

African Hermeneutics of Western education: A case of Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu of Barotseland, Zambia, 1897-1982.

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Abstract: An African proverb states that “until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”. This is the case of the historiography of Western education in Africa, which was largely Eurocentric. Unlike many studies that are Eurocentric, the objectives of this article were to examine the history of education in Africa from the African’s point of view; to demonstrate that Africans were not passive recipients, but that they engaged Western education in a dialogue with indigenous African education. This has been achieved by examining the career of Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu of Mongu-Lealui district, a man who made a significant contribution to the hermeneutics of Western education in Zambia. He became a teacher at Barotse National School but was twice fired for refusing to compromise on quality education. Mupatu led a movement that significantly decolonized education in a time which was forbidding. He established Makaplulwa School in 1945 but the school was closed due to local governance challenges in 1949. In 1963, the school reopened. Today Makapulwa School stands as Mupatu Combined School in Limulunga district. The study concludes that Mupatu’s contribution to education is a demonstration of African people’s capability to interpret western culture and also their desire to retain what was African even as they embraced the West. It is a story of adoption, interpretation and adaptation of Western education. Mupatu was a product of both the Barotse indigenous education and Western education. To present this discourse, I relied on primary sources, mainly information from those who knew him; family members and his former pupils, his biography and other secondary sources on the subject. The study is significant because it highlights the people’s aspirations of what education should be in Africa.

Key words: Hermeneutics, decolonisation, indigenous education, Western education, aspirations, Makapulwa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Historical interest is never completely suppressed in mankind. It is human to connect events of the past to the happenings of the present. The human mind is always interested in what was there before, and there are always people ready to carry out the work of history in whatever form they can. Central to the issue of presenting history is the aspect of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics in history is about how historical events are presented; it is about interpretation. Much as Western Education is not African, so were its first historians. The history of Western education in Africa is told from a Eurocentric point of view in most cases. However, it is high time for historians of Africa to stop presenting the

history of education from a one sided view: how Western education was planted on the African soil by the missionaries and colonial government and consider the views of the Africans about the education they received from the West. From our African wisdom, we are aware that “until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”. This has been the scenario in Africa about the historiography of European activities in general and Western education particular. It has been about how a particular missionary established a particular school and how the school progressed while presenting a little or no voice from the people for whom the school was established. In this paper, my interest is to demonstrate that while Western education was being established in Africa, Africans were also engaged in interpreting it and analyzing its relevance to their society. They were not passive recipients, they adopted Western education while striving to adapt it to their needs. They engaged Western education in a dialogue with indigenous African education. From the start, I want to state that the practice of adaptation that the African people engaged themselves in was not welcomed by the missionaries and the colonial government to a desired level. However, some Africans were strong willed to engage in the battle to a significant level. Of such men is Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu, of Mongu-Lealui district, in the Western province of Zambia which was formerly called Barotseland.

Mupatu made a giant step in the localisation of Western education by establishing the first private school in the region. Interesting, his school was aimed at solving the problem of “wastage” that come with Western education. In African indigenous education, failure is not very pronounced as learners are accorded a chance to repeat the tasks until they perfect the skills. As a teacher, Mupatu evaluated Western education and struggled to make it relevant to the experiences and aspirations of his people. Between 1945 and 1949, he ran a private school called Makapulwa but he closed it due to opposition from the Native Government. It is an African practice that those who do better than their brethren in the social and economic aspects of life should do some philanthropy by helping others, especially children, to go to school. This trend has been wide spread in Barotseland, and many educated people have benefited from it. The researcher here has been kept in a number of homes during his School days. It is something which Barotse people view as part of

their life to the point that such philanthropy is done “unconsciously”. In Barotseland for example, it is expected that anyone who is educated and earning a salary should in turn help educate some members of his extended family. This is to some extent a “plough back” into the community as many individuals within the family and outside the family assisted that person in a way. Some Africans took his concept to greater degree by coming up with milestone innovations. In Somalia, for example, the first secondary school was established in 1949, and it was a product of a Somali trader, and not the church or the government.¹ Mupatu also falls in the category of great African innovators in the area of education. He did not only look at helping a few people access education, instead, he wanted the benefits of education to be experienced by many households in his community.

Mupatu’s life spanned almost a century and it has been more than forty years from the time he died on 1st January 1982. To present this discourse, I relied on primary sources, mainly, information from those who knew him; family members and his former pupils, his biography and other secondary sources about education in Barotseland in general and Mupatu in particular. One may ask as to why we spend time to discuss the colonial aspects of education in the post-colonial twenty-first century era. The answer is simple; colonial education is still an aspect of education that is still evident in the present era. We have calls from many parts of Africa to decolonise education. In this paper, I examine how Mupatu led a movement that significantly decolonised education in a time which was forbidding and conclude that Africans were not passive recipients of western education, but were players in the interpretation of western culture in general and western education in particular. Further, Africans demonstrated their desire to retain what was African even as they embraced the West.

Mupatu’s early days

Those accustomed to the Barotse culture are familiar to the question: *Ki mwana mang’i?* [Whose child is she or he?] It is a question about nature and nurture of the person in question. The question is meant to bring a detailed understanding of the person in question by making an assessment of what the person is in relation to his experiences by virtue of birth and environment. It is an assessment of the person in question’s cultural capital.² Therefore, my discourse of Mupatu’s hermeneutics of western education starts by giving an answer to the question: *Mupatu ki mwana mang’i?* [Whose child was Mupatu?]. This is done because I believe that the innovations Mupatu made cannot be isolated from his life experiences. Sing observed that men make their own history not as they please but make it under circumstances

directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.³ Mupatu was a product of his society: from it he derived the meaning of life through his every day encounters with his indigenous environment. The everyday encounters gave Mupatu an indigenous knowledge which formed a philosophical base from which he understood life and this in turn formed a base for his hermeneutics of Western education. Indigenous knowledge refers to:

