history of slavery in pre-colonial Africa is still recoverable, and worthy of study. That past is not gone. 'It is hard now', wrote Yuyi Mupatu in the 1950s, 'to find who were slaves and who were not. However some survivors of the Old Aluyana can still

tell how things and people were. They very well knew.¹⁵ We can no longer hope to find such survivors. This thesis has seen kings fall, invaders, traders, explorers and missionaries come and go. Even the names of people and places have changed, but some things go on. The valley and river remain. The Lozi people have written their history into their land. To this day it bears witness to the long history and tribulations of their slaves.

¹⁵ Mupatu, 'Barotseland in days past', p. 13.

Appendix I: The 1906 proclamation¹

PROCLAMATION

I, LEWANIKA, Paramount Chief of the BAROTSE Nation and Subject Tribes, do, by and with the advice and consent of my Council, hereby PROCLAIM and MAKE KNOWN that We of our own free will, in the cause of JUSTICE and PROGRESS, set free all SLAVES, held by US, our INDUNAS and HEADMEN .

As, however, it is the established and recognised right of Native Chiefs to demand unpaid labour from their People, the following rules shall be laid down, and observed by me, by my INDUNAS and by my HEADMEN.

1. It shall be the rule that the Paramount Chief can call the INDUNAS, HEADMEN, and the People under them to send them on matters of business.
2. It shall be the rule that the Paramount Chief can call the INDUNAS, HEADMEN and the People under them to cultivate certain fields, known by the name of NAMOKAO [*namukau*].
3. It shall be the rule that the Paramount Chief can call on the INDUNAS, HEADMEN and their People under them, for the purpose of building huts, cutting reeds or grass for thatching, and procuring firewood. But it must be distinctly understood that these supplies are for the use of the Paramount Chief and for that of his household only.
4. It shall be the rule that no workman can be called upon by the Paramount Chief to labour for more than 12 (twelve) days during the year.
5. It shall be the rule that if the Paramount Chief calls upon a worker to labour for more than 12 (twelve) days during the year, or to render services other than those described in rules Nos. 1, 2 and 3, he shall pay the worker at the minimum rate of 5/- (five shillings) per calendar month.
6. The Paramount Chief shall be bound by these rules to feed all workers called upon to labour for more than 12 (twelve) days, or employed upon other kinds of work other than those mentioned in rules Nos. 1, 2 and 3.
7. During the 12 (twelve) days mentioned in the foregoing rules, the Paramount Chief is not bound to feed or pay the People working for him. But any INDUNA, HEADMAN, or person under any INDUNA or HEADMAN, refusing to comply with the requirements of rules Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 shall pay a fine not exceeding 10/- (ten shillings), or in default shall work for 20 (twenty) days.
8. Any Induna or Headman may call upon the people under him to assist him in cultivating his lands, building his huts and such other work as the proper maintenance of the

¹ Reproduced from 'Proclamation by Lewanika which freed the slaves in Barotseland', proclamation, 16 July 1906, ALM, LM2/3/1/11/4. A Sesuto original may be found in this file.

community or kraal demands; it being distinctly understood that such services are rendered for the exclusive benefit of the Community or Kraal.

9. The Induna or Headman shall not be bound by these rules to pay or feed the workers engaged upon the work described in Rule No. 8.
10. It shall be the rule that all work required by an Induna or Headman, other than that described in Rule No 8., or of such a kind as is not tendered voluntarily by FREE PEOPLE to INDUNA or HEADMAN, shall be paid for by the Induna or Headman requiring such work at a minimum wage of 5/- (five shillings) per month.
11. No Man, Woman or Child set free by this Proclamation may leave the kraal of his or her late master to reside elsewhere without the permission of the HEAD of the Kraal excepting:-
 - (a) In the cause of Marriage, when one party elects to reside at the Kraal of the other party, according to custom.
 - (b) In the case of ill-treatment at the hands of his or her former master.
 - (c) In the case of permission to marry being withheld by his or her former master.
 - (d) In the case of a Native or some other tribe located in some other portion of the Barotse Kingdom.

Such person shall be free to return to his or her former home upon payment by him or her, or on his or her behalf by relations or friends the sum of £2 (two pounds) to his or her former master.

WE have made these rules, trusting that by their means SLAVERY will become a thing of the past in our country,

WE call upon all Indunas, Headmen and others in authority, to observe these rules, and demand that others observe them.

Especially are WE anxious to put a stop to the exchange or gift of Human Beings, where by a Father may be separated from his Family, a Husband from his wife, a Mother from her Child.

PROCLAIMED AT KHOTLA, LEALUI, THIS SIXTEENTH DAY OF JULY, ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND SIX.

F.V.WORTHINGTON
Secretary for Native Affairs

LEWANIKA.
Paramount Chief of
the Barotse &c,&c.

F. AITKINS.
Senior D.C.
Lealui.

NGAMBELA.
Chief Councillor.

