

The History of Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) and Transformation of Barotseland, 1885-1904

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ABSTRACT

The study set out to reconstruct the history of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and how it contributed in the transformation of Barotseland from 1885-1905. Barotseland today is known as Western Province of Zambia. The study considered Barotseland as a study area and a period 1885-1905, because there was transformation on the political, social and economic organisation of many African societies in Barotseland. Data for this study was collected through primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources includes; books, journal, thesis and dissertations from the University of Zambia Repository and the main library. Primary sources includes; letters, notes books, annual reports, native reports, autobiographies and colonial administrative reports consulted from National Archive of Zambia (NAZ). Oral interviews was conducted to people who were linked with the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. However, the study concluded that the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in Barotseland contributed greatly in transforming the area through various activities such as introduction of the gospel, secular education, vocational training, agro forest and other agriculture practices. This outward influence was noticeable by variations in cultural and technological advancement of the Lozi people in Barotseland. These activities helped the Lozi people to become self-reliant and improved their standards of living.

Keyword: Barotseland, Missionary, Lozi, Education, Gospel

INTRODUCTION

According to oral evidence, the Luyana or Lozi originated from the Lunda Kingdom in Katanga region present known as Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). They migrated south and reached the Zambezi flood plain in 1600 and named were the settled as Buluzi. They were led by a queen mother by the name of Mwambwa.[1] She was later was succeeded by the daughter, Mbuyawamwambwa who gave the thrown to the son Mboo Muyunda.[2] However, the Lozi believed that they were direct descendants of a man called Mboo Muyunda who was born from a union between Nyambe (God) and a woman called Mbuyuwamwambwa. This story of origin gives the Lozi rulers a divine origin, which strengthens their political authority. Historical evidence suggests that, Mboo Muyunda became the first male ruler of Buluzi and assumed the title of Litunga, which meant King.[3]

The Lozi developed their Kingdom in the Zambezi flood plains (Buluzi) and their territory became to be known as Barotseland. Barotseland was more accessed to basic means of production compared to other areas.[4] The majority of the Lozi family circle were food secure and this led to the expansion of the kingdom. Barotseland today which the study area comprises the following districts, Senanga, Sioma, Mitete, Shangombo, Mongu, Limulunga, Mooyo, Kalabo, Sikongo, Kaoma, Lukulu, Sesheke and Mwandia. Mongu is the headquarters of Barotseland.[5]

Furthermore, the settlements of the Lozi were centered on valuable economic resources such as mounds or anthills locally called mazulu, grazing and fishing sites.[6] Their access to these basic means of production gave them both economic and political power to conquer the surrounding and external tribes. The Tonga, Ila

and Kaonde people were some of the external tribes that were conquered by the Lozi people while the Kwangwa, Mbowe and Totela were some of the subject tribes around the Lozi. [7] The Lozi kingdom was experienced with good leadership qualities and was ruled by many rulers from 1650-1834. They were overthrown by the Kololo who were a collection of Sotho speaking between 1834-1864. The Kololo's were led by Sebitwane and were running away from the Mfecane which were the great disturbances that were caused by Shaka and the Zulu warrior's. The Lozi kingdom was restored back in 1965, by Sipopa, a Lozi leader who was in exile. Due to quarrel among the Lozi aristocrats, who were inexperienced as leaders, Sipopa's rule was not smooth and was overthrown 1876. He was replaced by Mwanawina who in turn was overthrown in 1887, by Lubosi. Lubosi later called himself Lewanika and ruled until 1884. Francis Coillard who was sent by Paris Evangelical Missionary Society arrived in Barotseland during the reign of Lubosi with the hope of establish a mission station. [8]

The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society was founded in 1822 in France. The missionaries were forced to work outside the French Empire in order to spread the gospel. The earliest station was established in Basutoland in 1833. Francis Coillard, a French man who lived his life between 1833-1904, Huguenot minister of great moral, courage and evangelical fervor joined the society in Basutoland in 1857. [9] After three years of his stay in Basutoland, he married Christina Mackintosh, who was a daughter of a Baptist priest in Edinburgh. Francis Coillard and his wife stayed in Basutoland for twenty years and worked among the Sotho people. Later, Coillard and his wife were prepared for their first leave in Europe when they were asked by the Basuto Church synod to lead an expedition to the Shona people. [10] The expedition among the Shona's was frustrated by Lobengula, who was king of the Matebeleland and Coillard did not want to return to Basutoland where he had stayed for many years. Instead of that, he trek to the Zambezi River in order to explore the possibility of founding a mission in Barotseland. He was urged to do so by Khama, king of the Bamangwato, who procured guides for the party and sent ahead a high-ranking chief, Makoatse to introduce them to Lewanika, the Barotse ruler. [11] Encouraged by the fact that Barotse people spoke a language very similar to Sesuto, Coillard and his party reached the Zambezi in April, 1878 and sent a message to Lewanika asking for permission to open a mission station. The reply from Lewanika was very encouraging and Coillard returned to Basutoland in high hopes.