“...traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate the people’s way of living and making sense of their world. It is the sum of the experience and knowledge of a given social group, and forms the basis of decision making in the face of challenges both familiar and unfamiliar.”⁴

For centuries before the colonial experience, indigenous cultures were guided by a philosophical world view based on following their individuals’ experience as part of nature; respect for and revival of the wisdom of elders; consideration to the living, the dead, and future generations; sharing of responsibility, wealth, and resources within the community; and embracing spiritual values, traditions, and practices reflecting connections to a higher order, to the culture, and to the earth.⁵ The Barotse were not an exception, they understood this and that is why, through the process of learning the old knowledge, they discovered new knowledge and embraced it. For that reason they say: *ukuyete ku kwenda, Matunga tuta ni male* [learn to walk for the journey is long]. To them, learning to walk means making an effort to learn all that can be learnt from the environment in order to equip oneself for a holistic understanding of life; the journey of life. Mupatu remembered in his old age how his father used to remind him “*matunga tuta ni male*” [the journey is long].⁶

Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu was born in the last decade of the 19th century, when Europeans were beginning the occupation of Barotseland. His autobiography locates the year of his birth to be around 1897.⁷ Mupatu’s father was Wamunyima Mupatu, an *imilema* (personal body guard) of Lewanika and a warrior who participated in the raids against the *Masukulumbwe* (the Ila people). His mother was Masiyaleti Akayii of the Royal line under the lineage of Litunga Ngalama. Mupatu’s ties with the ruling class as a child of Lewanika’s *imilema* and a son of a *mukwae* (princess)

³Peter Sing, Max: A Very Short History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.50.

⁴ George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple readings of our world (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p.20.

⁵ George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple readings of our world, p.20.

⁶ Gwyn Prins (Ed.), Self Help Education at Makapulwa School: An autobiography by Yuyi W. Mupatu with Contributions from R. B Muteto and A.L.Mufungulwa, Communication No. 16. (Lusaka: Institute of African Studies, University of Zambia, 1980), p.13.

⁷ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.12. This year is doubtful as it may not be possible for a boy of twelve years to travel to South Africa by himself as the case happened in 1909. I therefore suggest that Yuyi Mupatu was bone a little earlier.

¹Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Dar-es-Salaam: Tanzania Publishing house, 1973), p.264.

² For a detailed discourse on cultural capital and educational capital, see Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. London: Routledge, 2010.

put him at an advantage as he would grow up within the Barotse ruling class. As a child he had personal contact with Lewanika and his children. He grew up understanding the responsibility of the ruling class to their subjects. Of particular interest here is that he saw the social and economic innovations which Lewanika put in place in order to develop the Barotse nation. He actually starts his autobiography by outlining Lewanika's aims for the Barotse nation. "King Lewanika had constructive aims in civilising Barotseland. These aims he never surrendered [even] when opposed by some of his councilors, mostly Mataa and Numwa as well as those at Nalolo."⁸ We get an impression that Mupatu did not only understand the aspirations, but was also an admirer of Lewanika's resilience in the middle of the opposition he received when he set out social and economic reforms. About Lewanika's resilience in the development of Barotseland, Mupatu wrote:

He was opposed by Numwa and Mataa and other rebels when he suggested that agriculture should not depend on the labours of the opposite sex, but that men should grow food along the low lying outskirts of Lyalui. He was opposed when he constantly visited all corners of Barotseland so as to know her geographical position, people and fauna living there. He was opposed when he encouraged some men belonging to subject tribes to take part in the government, which aim he never gave up. He was opposed by our fathers when he made a strict law that nobody was free to shoot with a gun at the lechwe; buck in the plain must not be shot with a gun, but hunted with dogs. He confirmed that there would be no favouritism to anybody, councilor or prince.

When the missionary Francois Coillard arrived and taught Lewanika foreign but progressive ideas, this was opposed. His councilors tried to discourage Western education, technical and academic. The more they opposed, the more he made plans how best he could keep schools run by missionaries. He appointed men of renown to sit on the school councils at Lyalui, Nalolo, Mabumbu, Sinanga and Mwandu Sisheke.⁹

The above extract from Mupatu's writing is a clear indication that he was an admirer of the Barotse leader, Lewanika. Lewanika's directive that agriculture should not depend on the labours of the women only, but that men should also participate in the growing of food along the low lying areas of Lealui made a lasting impact on Mupatu as he would continue with that campaign among his students throughout his career as a teacher. Lewanika later forced all his people to grow enough food for consumption and storage.¹⁰ He further drained Nalinanga, Namitome, Sopus, Mawawa and Kaande swamps and established them as farming lands. His sister,

Mulena Mukwae Matauka at Nalolo also did the same by draining Kataba swamps and established it into farming land. He also taught people good skills of animal husbandry. Those that resisted were publicly punished.¹¹ This made a big impression to the young Mupatu as he would also dig a canal that passed near his Limulunga's Itwandi village as a way of improving food production for the people of his village.

Lewanika established Neewa and Nayuma 'trade schools' in Lealui and he was the Principal. In those schools, he taught his apprentices how to make wooden dishes, spoons, walking sticks, handles for hoes and axes; curving ivory rings and bangles, decorated fly switches, ivory hair pins, small iron hoes decorated with elephant tusks. He also taught all young men in Lealui how to use fire arms. Lewanika expected all children to learn practical skills. In addition to Neewa and Nayuma, he took children in his capital to the Kaross teachers at Lwambo near Lealui to learn how to dress and tan the skins of tsipa, monkey, waterbuck and leopard so that they became very soft.¹² Mupatu attended the Lwambo skills programme. The skills Lewanika offered to the young ones were very beneficial as they helped in the production of goods and Karosses that sold handsomely to the Europeans in those days.

Having given the above description of Mupatu and his early days, we conclude without any doubt that he was well vested in the understanding of his society through indigenous knowledge systems. The cultural capital which Mupatu gained through indigenous education at an early stage would have a lasting effect on his cosmic view, and from the indigenous perspective, he would engage western aspects of life into a dialogue.