Appendix II: The 1925 proclamation¹

PROCLAMATION

In accordance with what had been proclaimed by the Late Paramount Chief Lewanika in his Emancipation Order of 16th July, 1906, that there should be some unpaid works which pertained to and were performed for the Paramount Chief, and also for the Councillors and for Village-headmen by their respective people:

Where when we were in Livingstone recently on the 27th day of August, 1924, I, Yeta III, on the advice and with the consent of my Council, we agreed with His Excellence the Governor of Northern Rhodesia that all the free labour rights or tributes which were brought to the Paramount Chief, the Councillors and Village-headmen should be compensated for by the Northern Rhodesia Government by an annual sum of money equal to two thousand five hundred pounds to the Paramount Chief;

Whereas we have been informed by the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for Colonies in England that he has consented to this agreement.

I, Yeta III, Paramount Chief of Barotseland, with the advice and agreement of my Council therefore publicly proclaim that:-

1. The following Orders Number One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten in the Late Paramount Chief Lewanika's Emancipation Order of the 16th day of July, 1906, are hereby struck out and abolished.

2. There will be no unpaid work or works of any kind which will be given to anybody to perform, but that every kind of work, national, personal, or for the Paramount Chief himself, or for a Councillor or Village-headman or for any ordinary person under the authority of the Paramount Chief of Barotseland, these works will be paid for in the same way as is being done for all other works in the country.

3. That no tribute will be brought or received by the Paramount Chief, or a Councillor or any one else in place of these works in any form whatsoever.

4. Whoever shall break any one of these Orders Number Two and Three of this Proclamation will be found guilty of breaking the Paramount Chief's Order and will be punished and also ordered to pay an amount of compensation to the man or men whom he has unlawfully made to work or pay tribute, equal to the amount he has taken from them.

5. These Orders will come into force as from the first day off April, 1925.

This Order has been proclaimed in Lealui on the third day of April in the Year One thousand nine hundred and twenty five (1925).

YETA,
Paramount Chief of Barotseland.

MATAA,
Ngambela

¹ Reproduced from 'Proclamation by Yeta III abolishing all forms of unpaid labour', proclamation, April 1925, ALM, LM2/3/1/11/5. A Sesuto original may be found in this file.

Appendix III: Oral tradition and Lozi history

Traditional time

Lozi traditional time does not flow evenly. The recent past, genealogies, kinglists and other sequences basic to the structure of societies are generally presented in a chronological fashion. Deeds and events are associated with individuals or groups. Beyond, and sometimes around, these structures are traditions which make statements about the community or the world, frequently with a moral tinge and what to the outside observer appear to be fantastical tales. Beyond this lie traditions of origin, which may be stitched together from fragments of information or echoes of events, but in such a way that it is nigh on impossible to untangle them. Even where a strong formal tradition exists, there is either a vast gap between creation myths and those of origin and migration, or these are conflated. The first people are the first rulers, and their rule marches forward in step with genealogies to the present. At all levels, perhaps barring the first, these genealogies and the events associated with them telescope or are compressed.¹

There are three levels of time in Lozi tradition. The first and oldest is what, borrowing from Evans-Pritchard, Prins called the realm of pure myth. It is the most prestigious time period, encompassing the origin myths and those of the foundation of the kingship. The next is *Muluilonga*, which he glosses as ‘the Noble Age’. Time is sequential but does not mirror chronology; rather it is tied to structural concerns.² In his phrase, ‘Here are the deeds of kings’.³ I would further suggest that events have a more specific spatial dimension – once the traditions are concerned with events within Bulozhi, they begin to be tied to places, in particular mounds. ‘Finally we reached historical time which is placed by contemporary oral sources during the reign of King Sipopa...for matters of political tradition, presumably because this was the end of Kololo rule. In the 1890s it was placed commensurately earlier, towards the end of the reign of Mulambwa.’⁴ Elsewhere, Prins notes that the threshold of *Muluilonga* moves, and that at the time his book was published, Lewanika was ‘represented as the resurgence of its qualities’.⁵ Prins then proceeds to give a brief two page account of the period from about 1840 to Lewanika’s eventual reassertion of his rule following a rebellion in 1885. He considered 1840, the advent of the Kololo

¹ My thinking about the structure of traditional time has been much influenced by Vansina, J., ‘Deep-down Time: Political Tradition in Central Africa’, *HIA*, 16 (1989), p. 341-362.

² Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. xv.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 278, fn. 32. This, of course, depends on one’s informant, but for the most part those I interviewed certainly conceived of Lewanika as *the* greatest *Litunga*, the father of his people.

invasion, to be the 'earliest reliable date in modern Lozi history'.⁶ Further, he argued that as the reasons for both their successful conquest of Bulozhi, and subsequent expulsion in 1864 are unclear, he need not deal with the period in any meaningful way. As he put it, 'I see little benefit in detailing a composite version of the materials within the first two categories of time here; it has been done often enough before.'⁷ Nevertheless, the task is worth the attempt, if only to challenge a thesis of Mainga's *Bulozi under the Luyana Kings*, that Lozi origins were external to the floodplain. Mainga, and others, have argued this on the basis of oral tradition, or rather, an alternate version to that given in the 'official' version of Lozi traditions, Jalla's *Litaba za Sichaba*. Ideas of external origin have long dogged the heels of those writing the history of Barotseland, and ought to be relegated to their proper place.

These are distinctly murky waters, but one can discern two broad channels in Lozi traditions of origin. There are those which claim the Lozi originated in the plain, and there are those that claim an external, particularly northern origin, as we saw briefly in chapter 4. But all streams converge on the establishment of Mboo as the first *Litunga*, and for the most part run in parallel until the reign of Mulambwa. From there, the waters become muddied once more.