His next step was to visit Europe in 1880, in order to obtain approval from Paris for his proposal, and to raise funds. The Paris committee of society was not enthusiastic about undertaking such venture in a remote region, but eventually £ 5000 was raised and in January, 1884, Coillard again left Leribe, the Basuto Mission headquarters and went to Barotseland. [12] His party consisted of his wife, his niece, the Rev Dorward Jeaniret (a young Swiss missionary), George Middleton (an Englishman), William Waddel (a Scot), four Basuto teacher evangelist (Isaiah, Levi, Aron and Andreas) and their families.

In August, 1884, Coillard and his party reached the Zambezi only to find out that the civil war, the threat of which had hastened Anorts departure three months previously, had broken out, and that Lewanika was in exile. Nevertheless, Coillard was well received by the usurper, Akufuna, when he reached Lealui in January 1885, and in September of the same year he was able to open the first mission station in Barotseland at Sesheke on the Zambezi. [13] Within months Lewanika regained the throne and in March, 1886, Coillard met the king on the river, where with all his chiefs, Lewanika was paying his annual visit to graves of his ancestors. Lewanika urged Coillard to start a new station near his capital, Lealui. [14]

In January, 1887, leaving Jean mairret in charge at Sesheke, Coillard and his wife began to establish themselves at Sefula, a four-hour journey by canoe from Lealui. Sefula is the oldest surviving mission station in the country which has greatly contributed to the development of Barotseland. [15] In view of the above, the study set out to reconstruct the history of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and how it contributed in the transformation of Barotseland from 1885-1905.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on comprehensive research conducted in Western Province of Zambia formerly known as Barotseland. Data was collected from various sources which included the University of Zambia main library where both published and unpublished information was gathered. Books, thesis, dissertations and articles from journals were consulted. The African Annual Reports provided vital information on the origin of missionaries in central Africa. Published materials provided an opportunity to interact with other scholars' and their different dimensions in their works. Information was also collected from National Archives of Zambia (NAZ) where correspondence of the PEMS and British South African Company officers were consulted. Tour Reports from the colonial government officials were examined. The study also utilised oral evidence which was obtained by way of interviews. Oral evidence was vital in supplementing written sources. Interviews provided firsthand information on the dynamics of missionaries who came to Central Africa. These interviews were conducted in English except in situations where the interviewee was not conversant with English. In such situations, an appropriate medium was used like Lozi, Nyanja, and Bemba. Finally, data was collected from primary and secondary sources were organized, analysed and interpreted using qualitative method.

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

This theme highlights the findings of the study and the results were achieved after conducting oral interviews from the Lozi people who were associated with the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in Barotseland. The local people who were orally interviewed include the villagers, students, Catechists, women and teachers. According to oral interviews conducted from the Catechist and villagers, the main aim of the PEMS was to spread the good news of Jesus Christ among many Lozi people to the areas where they had settled.[\[16\]](#)

In order to achieve this motive, PEMS started recruiting Catechists through the indunas (senior chiefs) and headmen in Barotseland. The indunas and headmen carefully only recommended people who had good personality and leadership qualities and trained them as catechist.[\[17\]](#) Oral interviews from teachers indicate that, the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society contributed greatly in the history and transformation of Barotseland. It was the foremost mission after Anort's fruitless attempt to introduce western education to Buluzi.

In 1882, F.S Anort commenced the early western education initiative in Buluzi.[\[18\]](#) He was impressed with the land where the Lozi people had settled and became the first white missionary to enter and inaugurate a school in Buluzi. He constructed his school at Lealui in 1883. Anort had many challenges to obtain and retain pupils at his school. Thus, it closed down in 1884 and Anort left Buluzi for Angola in the same year. The school was however, reopened in 1887, by Francis Coillard who led the PEMS expedition to Buluzi from Basutoland. Coillard arrived at Lealui in 1885.[\[19\]](#)

By September 1885, the PEMS had established their first station in Buluzi at Mwandu in what is today Sesheke District. He later opened Sefula in 1886, which later became the permanent residence of Coillard. At Sefula Coillard opened up a small school where he taught children of royal family and of the principal indunas how to read and write.[\[20\]](#) The school policy was drawn up which allowed them to have a double program of academic and vocational pathway. All pupils in the literacy section of the school were also taught in numeracy and handwriting. The pupils spent four hours in school and four hours in the workshop daily.[\[21\]](#) While at Sesheke, Coillard attempted to teach some people to read, with the help of Jeanmairet.