Mupatu's Education

Mupatu's Western education journey started when he was enrolled at Lealui school because his parents were compelled to do so by Lewanika. He proved to be an able student such that by 1906 he was top of his 'lipulelo' [words] class which was taught in Sesuto. At the suggestion of the missionaries, he was one of the students who were in the third group to be sent to Mabumbu School by Lewanika. He spent two years at Mabumbu under the tutelage of Rev. Coison. In 1908, Lewanika sent his two sons Mwanawina and Akashambatwa and Mulasikwanda son of Induna Nawa Silundu to Lovedale in South Africa. The following year, 1909, Mupatu was also sent to Lovedale. He traveled to South Africa by himself. He started off from Mongu-Lealui to Livingstone by the canoe of the Native Commissioner, Mr. H.R. Palmer who was accompanied by Induna Amafuba. From Livingstone, he boarded a train to Bulawayo. From Bulawayo, he travelled to South Africa again by train and arrived on 9th February 1909. This trip to South Africa was in itself a test of courage to the young Mupatu. One is left to wonder how a young boy could venture into such a long journey using foreign technology which he was not

⁸ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.7.

⁹ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.7.

¹⁰ East of Lealui, there is a village called Mashete. This is where food was stored. There were other designated places in the kingdom where food was stored.

¹¹ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.7, 13-14.

¹² Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.7-8.

accustomed to. It was a test of how far he had acquired the skills to associate with a wider world beyond his own.

His stay at Lovedale was short lived as he applied to go back to Barotseland after he got a rumour that Lewanika would send his children to England. Because of that, he was sent back to Barotseland after finishing standard V. However, it turned out that Lewanika's children never went to England as it was earlier rumoured.¹³ He later regretted having made an application to go back to his homeland basing his actions on rumours. This was against the Barotse wisdom who understands that "*linong'u lili ling'wi a limatelwi*" [don't follow a single vulture]. This means, one should not make action until there is enough evidence to support the action. Back in Barotseland, he joined the Normal School at Sefula for standard VI and VII. This was the highest educational capital he could gain in Barotseland as there were no secondary schools.

The world of Work

Mupatu's first job after school was in the office of the Native Commissioner at Lukona where he worked as an interpreter. It must be understood that the work of an interpreter was and is still a challenging one. It required the interpreter to possess an understanding of the silozi language and the cultural aspects the people so as to be able to explain a particular case in English to a Commissioner in who had very little idea of Silozi and the culture of the people, yet the interpretation must be done in a manner that will make the commissioner pass a fair judgement. At that time, the Commissioner was Mr. Palmer whose work was mainly tax collection. Mupatu interpreted in cases of tax defaulters and other cases brought before the Commissioner. He did not stay long in that job; he moved to join a trader Mr. T. C. Russel as a store *capitao*¹⁴ at Libonda and later moved to Tapo during the flood. In 1915, through the contact he had with Mr. H. N. Gaskell, the Principal of the Barotse National School (BNS) who visited Tapo and identified him as a potential teacher, Mupatu was offered employment as a teacher at BNS.

At the BNS, he distinguished himself as an able teacher and served even in administrative positions. In 1916, he served as the headteacher of the elementary school in addition to other administrative assignments.¹⁵ Mupatu taught at the school until he was dismissed in 1929. The dismissal of Mupatu from the BNS is of particular interest to this study. Trouble came in 1929 when Gaskell left service and went back to England and a new Principal took over the running of the school. The new Principal discouraged teaching many aspects of arithmetic, geometry, algebra and English the way they were taught before. He insisted on following the government syllabus which did not demand the high level that was there before. Mupatu tactfully inquired about the situation and in anger the Principal said: "Barotseland has attained

higher education than the rest of Northern Rhodesia. Therefore they [the people of Barotseland] must wait for the other schools in the territory."¹⁶ Mupatu refused to accept such a move and this led to his dismissal, but he was not intimidated. He decided to take up the matter further with the Ministry of Education. He left Mongu and walked to Livingstone to petition the Director of Native Education, Mr. G.C Latham. The journey from Mongu to Livingstone took him eleven days of walking. Latham listened to the complaint but suggested that he returns to the school and be given a different offer. When he refused the offer, Latham suggested that he be posted to teach in one of the out schools but still Mupatu refused to take that offer because he would still remain under the same administration of the same "Pharaoh".¹⁷

The Director of Education promised to find a teaching job for Mupatu elsewhere. As he was waiting for a teaching job, Mupatu was employed by Messrs Creed & Company as a supervisor of labourers. His next teaching appointment came through the Rev. Ray Lawyer of the Church of Christ. He was engaged to teach under him (Rev. Lawyer) in Chief Simwatachela's Kabanga area in Gwembe flats. Mupatu started the school all alone and taught the lowers grades alone. He learnt Chitonga very fast and was able to interpret it and even developed a supplementary reader called "Chipeleta cha Tonga". This was not a mean achievement. Again it set him apart as an able language scholar. Mupatu was a committed student of language, especially silozi, where he authored a number works. Before he completed a year with the Church of Christ, Mupatu received an offer of employment from the Ministry of Education in Bechuanaland. The offer was high paying; giving him eight pounds per months compared to the three pounds he was working for with the Church of Christ. Although the Bechuanaland people spoke a similar language to Silozi, the language of Mupatu, he chose not to take the offer. His reason was based on the good treatment he received at the Church of Christ mission. He saw freedom in service as an important element in life. His anecdote of the two dogs is important for us to understand his actions:

There were two dogs in a town. The first dog was properly cared for, but was not allowed to go visiting anywhere. It was chained up. The other dog was not fed or looked after by anybody but was not chained up and could visit any place; however it was miserable, very thin and haggard.