It 'would be absurd to assume...an independent...origin for the Lozi': Mainga and *Mwambwa*

Mainga's preferred view is of an origin and connection with the Ruund State and *Mwant Yav* in southern Congo. The people of Bulozhi, she argues, were not a single polity, but a series of decentralised groups, although there was a rough north/south linguistic divide. The supposed offshoot from the Ruund, Mainga's progenitors of the Lozi dynasty, conquered these groups, but absorbed the language of those in the north.⁸ This is argued on the grounds that Siluyana is related to the languages generally spoken in the north at present, and of these Sikwangwa bears 'some resemblance' to Bemba. Mainga further argues that Sinkoya, classified as a

⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷ Ibid., p. 29 and fn. 34. His footnote, to be found on p. 255, gives 'In Jalla, *Litaba za Sichaba*; Gluckman, *ECBP [Economy of the Central Barotse Plain]*, pp. 89-90; and Mainga, *Bulozi under the Luyana Kings*.' This is something of a development from his thesis, in which he gave a rather different explanation: 'since the methodical explanation of these data requires space and detail inappropriate to the present purpose and since in any case a full exploration of this type will be offered in *Litaba za Mulonga* where texts will be given and accompanied by analysis, I see little benefit...'. As this collection never saw the light of day, we can presume that the task was abandoned at some stage between the completion of the thesis and the publication of the book, and therefore we are not able to benefit from Prins' insights. Prins, 'Bulozi during the Period', p. 33. Also mentioned on p. 15, fn. 2; 'Texts in collection *Litaba za Mulonga* (Histories of the Kingdom) in my possession.'

⁸ Following Macola, who in turn follows Hoover, Ruund is here taken to mean the inhabitants of the heartland of *Mwant Yav*'s polity and their language. Lunda refers to the political and cultural system of the Ruund. Macola, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 39, fn. 10, referring to Hoover, J.J., 'The Seduction of Ruweji: Reconstructing Ruund History (The Nuclear Lunda: Zaire, Angola, Zambia)', 2 vols, unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, 1978.

Luba language, indicates a link between the Luba and Lozi. It is worth pointing out that van Binsbergen and Flint provide compelling evidence that the name Nkoya is a corruption of a place name, rather than a name for a people.⁹ She also reported that some Luyana speaking *manduna* in Bulozhi reported were able to understand eastern Lunda praise names which are in archaic Luba, or rather they were able to understand the 'general meaning of the text whose English translation [she] had.'¹⁰ While admitting that 'everything in the linguistic analysis' was 'purely speculative', she still considered such evidence 'suggestive' and sufficient to carry the burden of the following conclusion.

This has led me to favour the thesis of a Lunda-ruling minority establishing itself over large but disunited groups of Luba-speaking groups already settled in the Plain, and subsequently extending its authority over the Tonga-related southerners. There is little *direct evidence* to illuminate such a process for Bulozhi but such a situation would not be unique to Bulozhi.¹¹

This is certainly a development over her previous position, as represented in her 1966 contribution to a collection of studies of Central African history, *The Zambesian Past*.¹² This is, in turn, a version of a paper Mainga gave at a 1963 conference, where she presented the results of a University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland research project in Barotseland.¹³ In both this paper and her book, Mainga quotes White's view that Lozi traditions are 'a disappointing source of ethno-historical data. They provide no corroboration for cross-references from other traditions and in fact are in contradiction to them.'¹⁴ Clearly, if one finds the traditions to be unsatisfactory, then one must search out those which better suit one's idea of a less 'disappointing' series of events. Centring her argument on the divinity of kingship and of dead kings, Mainga believed that it seemed 'rather unreasonable to suppose an independent origin of these ideas in Barotseland or to postulate it as a third old nucleus. Lozi institutions are likely to have been derived from the Luba-Lunda or the Karanga-Rozvi centres.'¹⁵ She then provided an example from both Lunda and Rozvi traditions claiming

⁹ Flint, 'Historical Constructions', p. 28; van Binsbergen, W., 'The Kazanga Festival, Ethnicity as Cultural Mediation and Transformation in Central Western Zambia', *African Studies*, 53, 2 (1994), p. 100.

¹⁰ Mainga, *Bulozhi*, p. 16

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. Emphasis added.

¹² Mainga, M., 'The Origin of the Lozi; Some Oral Traditions', in Stokes and Brown, *The Zambesian Past*, pp. 238-248.

¹³ Mainga, M. 'The Origin of the Lozi: Some Oral Traditions by Miss Mutumba Mainga (history honours student), paper delivered at History of Central African Peoples Conference 1963', p. 2. ALM, LM2/4/93/41.