This dog in its rounds one day came to the place where the fat well cared for dog lived. The fat dog looking at the thin dog and laughed ...with scorn and said: "Oh, what is this that I see so miserable, poor and

¹³ Rupert Masiyaleti Mupatu, Interview, Limulunga 29th September 2020.

¹⁴ A corruption of the word captain. A store capitao was the one supervising the day to day activities of store.

¹⁵ Rupert Masiyaleti Mupatu, Interview, Limulunga 29th September 2020.

¹⁶ Prins, *Self Help Education at Makapulwa School*, p.20.

¹⁷ Liwakala Muyoba, "The People and Western Education: A study of the People's Responses and Application of Western Education in Barotseland, Zambia, 1883-1973" (PhD Thesis: Zambian Open University, 2020), pp.314-315.

thin". The fat dog then said, "I am leading a happy life under this roof. Foods of all tastes are given to me by my master, while you knock from corner to corner to hunt for food. Go away from my presence or I shall vomit because the odour from you is unpleasant.

The thin dog snarled and said: "You are fat but you are a prisoner. Look at the chain around your neck. You cannot go anywhere you like while I am free to visit any place in this town. Whenever and wherever there is a feast or a noise or trouble, I go there because man is kind to me. He feels it humane to let me enjoy life. You must bear in mind that all creatures must not be dependents on their fellow creatures...God for all, every man to himself."¹⁸

From Kabanga mission, Mupatu together with his nephew, Mufunglulwa, began trading at Luyi River. The trading experience was challenging, but they did not give up. In April 1934, Mupatu decided to get back to his teaching career; hence, he applied by letter to the Principal of the Barotse National School, Mr. J.A. Cottrell, for a post of a teacher and he was successful. At the time, the school was undergoing reorganisation and Mupatu was considered, after assessing his records, as the right person to head the Elementary section of the School. He only served for two months; he was promoted to the post of deputy head teacher in the primary school. In 1936, after working with satisfaction of the school authorities, he was selected to go to Mazabuka Jeans School for further training.¹⁹ The training took him two years and thereafter he rejoined the BNS.

Mupatu was dismissed again in 1943 for advocating for the progress of indigenous teachers at the expense of expatriate teachers.

It all started in 1942 when Mr. Cottrell left the school, and when authorities hired a Malawian Expatriate, Mr. Matthews to run the school as headmaster. Mr. Mupatu and other indigenous Barotse teachers were not happy with the move, believing that their nation had able indigenous persons who could handle such a responsibility. To worsen the situation, the Malawian headmaster belittled all other African teachers at the BNS. He even offered himself to teach standard VI which was beyond his grasp. He used the school type writer, ink, papers and time to enhance his private correspondence studies with a South African institution for Matriculation. Even with such self-granted privileges, he unfortunately failed the studies. The standard VI pupils became restless, using the good example of the previous teacher; they demanded change of teachers. Mupatu saw such happenings as lowering the quality of education at the school. He openly opposed the headteacher and was singled out as a ring leader leading to his dismissal from service. He gladly accepted the dismissal. Mr. Nalumango, another indigenous teacher at the BNS encouraged Mupatu and said "everyone

can find fault; few can do better. I can prophesy that there is something noble in store for you because your patriotism is very high".²⁰ Mupatu never again entered government service until after independence in 1966 when he was appointed life headmaster of Mupatu primary school, the school he founded. His belief in the ability of his people is worthy commenting on. Today, the African society is suffering from Euro-phobia. Mupatu believed that education should equip the masses with the ability to lead themselves. It must be about "Buipuso" (self-government). Borrowing from the words of one man on the appointment of Malawian expatriate to lead BNS:

Have not at least ...people been taught well enough to work for our country instead of having us upset by having people from another country working. I am referring to Nyasaland...if they are cleverer than we, what have our schools been doing since they first began to collect school fees from us...if we do not do something about it now to help ourselves, perhaps tomorrow we will have more trouble and the next trouble will be greater than the trouble we have had.²¹

This has been the spirit of Africa exhibited by many other sons of Africa. The question was not about B.N. Matthews per say, it was about the process applied in putting him there at the expense of those capable indigenous men and women in Barotseland. The West has continued to make Africans feel incapable of handling their own affairs. Mupatu rejected the idea of making his people feel so. This is the spirit, for example, Sankara wanted to put in his Bukinabe people. He wanted them to be proud of their cotton, education, culture and so on. He went even to the point of changing the name of their country from Upper Volter to Bunia Faso; meaning, the land of upright men.²² African societies for sure are societies of upright men. Today, Western education has contributed to the failure of African progress because we are made to look down on our abilities.

The Birth and Progress of Makapulwa School

At this point, Mupatu could no longer fit in the frame of the happenings at BNS, he left and went to live at his Itwandi village where he traded. While at his village, he began to be more concerned about hundreds of children who were not catered for in school and were wondering aimlessly. He was more concerned whenever school age children visited his store. They were not in school because they were above 15years and could not be enrolled or they failed an examination and could not be allowed to repeat. The idea to open a school became very strong in his mind and on 10th August 1945, he discussed it with the Provincial Education officer. He was allowed. The Provincial Education Officer gave him a blackboard and twelve pieces of chalk and a geography book by Robertson. After reporting the new school

²⁰ Prins, *Self Help Education at Makapulwa School*, p.31.

²¹ Terrence Ranger, "Nationality and nationalism: The case of Barotseland," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.4, No. 2 (June 1968), p.239.

²² Amber Murrey (Ed.), *A Certain Amount of Madness: The Life, Politics and Legacies of Thomas Sankara* (London: Pluto press, 2018), p.vi.

¹⁸ Prins, *Self Help Education at Makapulwa School*, p.22.

¹⁹ Prins, *Self Help Education at Makapulwa School*, p.30.

to the Litunga, on 15th August 1945, the school started with nine pupils under the name Makapulwa.²³

The choice of the name Makapulwa is important to the hermeneutics of Western education under discussion here. It has been argued that human thought processes are largely metaphorical and that linguistic expressions are possible because they are metaphors in a person's thought system.²⁴ Makapulwa as the name of the new school was in itself a metaphor. Makapulwa means "thrown out". It refers to wastage that comes out of a process. Indigenous African education does not produce wastage: those who pass through it graduate as a team. Through the metaphor of Makapulwa, Mupatu was reminding the propagators of the education system that they had produced waste in form of learners who had failed progress to higher levels and also in form of those who had no access to school. By the establishment of the school that took care of the "waste", he demonstrated that Western education will only be relevant to the African culture if it took care of the spirit of Ubuntu, where a community of learners progress as a team.

The school progressed until after four years when the Barotse Native Government appointed him as Administrative Secretary: Induna Imandi Liomba. The appointment forced the school to be closed. According to the Barotse laws and customs, no common man can reject an appointment by the Kuta because such an appointment is from the Litunga in Council. It is well known that "*kukana kwa mubika ni kupumena*" [when a common man refuses, he is actually in agreement]. This was a dilemma to Mupatu, who understood the implications behind his appointment. It became clear that the Kuta did not take the progress made at the school as priority. Although the closure of the school pained Mupatu, he had no option than to choose to respect his customs. Relief came when Mr. Muteto came in and volunteered to reopen the school. As enrolment increased, Mupatu and Muteto employed a teacher; Mr. Samalambo whom they paid from their pockets. Muteteo was an able singer and sculptor. He taught his pupils curving and some portions of the Psalms of David, something Mupatu acknowledged as not done before at the school. Children were also taught skills of soap making from indigenous tree oils. In 1950, Mr. Muteto was appointed Induna Luyanga and the school was closed. Before the school was closed in 1950, there were positive strides made to the effect that the Colonial Government wanted to give it a grant. That move was strongly opposed by the indunas in the Kuta.²⁵

On 12th February 1956, the Ngambela relieved Mupatu of his duties at the Kuta so that he attends to his demands to reopen the school.²⁶ His engagement as Induna Imandi was a blessing in disguise as it reinforced his convictions about the need to reopen Makapulwa School. As

Induna Imandi, he headed the regiment of Kabeti and he was also responsible for education and development of the Barotse people under the Barotse Royal Establishment. In his official and in his individual capacity, he reasoned that unless something is done for those who could not progress, the nation would have a lot of waste. He saw a lot of potential in the young people hence his desire to find solutions. He continued tabling his ideas of reopening the school before the Kuta and he was relieved his duties and given a go ahead to reopen the school. Although he had challenges in making his innovations a reality, Mupatu had overtime won the confidence of the Barotse society, for they were sure of his practical solutions as seen from his past achievements. His long standing service as a teacher to the level of a Jeans inspector, his publications, his position in the Kuta and his shop which was running at Limulunga's Jauten area were all pointers to his abilities. In addition, he was also a village induna in charge of his Itwandi village. For six years, he fought with the Ministry of Education to allow him to reopen the school and authority was only granted in 1963. For the authority to be granted, Mr. Francis Suu and Mr. N. Mutendango in their capacities as Managers of schools played a big role.²⁷

In 1963, a year before the independence of Zambia, Mupatu reopened his school at Itwandi, and later it would move to Limulunga village after independence. As before, Mupatu was still not satisfied with the issue of access to secondary education. There were a lot of pupils who failed to get space in form 1 as at the time only Kambule, St Johns and Sefula had form one. Those who failed to proceed were not considered for anything, not even repeating. To add on their dilemma, they were despised by society and were blamed for their failure.²⁸ A few young people who repeated grades had connections with some people within the education system. The school was still named *Makapulwa*, meaning the 'thrown out'. Its movement from Itwandi to Limulunga royal village was made in 1966. With the approval of the Kuta, he proceeded with his idea of a school of repeaters. The first school was a two class roomed block which was built using pole and mud and iron sheets. The desks were made locally of plunks that were nailed to poles that were cut to the height size of a desk. Each desk had four poles, two were higher, making that part of the desk used for writing and two were lower, making that part of the desk for sitting. The poles were fixed in the ground. Mupatu was the only trained teacher and he hired two untrained teachers, Pumulo and Kwalombota.²⁹

Parents also welcomed the idea of the school and gladly encouraged their pupils to join the school. As a result many dropouts responded to the idea. At the time of the school's restructuring, he arranged his repeaters such that allocation of grades started with the highest grade, grade 7.

²³ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, pp.32-35.

²⁴ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1980), p.6.

²⁵ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, pp.42-43.

²⁶ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.43.

²⁷ Prins, Self Help Education at Makapulwa School, p.45.

²⁸ M.J.Kelly, *The Origins and Development of Education in Zambia* (Lusaka: Image Publishers, 1999), p.139.

²⁹ Mwangelwa Akapelwa, Interview, Limulungwa Royal Village, 17th July 2019.

Since the response was overwhelming, he decided to give his candidates a test in Mathematics, English and Science for the purpose of selection. For grade 7, he selected 45, the number which exceeded the government standard enrolment by 5. The remaining candidates were allocated to grades 6 and 5 according to their performance in the said tests. The school had only two classrooms, but the classes formed were three. To provide the third class, he worked with the pupils in collecting poles from the Ushaa forest to the north of Limulunga and a third class was erected. In 1966, Mupatu taught grade 7 and the other grades were shared between Pumulo and Kwalombota.

Despite the school not having teachers' and pupils' text books apart from what Mupatu and his teachers were using, it advocated for excellence in education. The syllabus which the school followed was closer to what was being used in the government and grant aided schools. Although there were some aspects of the curriculum outside the syllabus which Mupatu taught his pupils on the premises that it was important for them, he had to stay close to the official syllabus because he wanted them to sit for a government examination.³⁰ By sitting for a government examination, his pupils would be accorded a chance to compete with the rest of the pupils in the nation. By providing some added content to the curriculum, Mupatu showed his understanding and importance of the localized curriculum. His understanding was that a subject curriculum cannot be a one size fits all in all aspects. For example, practical aspects of a given curriculum do not need to be alien to the society of the learner. In the teaching of English, he stressed grammar, spelling and pronunciation. He emphasised that written and spoken English should follow grammatical rules. To him wrong spelling was a mark of inferior education.