¹⁴ White, C.M.N., 'The Ethno-History of the Upper Zambezi', *African Studies*, 21 (1962), pp. 10-27 as quoted in Mainga, *Bulozhi*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Mainga, 'The Origin of the Lozi', p. 2.

than the Lozi were an offshoot of these polities. Mainga admitted that Jalla's account is at odds with these suggestions, which she explained as a result of the Lozi giving early writers 'an 'official' version aimed at emphasizing Lozi uniqueness and primacy.'¹⁶ The results of the University College research project demonstrated, so Mainga claimed, a

second layer of Lozi Oral Tradition which is very different from the official version and which is comparable to Lunda or other traditions in giving an account of the arrival of the Lozi, their origins and the people they displace or conquered. Strangely enough, the two theories of Lunda and Rozvi origin still appear simultaneously even within Lozi Oral Tradition although the Lunda origin emerges more strongly than the other.¹⁷

Some traditions Mainga recorded suggested that the reason for Mwambwa's break from the Lunda was to escape punishment for a breach of tradition, either that she had children when female chiefs were not permitted to do so, or that the issue with her offspring was not that they were the product of a prohibited union, but an incestuous one. 'Mbuyu [Mbuywamwambwa], Mwambwa's daughter, is said to have contracted a similar incestuous union [as her mother had] and that is why the identity of the father of her children has never been disclosed by the Lozi.' She reports that this information was given on the basis that her informants would remain anonymous.¹⁸ This does seem a rather elegant solution to the nagging problem to the father of Mbuywamwambwa's children, and Mainga reports that it was understood 'that most of the mystery surrounding contemporary Lozi rituals is based on the original act of incest committed by the early ancestors – Mwambwa and Mbuyu [Mbuywamwambwa].'¹⁹ The common threads that she draws out are that Mwambwa was a Lunda princess or chieftainess, who accompanied by a small retinue broke away from the Lunda and wandered the land until they reached what is now Buluzi. Despite their small numbers, they were able to successfully impose themselves on the original inhabitants.²⁰ There is little that modifies this basic outlines in all traditions. Indeed, Mainga's paper deals at greater length with those traditions which backed a northern genesis. Yet by the time *Buluzi under the Luyana Kings* appeared, Mainga found space in a footnote to remark the 'Lozi-Rozvi theory has become so weak as not to allow any lengthy discussion of it. The theory may have been started by the missionaries...There is no tradition within Buluzi to

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

support the Lozi-Rozvi link.’²¹ But surely this only lent further weight to the northern hypothesis. Indeed, by this stage Mainga thought ‘it would be absurd to assume there was an independent centre of origin for the Lozi in the Plain on the Zambezi.’²² Of her source for the Rozvi link in her earlier papers, she admitted that ‘it has since, however, become clear that he has read a lot of missionary writings and does not draw a precise distinction between what he has read and what is tradition.’²³

All of these more or less fanciful, unsubstantiated and contradictory reconstructions point to a broader problem. In seeking out oral traditions less ‘disappointing’ from an ethno-historical standpoint, better able to provide cross-references to other oral traditions, or at least not in contradiction to them, Mainga may have been blind to the wider purposes that such traditions could serve. She admits in her appendix on fieldwork methodology that the political situation in the 1960s had had an effect on the willingness of some of her informants to disclose information, or may have coloured their statements. She accepted, as she had in 1963, that the traditions were plagued by serious distortions of time and place. But she was rather more explicit about a second problem in her earlier paper. Then, she wrote, a major problem to overcome was

the suspicion that exists in the mind of the people and our informants. In the course of my research, it became quite plain that it was suspicion more than anything else which led to the concealment of a number of ‘true’ oral traditions in favour of the façade found in Jalla. This emerged quite early in the questions asked by informants – “Why are you asking about where we came from? Do you want to make out that the Lunda are senior to us?” or “Why are you asking who was here when we arrived? Do you want to give the land back to the people?”²⁴

Suspicious of this sort may have been pronounced in the 1960s, but they were hardly novel. Also conspicuous by its absence in the version of events Mainga presented in her book was the assertion that the ‘Lozi Kingdom is a characteristic ‘Sudanic’ type Divine Monarchy’.²⁵ Shorn of the overtly racist implications of the previously dominant ‘Hamitic Myth’ hypothesis, which relied on the invasion and domination by racially superior outsiders to explain African state formation, the ‘Sudanic state’ hypothesis nevertheless operated on the same principles. In essence, the ‘Sudanic’ state hypothesis was composed of four elements;

²¹ Mainga, *Bulozi*, p. 14.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 14, fn. 28.

²⁴ Mainga, ‘The Origin of the Lozi’, p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

state formation as a result of conquest, the identification of the conquerors as outsiders, the attribution of superiority to the conquerors, and total and instantaneous state formation.²⁶ This hypothesis had become rather unfashionable by the time Mainga's book, and we no longer find the term 'Sudanic' employed. But little else was altered. As Miller notes, the 'last assumption of the 'Hamitic myth' to fall by the wayside was the reliance on outsiders to explain state-formation.'²⁷ Claims of external origin gave an African ruler a legitimacy 'denied to simple residents of the country...divorced him from any connection with local interest groups and rendered him theoretically impartial in dispensing justice'.²⁸ The political purposes which Lozi traditions have served and the use Mainga made of them provide elegant testimony to the perceptiveness of Miller's critique. In seeking to find material less 'disappointing', or rather, more in line with the dominant theories of African state formation in the 1960s and early 1970s, Mainga mined a seam of tradition formed which exalted both her own theories and the kingship of the Lozi.