Learning at the school started at 07.00hrs. Break was at 10.00hrs and thereafter pupils would go for lunch at 13hrs. There was provision for afternoon preparations and extra lessons. Pupils who were admitted at Makapulwa were very excited to be back at school. At last the fear of "*kucamasipa a litaka za bona*" [eating feces of their age mates]³¹ was lessened. As months went on, the reality of being in a school which is not a registered examination center brought a lot of desperation on the part of the pupils and their parents. The pupils were learning except that there was no sure provision for an examination. The desperation grew big especially as others doubted and started scoffing the possibility of the school being given an examination center. This was a time of uncertainty in the community of Limulunga. The pupils still had trust in their teacher, Mupatu. Hope was rekindled when he announced that he was taking a leave of absence to go and see the President, Kenneth Kaunda in Lusaka over the affairs of his school. During his period of

absence, Pumulo and Kwalombota took turns to teach the grade 7 class. His absence took slightly more than two weeks.

When he came back, he briefed his pupils and the Kuta about his trip to Lusaka. Once in Lusaka he went directly to State house asking the security officers to accord him chance to see the president. The security officers refused to grant him that opportunity and he vowed to remain at the gate until he would have a chance to see the president. Little did he know that the president had noticed his presence each time he was going out and inside State House. One day, President Kenneth Kaunda asked the security officer on duty to call him, and that was the opening of everything. He told the President about his mission on behalf the people of Limulunga who had responded to a call to establish a school. Kaunda was very impressed with the confidence of the old man and the English he spoke. State house staff was instructed accordingly, an appointment was made and he was then given accommodation at Ndeke hotel at the government expense. After his discussion with the president, he was not given an immediate answer but the president made an appointment to visit the school in two weeks' time.

This was good news to the people of Barotseland. Though they had no answers to their demands, the promise of the President's visit cheered them up as they felt that something positive would come out. The pupils were more excited, at last the president would see them, in their honest struggle to acquire education for their future life. The remaining weeks were spent in preparation to host the president. Finally in May 1966, with five months the school's existence on the upper land in Limulunga, the president visited Makapulwa primary school. All provincial dignitaries were present at the occasion. The Ngambela and Makwambuyu were also present to represent the Kuta. This turned out to be the occasion for Mupatu to explain his views on education.

When all the protocols were done, Mupatu was given time to welcome the President, Kenneth Kaunda to the school. He also welcomed the Ngambela and the Provincial Heads of departments and all those who were present. In his welcoming remarks, he stated the importance of education to the nation and related the role of education in the development and civilisation of people all over the world and in particular, the Zambian citizens. He pointed out that Makapulwa primary school was a product of his belief in the role of education in the development and the civilisation of the people. He stressed that everyone had the right to education and that the limiting factor was the limited spaces in form 1. The fact that students who failed to get places in form 1 were not attended to; they were left as drop outs. To worsen the situation, they were not allowed to repeat. For that reason, the school was specialised in those many unfortunate young people who did not make it to form 1. After highlighting on statistics and the selection criteria in place at the time, he argued that the practice that was prevailing at the time was not helping a young nation like Zambia. Specifically, he criticised the government policy in place and argued that it was still colonial, especially that only

³⁰ Mwangelwa Akapelwa, Interview, Limulungba Royal Village, 17th July 2019.

³¹ This is a saying referring to occupying a lower social position in life compared to the social position of your peers

very few were to progress. He called on the government to expedite the expansion of more infrastructures for the training of teachers, and secondary education. He stressed also on the need to expand education opportunities for girls. At the time, there were girls enrolled in his grade 7 and only a few in grades 6 and 5. He called on parents to encourage and support girls to aspire for higher education as opposed to taking them into early marriages. Above everything, he requested the president to register Makapulwa primary school as an examination centre so that the grade 7 pupils would have a chance to sit for their examination that year.

Makapulwa pupils also entertained the visitors by singing two songs. The songs carried welcoming messages and also messages about the pupils' hopes and in their struggle to acquire an education, which they had missed when they could not be selected into the higher level. The first song was in English and the second was in Silozi. English song was as follows:

Welcome home
 Welcome home
 Welcome our dear visitors
 Let us all with a grand some mind
 Welcome our visitors
 You have come to a poor school
 Neglected by society
 Welcome home
 Welcome home
 Welcome our dear visitors
 As long as the school stands
 Your name will be remembered
 Welcome home
 Welcome home
 Welcome our dear visitors³²

The Silozi song was as follows:

Bashemi ba Bulozī (Dear parents in Barotseland)
 Mutundamene tuto (hold on to education)
 Niha butata bukiteng'i, (even if there are troubles)
 Mwa sehiwa, (even if you're scoffed)
 mwa silokwa (and despised)

Chorus

Aluye,luakufe (Let us in a hurry)
 Kwa sikolo sa Makapulwa (enroll at Makapulwa school)
 Alufumani sibaka (now that we have found a vacancy)
 Lisike lwa liyeha (let us not delay)
 Bupilo bwa kanakoye (Life in the present day)
 Buitingile fa tuto (depends on education)

³² Mwangelwa Akapelwa, Interview, Limulungba Royal Village, 17th July 2019.

If we do not get educated (Haiba lusa ituti)
 Kakaba bai shweli (we are dead)
 Ku mutu ya itutile (For an educated person)
 Ulatiwa ki sicaba (is loved by the people)
 Malena ni makwambuyu (Kings and dignitaries)
 Ba lifasi labulozi (Barotse people).
 Mulutuse lwa lapela (Help us we pray)
 Niluna lube batu (We also want to be recognised as people).³³

The songs carried messages that were a summary of the people's views on education. In 1907, it was Litunga Lewanika who led the education reforms.³⁴ In 1966, it is a common man, Mupatu. He managed to gain the support of nearly all the people, including the sceptics. After the songs, it was time for the President to give his speech. All the people waited eagerly to hear the President's response to the issues raised by Mupatu and the pupils through their songs. Mupatu was well aware of the response that would come from the President as he had already received the President's response to his written petition of 18th March 1966. Mupatu's petition was grounded on an understanding of the UNIP manifesto. About his petition he wrote:

I lost no time in writing my petition to his Excellency the President of Zambia explaining our needs for money and equipment, setting out the history of Makapulwa, its achievements and quoting the relevant sections from the UNIP manifesto which pledged education for all, the continuation of individual agency run schools alongside state schools, promises of special attention for deprived children and for schools with adequate facilities.³⁵

The president started by recognizing the efforts of the Barotse people in the advancement of Western education. He pointed to the Barotse prominence in his cabinet and praised the Native Government for having persuaded their subjects to acquire education. He then outlined the importance of education to the nation. At the end he gave four pronouncements: firstly, with immediate effect, the government took over the school. Secondly, the school to change name from Makapulwa to Mupatu Primary school. Thirdly, with immediate effect, Mupatu primary School was given a grade 7 examination centre. Fourthly, Mupatu was employed as a life headmaster of the school with full pension.

Other pronouncements included allowing pupils who failed an examination to repeat provided there was such a space to do so. The Ministry of Education was directed to build permanent 2x1x3 classroom blocks at the school and

³³ Mwangelwa Akapelwa, Interview, Limulungba Royal Village, 17th July 2019.

³⁴ For details on Lewanika's Education reforms see Liwakala Muyoba, "The People and Western Education: A study of the People's Responses and Application of Western Education in Barotseland, Zambia, 1883-1973" (PhD Thesis: Zambian Open University, 2020), pp.110-117

³⁵ Prins, *Self Help Education at Makapulwa School*, p.53.

also to provide the required text books and teachers' books. The two untrained teachers were also given slots to train as teachers on condition that they are posted to Mupatu upon completion. The pronouncements cheered the people. Pupils were very delighted also, especially those who were in grade 7 for they were finally sure that they would write their examinations. For sure the visit motivated the people of Barotseland to continue with their struggle to acquire Western education. They felt respected. In the 1966 examinations, 14 pupils made it to form 1; 5 were accepted at Kambule, 4 at Sefula and 5 at St. Johns. This was not a small achievement. Those that could not make it were allowed to repeat. Litunga Mwanawina threw a banquet at the *Kashandi*³⁶ at Lealui in honor of the school's distinguished contribution to the education in the region.

We may not be able to give the where about of everyone who was in the first class but we are able to sample just a few. Mr. Iluba joined Zambia Police. Upon retirement, he went back to Mongu. There he invested in the provision of education to his people. He established a private secondary school called Ilukama secondary school in Limulunga district. He affirms that his motivation to start a school had an influence from his early contact with Mupatu.³⁷ Mr. Mwangelwa Akapelwa joined the teaching service. He rose through ranks until he retired as District Education Board Secretary of Senanga District. He is currently serving as an induna in the Kuta of the Barotse Royal establishment. His Brother, Mr. Akapelwa retired as head teacher of St Mulumba in Choma district of Southern Province. It is important to mention that the two brothers' volunteered to teach at Mupatu as untrained teachers in 1982 before they went for training as teachers.³⁸

Mr. Mupatu was not only dreamer but a visionary achiever of dreams also. He used his education to boost the people's achievements. He believed in the abilities of the indigenous people to be champions of their destiny. He was the first indigenous person to own a shop in Barotseland as earlier discussed. He established the first private school which was later adopted as a government primary school, and he published a number of books. He was also involved in the traditional leadership. All these are pointers to his commitment in the localisation and indigenisation of Western education. He used Western education to upgrade his perspective of various aspects of life so that his tradition reaches a 'world class' level. This is evident in the subjects of some of the books he authored such as 'Bulozi Sapili', 'Luyana and Lozi Proverbs' and a 'Study of the Luyana Language' which he prepared in collaboration with Francis Suu among others.³⁹ These books touched the fabric of the

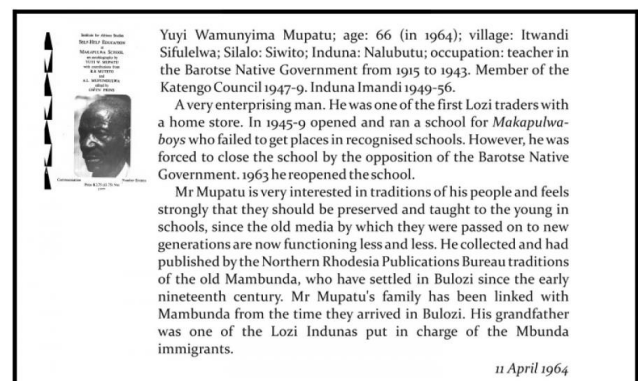
Luyana society, and by these publications, the Luyana culture went on a broad stage to signify its presence among other cultures.