The 'facts omitted in Revd. Jalla's Barotse History': Origin myths and political expediency

The circumstances of the creation of Jalla's *Litaba* have been discussed elsewhere, but it is worth briefly reiterating the basic facts.²⁹ Compiled the first decade of the twentieth century, and appearing in the vernacular in 1909, it is the earliest and most complete account of Lozi history, from the founding of the dynasty to the reign of Lewanika. It has come to be the yardstick against which all other traditions have been measured. Here we examine an example of its subsequent manipulation by a descendant of its progenitor as a demonstration of the deep political significance attached to Lozi origin myths.

The *Litaba* begins with the ultimate myth, that of creation. In Jalla's rendering, all things come from the god Nyambe.

Long long ago, Nyambe lived on earth with his wife Nasilele. It was he who made [the] forests, the river and the plain; it was he who created all the animals, the birds and the fishes. He also made Kamunu and his wife.

Kamunu hastened to make himself different from the other animals. If Nyambe carved wood, he, man, carved his also; if Nyambe made a wooden dish, he, man, made his

²⁶ Miller, J.C., *Kings and Kinsmen, Early Mbundu States in Angola* (Oxford, 1976), p. 10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See Hogan and Macola, 'From Royalism to E-secessionism'.

also; if Nyambe forged iron, so did he. Nyambe was surprised, and began to be afraid of him. Later on the man made a spear.³⁰

Nyambe then banished Kamunu because he killed and ate the other animals. ‘O man, your ways are bad. What do you kill them for? They are your kin. You must not eat them, you are all my children.’³¹ Yet Kamunu returned, began to cultivate, and continued to kill the animals. Nyambe then decided to go somewhere Kamunu would bother him no longer, eventually ascending to ‘heaven’ with the aid of a spider. Before he left earth, Nyambe had created many wives ‘of all kinds’ for himself and fathered many children who ‘formed the nations so different in [physical] characteristics, customs and languages.’³²

In this manner he married Mwambwa and her daughter Mbuyamwambwa, who alternatively gave birth to a cow and a child with something resembling horns, ‘and even to this day it is said that those of the chief’s clan are still born with these horns of flesh but that they are destroyed by medicine’.³³ We are then told that:

The children to whom Mbuyamwambwa gave birth were without a father. But there is some argument about that. Some say that they were just children because they were born far from the Chief’s village. Others say that they were Nyambe’s children and they must have been because they had no father and Mbuyamwambwa was Nyambe’s wife.³⁴

The one thing that is certain, and is in accordance with other traditions, is that the children of Mbuyamwambwa are acknowledged to have been without a father, or rather, that their father was absent unless one considers serial immaculate conception a more likely explanation.³⁵ Once Nyambe ascends, Mbuyamwambwa is reported to have left Barotseland for ‘Kaumbu in the Lunda country where she was followed by the common people. There she repented and said “‘Let us return to Barotseland, that is a good country.’” Some of her people refused.³⁶ Mbuyamwambwa then returned, and settled at Makono. From this point on, the traditions remain rooted in Barotseland, and become somewhat less metaphysical. In essence, this tradition places the origins of the Lozi firmly in the plain, gives a divine origin to man, divine ancestry to the ruling dynasty and centres this at

³⁰ Jalla, ‘The History of the Barotse Nation’, p. 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p. 10.

³³ Presumably she was also his daughter, although this is not explained in Jalla’s text.

³⁴ Jalla, ‘The History of the Barotse Nation’, p. 11.

³⁵ Nowhere in Jalla’s version is incest suggested. Nor is it, incidentally, in Mainga’s book, unlike her earlier paper.

³⁶ Jalla, ‘The History of the Barotse Nation’, p. 11.

Makono. In the face of colonial and missionary encroachment, this rendering of Lozi tradition presented an imagining of the past tailored for two audiences. Not only did the Lozi enjoy their rights over their land by right of first origin, but with divine sanction. Adam was a Lozi, Bulozu was Eden, and to borrow from Livingstone, the Lozi were the Israelites. It does also suggest external connections, but this is brief and somewhat incidental. This, as we shall see (and Mainga's informants were clearly conscious of) resulted from a desire to assert both a claim to land and the distinction of antique pedigree.

In July 1937 the African Literature Committee of Northern Rhodesia (ALCNR) consulted the editor of *Mutende*, the Northern Rhodesian government African newspaper, in an attempt to ascertain whether 'any natives... [were] writing books about their own tribes.'³⁷ The ALCNR, in co-operation with *Mutende* promoted literary competitions, the first of which, run in 1939-1940. One of the four winning essayists was Godwin Mbikusita Lewanika, son of Lewanika, later *Litunga* Godwin Mbikusita Lewanika II, who submitted a vernacular history essay on the Mbunda.³⁸ In response to the announcement of an English essay competition in 1941, Mbikusita Lewanika sent the Secretary of the African Literature Committee, Ndola, 'The Barotse Tribal History'. In his foreword, he made it clear that it was his intention 'to write, in this little pamphlet, facts omitted in Revd. Jalla's Barotse History' and that he hoped 'the information I am giving will interest the Barotse young men, because they shall now know how the Barotse in the valley are related to their brothers outside the valley.'³⁹ He explained the origins of the Lozi as follows:

Long ago Barotseland was a swampy valley. The Barotse lived on mounds made above swampy level. After years it became a lake, then they migrated northwards, but afterwards the new generation thought to go to Barotseland. These were Mwambwa-Njemakati's children, led by Mbuyamwambwa, Imbwa, Ambanwa, Iishuwa, Lusinde and Mukelabai. Mbuyamwambwa, eldest daughter of Mwambwa-Njemakati, was the head.