Mupatu made other innovations that have stood the test of time in this village. He understood the value of planting trees. In Itwandi of the flood plains, he planted big portion of reeds; the type that is used by the Barotse people in building. These reeds are still standing and the people of Itwandi harvest the reeds annually and sell to the public. This has been a steady investment whose value has kept increasing. In twandi of Limulunga, mupatu dug a canal that brought water near the village and though it, he promoted the planting of vegetables.⁴⁰ The researcher visited Itwandi village of Limulunga and found gardens flourishing along the Mupatu dug canal.⁴¹

II. CONCLUSION

Though Mupatu is died on 1st January 1982, his influence cannot be ignored among his people. In 2019, at a meeting to evaluate the teachers' day celebrations event, a team of practicing teachers and education administrators led by the Provincial Education Officer, Dr. Stephen Chishiko resolved to honor him posthumously by putting a tombstone on his grave at Itwandi village. I should mention that the Teachers day Celebrations of 2019 included among other activities an education pilgrimage. This was a pilgrimage where participants were given an opportunity to visit the early education sites which included a visit to Mupatu primary school. The activity of putting tombstone on Mupatu's grave was done on 13th November 2020 and Mr. Mukwambuyu Katungu, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Western Province and the Kuta graced the occasion. During the occasions teachers and the public listened to various presentations in the company of song and dance in memory of Mupatu. From the presentations, Mupatu was a man of determination. He understood the aspirations of his people.

Figure: A poster on Mupatu



Source: "Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu, father of institutional education in Barotseland," <http://barotselandpost.com/top-stories/yuyi-wamunyima->

³⁶ Special hall at the Palace.

³⁷ Iluba, Interview, Mongu Town, 27th July 2019.

³⁸ Mwangelwa Akapelwa, Interview, Limulunga Royal village, 17th July 2019.

³⁹ Yuyi Wamunyima Mupatu, father of institutional education in barotseland, <http://barotselandpost.com/top-stories/yuyi-wamunyima-mupatu-father-of-institutional-education-in-barotseland>. Retrieved 6th April 2019.

⁴⁰ Rupert Masiyaleti Mupatu, Interview, Limulunga 29th September 2020.

⁴¹ At the time of the visit, I found the canal dried up due to non-clearing. However, the people in the village told me that the water was very near that is why they found water near when they dug open well on the canal bed.

[mupatu-father-of-institutional-education-in-barotseland](#), Retrieved 6th April 2019.

Kanduza's⁴² arguments on Mupatu are of vital importance. In arriving at the arguments he presented, Kanduza selected a range of human expressions in form of speech, consistent action and recourse to indigenous tradition as a heritage that is continuously in transformation. Through that approach, he has clearly demonstrated that the indigenous people did not accept everything the western culture presented without evaluation. For example, in the same work, he pointed out that Mushindo, a compatriot of Mupatu, was aware that Western barbarism had permeated and became ingrained in biblical practice and doctrine. His case was that Christianity should adapt to African culture and civilisation. He rejected the opinion that African cultural beliefs made Africans unfit for Christianity. He argued that Africans did not have to renounce their cultural roots in order to become Christians. Mahmood Mamdani's gives a recipe for improvement of education that stands on three legs: usage of local languages in scholarship and instruction, reduction of fees, and `to theorize our own reality, and to strike the right balance between the local and the global as we do so.'⁴³This was what Mupatu strived to demonstrate by his campaign for universal education, an education that should be accessed by all; his promotion of Silozi language by writing books that are still being used today in the Zambian schools and his insistence on the teaching and usage of correct English grammar.

In the same line, Mupatu's dismissal as a teacher at BNS was a clear indication of his desire to have only the best for his people. His first dismissal was on the change of the syllabus. The cause of the change was that Barotseland had attained higher education than the rest of Northern Rhodesia; hence students were to wait for the other schools in the territory to catch up. Mupatu refused to be part of such mediocrity. He could not understand why the quality of education could be undermined simply because it was seen to be too good for the people it was offered to. His second dismissal was about the appointment of a less qualified Malawian expatriate at the expense of qualified indigenous people. He understood the Barotse saying that that "*tapi I bolela kwa toho*" [a fish starts rooting from the head]. This implies that, any organization cannot rise above the caliber of its top leadership. By hiring a less qualified headteacher, the standard of education was already compromised. His anecdote of the two dogs above spoke volumes about his philosophy of life. Mupatu was the thin dog. He was constantly looking for solutions to improve his people's lives. He believed that for any society to be, it must become; he therefore called on men and women to be in the process of becoming what they want to be. He had no fear of freedom and about freedom Freire wrote:

⁴² Ackson Kanduza. "Towards a history of ideas in Zambia". Samuel N. Chipungu (ed.) *Guardians in Their Time: Experiences of Zambians under Colonial rule, 1890-1964*, pp.126-146.

⁴³ Karim F. Hirji, *Under-education in Africa: from colonialism to neoliberalism* (-----,Daraja Press,2018),p.222.

Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.⁴⁴

Truly Mupatu was an educated man. About education, Taneja said:

Education is the emancipation from ignorance. It emancipates the person from the tyranny of the small self and the educated person becomes altruistic and social....education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of the dust and gives us the wealth, not of things but of inner life, not of power but of love, making the truth its own and giving expression to it.⁴⁵

Mupatu was misunderstood by his own people, who considered him to have held impossible dreams in his innovative ideas. Interestingly, he was not discouraged. Drawing his experiences from Lewanika, the Statesman, he believed in a culture that combined thought and action. He viewed education as an ongoing process, not a series of disjointed schooling episodes of life. He demonstrated that "Indigenous education involves knowledge that is generated, obtained, and adapted to fit the historical contexts and needs of indigenous peoples and is then transmitted through educative means to others."⁴⁶As already stated above, he wrote his ideas, achievements and efforts. Mupatu's refusal to accept a low deal in education for his people demonstrated that there were men of conviction in the face of criticism, and he was part of them. Mupatu's role as the first indigenous man to establish a private school in Barotseland is an affirmation of his desire to provide solutions to problems facing the people. His actions were an indication that the indigenous people were willing to contribute to the development of their own nation outside their participation through government and public institutions.

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⁴⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1970), p.47.

⁴⁵ V.R. Taneja, *Educational Thought and Practice* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1990), p.13.

⁴⁶ W. James Jacob , Sheng Yao Cheng, Maureen K. Porter (Editors) *Indigenous Education Language, Culture and Identity*(New York: Springer Science and Business Media Dordrecht, 2015),p.3

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