The most recent survey of Lozi tradition states 'all versions of Lozi history recounted for this work'⁴⁰ agreed that Mwambwa ruled over the Lozi until she died on the throne, and her daughter Mbuyamwambwa succeeded her. Yet here in Mbikusita-Lewanika's account Mwambwa is not with the group once they return from Congo. The group is instead led by

³⁷ Minutes of the Third Meeting of the ALCNR, 27 July 1937, NAZ, SEC2/1141 as quoted in Macola, 'Historical and ethnographical publications', p. 362, fn. 23.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 350, 362 fn. 24.

³⁹ Mbikusita, 'Barotse Tribal History'.

⁴⁰ Flint, 'Historical Constructions', p. 27.

Mbuywamwambwa, who then had a dispute with one Imenda, ‘also a Mulozi. His people are Mambowe, because they live in a place called Mbowe.’ Thus the Mambowe are rendered as being Lozi. As a result of this quarrel, Mbuywamwambwa ‘then thought to appoint a male leader, who could attack Imenda.’ Meanwhile, Lusinde went hunting, and in tracking eland with his followers found a place rich in game. ‘He therefore decided to reside there and announced his decision through errands. Lusinde, now called Shinde, is the originator of the Lunda Tribe. This is endorsed by the saying:- “Kalui-Mwambwa, Kalunda-Mwambwa” (Both Aluyana and Malunda come from Mwambwa).’⁴¹ What follows is account of the Lozi colonisation of the plain, and information on the origin of the Lozi’s cattle and Royal drums.

The timing of the *Mutende* literary competition provided an opportunity for Mbikusita-Lewanika to make a political statement at a crucial moment. Earlier in the same year the Northern Rhodesia Government Gazette carried confirmation of a decision of major import for members of the Lozi elite.

The King’s Commissioner has found that the land in the Balovale District does not belong to the Malozi, and in accordance with this finding His Majesty the King has decided that the Lunda and Luvale tribes are entitled to be free from Barotse rule and that most of the Balovale District should no longer be part of the Barotse Province.⁴²

In his welcome address to the Acting Governor in advance of this decision being announced in Mongu on the 16th of June, the *Ngambela* Wina declared that ‘To-day thousands of eyes are fixed on you and we are looking forward to hearing of the decision of our long standing dispute over the Balovale political situation; the decision which we have every confidence will be given with strict Justice.’⁴³ Four days later, he had signed the agreement excising Balovale from Barotseland. The loss of this long standing dispute undoubtedly came as a blow to the Lozi. From a minor and seemingly inconsequential event in Jalla’s account, the Lunda expedition is here not only central to the narrative, but predates the establishment of the Lunda under the suzerainty of a son of Mbuywamwambwa. In 1903 Lewanika stated that Mboo had conquered the Mbunda, Lunda and Luvale and incorporated them into the kingdom.⁴⁴ This claim, although tenuous in the extreme, merely reflected and sought to justify the continued inclusion of these areas within Barotseland at the time. As with the claims of a Lunda connection made in Jalla’s *Litaba za Sichaba*, Lozi rights over these areas

⁴¹ Mbikusita, ‘Barotse Tribal History’.

⁴² *Northern Rhodesian Government Gazette*, No. 1041, vol. xxxi, No. 38, Lusaka, 9 July 1941.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ ‘Copy of Affidavit by Lewanika as to genealogy of kings of Barotseland, 5 June 1903, before Justice of Peace, F. Aitkens.’, NAZ, KDE, 2/44/4-21.

was not the issue at hand, and so these connections were not placed at the centre of the narrative. In 1941, however, the Balovale question was foremost on the Lozi political agenda and concomitantly took centre stage in Mbikusita's modifications to Jalla's account.

The missing link?: *lingongi* and the Lozi

Beyond oral tradition, however, there is one other possible basis on which an external origin for the Lozi might be argued, which on the face of it seems to present tangible evidence in support of migratory myths. In *The Hidden Hippopotamus* Prins, drawing in part on a sketch made by Holub of a type of double bell during his stay in Sesheke in 1876, suggested a radical revision of our understanding of early Lozi political institutions.⁴⁵ He did not, however, deal with the potential ramifications of the presence of these bells, beyond noting that the bells were 'similar to those of the Lunda/Luba area of the southern Congo' and were a 'symbol of power in Bulozhi as in other African kingdoms.'⁴⁶

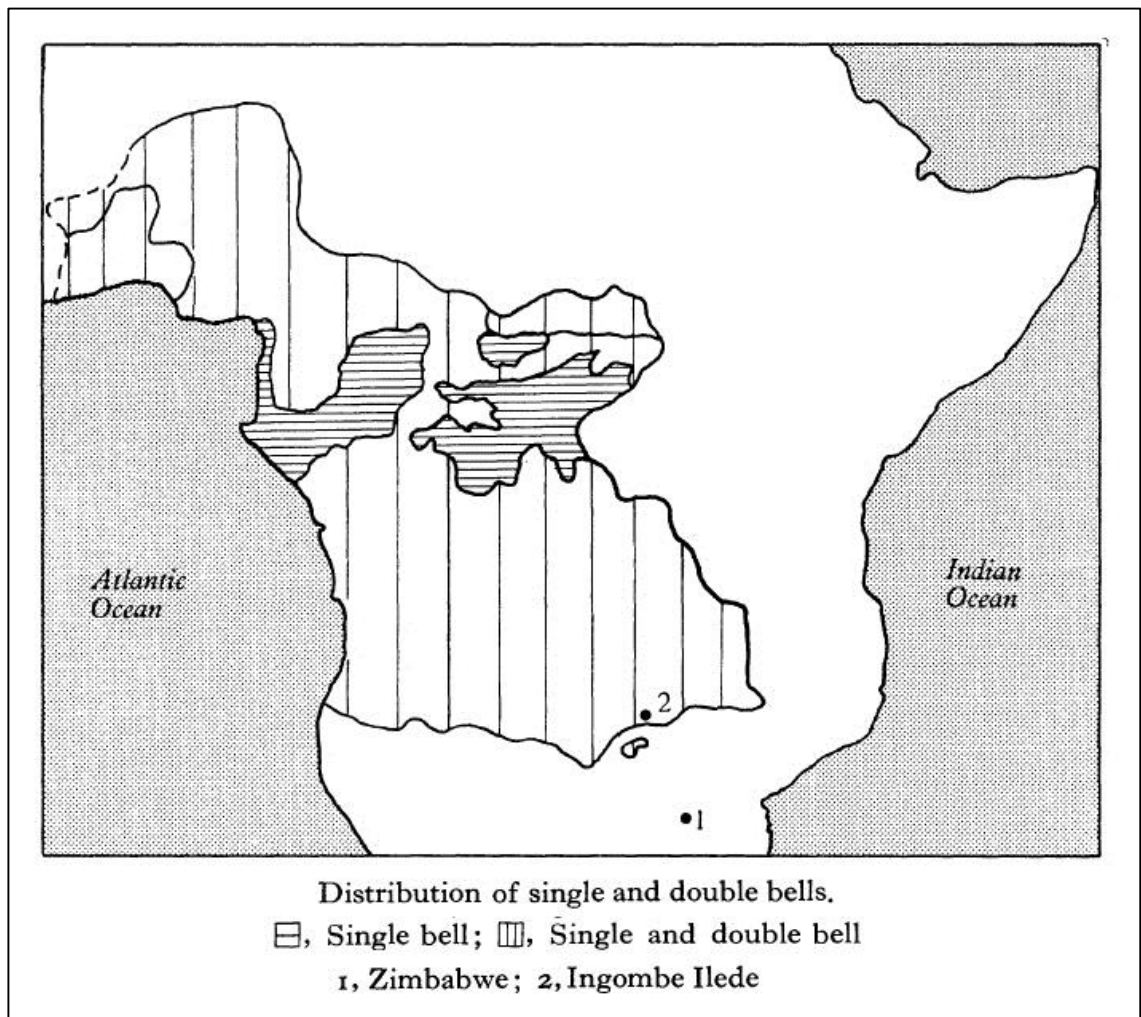


Fig. 6. 'Distribution of single and double bells', from Vansina, J., 'The Bells of Kings', *JAH*, 10, 2 (1969), p. 193, fig. 2.

⁴⁵ See p. 69, fn. 22.

⁴⁶ Prins, *Hidden Hippopotamus*, p. 103.

Double bells of this sort were excavated at Ingombe Ilede, and also found at Great Zimbabwe (See Figure 6). The discoveries at Ingombe Ilede indicate that by the 14th century there were contacts with the north, and traditions of territorial chieftainship, suggesting wide-ranging political and economic influences across the region.⁴⁷ Describing the version of the double bell found among the Lozi, Walton noted that the bells ‘themselves are of similar construction to those from the Congo and the [Zimbabwean] ruins but they are joined differently.’⁴⁸ Bells of this sort are found across Zambia, those found among the Lozi, for instance, bearing a strong resemblance to those found among the Bisa.⁴⁹ Early interpretations of the distribution of such bells suggested that this was evidence of migration on a large scale.⁵⁰ But the artefacts can only take the argument so far, and linguistic data, carefully handled, can do much more. As Vansina put it, in cases such as these the

approach most useful to historians is known as "words and things." It compares words across languages and exploits the arbitrary relationship between a term and its meaning, cases of onomatopoeia and babytalk excepted. Because the relationship is arbitrary, it is highly unlikely that two peoples will invent the same term independently for the same item.⁵¹

The Lozi word for this form of double bell is *ngongi* (pl. *lingongi*). There is also a single form of bell, known as a *singongi*, which Jalla described as a ‘triangular iron bell, without clapper, used by headmen to assemble people’ adding that it could also simply be a ‘musical instrument’.⁵² In contrast, the *ngongi* is described as a ‘native gong used by headman to assemble people for public works or war’.⁵³ Clearly, the *ngongi* is a symbol of greater authority. Jalla also recorded that *ngongi* could be used figuratively to mean a leader.⁵⁴ Thus the connection with political power is clear. But the term is onomatopoeic. The verbs *ngongola*, ‘to strike, to beat, to hit’ *ngongaula*, ‘to strike repeatedly’ and even the name for a Wood-Pecker, *Ngongola* are all clearly words in the same category, and appear to share the same onomatopoeic root.⁵⁵ This onomatopoeia is not unique to the Lozi, as clapperless bells

⁴⁷ Roberts, *A History of Zambia*, pp. 61-62

⁴⁸ Walton, J., ‘Iron Gongs from the Congo and Southern Rhodesia’ *Man*, 55 (1955), p. 21.

⁴⁹ Reynolds, B., ‘Iron Gongs from Northern Rhodesia’ *Man*, 58 (1958), p. 194.

⁵⁰ Walton, ‘Iron Gongs’, pp. 20-23. Walton’s article was strongly criticised, and Ian Cunnison very effectively demolished Walton’s putative timescale, Cunnison, I., ‘Central African Chronology’, *Man*, 55 (1955), pp. 143-144.

⁵¹ Vansina, ‘Deep-down Time’, p. 350.

⁵² Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *singongi*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, s.v. *ngongi*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, s.v. *ngongi*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, s.v. *ngongola*, *ngongolela*. *Ngongola* (wood-pecker) can be found in the supplement ‘Names of Barotse Land Birds’, pp. 390-393. Interestingly, Jalla’s dictionary also includes the interjection ‘*konkilililili- konkilililili!*’, defined as an ‘imitation of sound expressing the sound of *ngongi*’, which

of this sort in Central Africa are often 'called *ngonge, ngunga, longa*'. It cannot, therefore 'be safely used to prove anything without a great deal of detailed study.'⁵⁶ Vansina argued that the distribution of single and double bells, their names and forms, suggests that the similarity in the shape of bells might rule out multiple origins, and as there is no 'necessary correlation between shape and function, the findings of similar functions for these bells strengthens this argument. Independent invention is unlikely, and the constant arbitrary association of shape and function documents the case for diffusion.'⁵⁷

Vansina accepts the possibility that double bells might have been invented twice, as 'idea of joining two single bells to make a chime on which tone patterns could be beaten out is a simple one for people who speak tonal languages, and all the more so if they already have talking drums.'⁵⁸ Nevertheless, excluding this possibility, he suggested that

Single bells spread from West Africa to the Lower Congo and then to Katanga, Zambia and [Zimbabwe] before A.D. 800. The double bell spread in the same general direction, arriving around 1450-1500 in [Zimbabwe], but did not cross the forest on a wide front. The fact that very few terms exist in the southern savanna for 'double bell,' especially the wide solid distributions of the linguistic forms *GONG- and *(B)EMB-, indicates that the idea of joining bells swept rapidly through the area from the west, once it appeared there.⁵⁹

The presence of *ngongi*, therefore, is evidence of the transfer of ideas, and not the migration of people. What ought to be abundantly clear by this point is that there is much said of Lozi origins external to the floodplain, and barring the dubious Luba/Lunda provenance of *lingongi*, little evidence beyond a welter of conflicting oral traditions to support this. There seems little need to go any further down this avenue. Nor is such an explanation necessary, although reasons why it is commonly furnished have been given. However one approaches the question, and in contrast to Mainga's assertion, what seems absurd is the succession of attempts to place Lozi origins outside of Bulozhi. In reality, such accounts have the same object as those recounting a divine genesis. As Jalla himself noted, 'The story of Nyambe's marriages and the manner in which Mbuywamwambwa's children were born is purely

chimes with an impression of an *ngongi* recorded during the fieldwork for this thesis. Jalla, *Dictionary*, s.v. *konkilililili- konkilililili!*. Mubiyana Wamunyima, Interview, Limulunga, 25 November 2011.

⁵⁶ Vansina, 'Deep-down Time', p. 350.

⁵⁷ Vansina, 'The Bells of Kings', p. 191.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195

legendary. It is to distinguish the Barotse (Malozi) amongst the other tribes and to exalt the royal clan so that they are respected by people.⁶⁰ These traditions are a justification for situation rather than an explanation of its genesis, and historian's use of them has much more to do with the dominance of a particular interpretation of African history than African history itself. Depending on where you look, and when, political needs shift, and so do the formulations of tradition. What does not appear and disappear at the behest of shifting political circumstance is the land itself. As has been argued throughout this thesis, the environment of the plain is sufficient explanation for the rise of a centralised state.

⁶⁰ Jalla, 'The History of the Barotse Nation', p. 12.

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The interviewees are listed alphabetically with their year of birth followed by the date and location of the interview. Recordings and transcripts of the best interviews are to be deposited in the Special Collection of the Library of the University of Zambia, Lusaka.

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Kusiyo Mbikusita Lewanika; born 1952; Mongu, 15, 16 and 21 November 2011.

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Abbreviations used in bibliography:

<i>HIA</i>	<i>History in Africa</i>
<i>IJAHS</i>	<i>International Journal of African Historical Studies</i>
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
<i>JRGS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i>
<i>JSAS</i>	<i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i>
<i>RLJ</i>	<i>Rhodes-Livingstone Journal</i>
<i>S&A</i>	<i>Slavery and Abolition</i>

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