In April, 1886, the latter wrote to Mission headquarters and within seven weeks of his arrival at Sefula,

Coillard opened a school. Lewanika sent two of his sons and five nephews to be enrolled and other chiefs followed his example.^[22] Each pupil was accompanied by one or more servants. The princess Mpololoa, aged 12 required three such attendants, one to lean against as a cushion, one to hand her slate, pencil, or book, the third to present her back as a writing desk.^[23] The children lived in grass huts near the Coillard house. Feeding so many people constantly worried Coillard and the young princes brought no food with them. They intercepted villagers bringing food to sell to the mission and relieved them of their loads; raided the grain-bins in surroundings villages and they stole Coillard's sheep and ate them. Coillard, however, did not lose heart. In February, 1888, the school was closed for eight months while the pupils accompanied the Barotse army which was raiding the Mashukulumbwe, a vassal group.^[24]

According to oral interviews conducted in Mwandu and Sesheke, the curriculum of the mission school was made up Manual Work, Music, Arithmetic, English, Sesotho and Handwriting. They also introduced football game which was a main recreation activity for the learners.^[25] The element of manual work as a subject on the time table allowed pupils to spend four hours in class and four hours at the workshop doing manual work.^[26] The school curriculum was divided in two sections and these were the technical department and the literacy department. The learners in the practical department were full apprentices and it was those in the literacy department who did manual work.^[27] Throughout the manual work periods, learners were put into groups. Each group was given a piece of work to do. The young pupils would either wash walls of the classroom, sweep the dormitories or would be asked clean the school premises. The groups of bigger learners would be asked to build latrines for schools, to cut grass for thatching or cut trees. A few others would be in the workshops learning the names of tools and how to handle the same tools.^[28]

It was also revealed that, the PEMS later on introduced industrial courses in schools where the indigenous Africans were taught skills of carpentry and joinery in a workshop. The workshop was made up of the industrial department of the school, and had apprentices who were employed on a full time basis as sawyers and carpenters.^[29] They received allowances at the end of every month and a night school was opened for them. This night school closed immediately after the industrial department began to recruit pupils who had gone through the literacy section of the school.^[30] The mission policy on education had no limit on age as such everyone was allowed to enroll in school. The missionary also provided free incentives such as uniforms, meals, food, meat, soap and salt. This was a motivational that improved the enrolment level. Gradually, the PEMS spread to all parts of Buluzi opening mission stations at Mabumbu, Lukoma and Nalolo.^[31]

Mission Stations Opened by Paris Evangelical Missionary Society

SN	Name of Mission Station	Founder	Area/District	Year opened
1	Old Sesheke	Francis Coillard	Mwandu	1885
2	Sefula	Francis Coillard	Mongu	1887
3	Kazungula	Francis Coillard	Kazungula	1889
4	Lealui	Francis Coillard	Mongu	1892
5	Nalolo	Rev. Eugene Beguin	Mongu	1894
6	Senanga	Rev Emile Boiteux	Senanga	1898
7	Mabumbu	Alfred Mann	Mongu	1898
8	Old Drift	Rev Auguste Coisson	Livingstone	1898
9	Lukona	Rev. Theophile Burner	Mongu	1905
10	Limulunga	Rev. Samuel Seguin	Limulunga	1934
11	Muoyo	Rev. Samuel Seguin	Nalolo	1955

SOURCE; P. Snelson, Education Development in Northern Rhodesia 1883-1945 (Lusaka: KK Foundation, 1974) P.46.

The above table shows the area and period when the PEMS open up the mission stations and it was observed that the main aim was evangelization and secular education. In conformity with the conviction all the PEMS schools were built partly for the purpose of promoting church work.[\[32\]](#) They provided secular education because they wanted their converts to read and write so that they would be able to understand the bible.[\[33\]](#) For this purpose, the PEMS opened numerous village schools under the direction of each mission station. The second reason for giving secular education was to bring Bulozhi under influence of the PEMS. As a result, there mission societies found it difficult to penetrate into Bulozhi.[\[34\]](#)

The PEMS was very important in the history of Bulozhi because people were converted to Christianity and became literate. Francis Coillard became instrumental in influencing Lewanika to request for the British protection from Queen Victoria of England.[\[35\]](#) It was the PEMS which later on persuaded Lewanika to accept a treaty giving the British South African Company virtually a free hand in what became Northern Rhodesia. Furthermore, it was F. Coillard who acted as a scribe to Lewnaika.[\[36\]](#) In 1890, Lewanika granted to the B.S.A.Co a mineral concession over the whole of his kingdom. In return Lewanika benefited from Lochner concession because it promoted the education among the ethnic societies of Bulozhi. Until 1895, the company had not taken an active part towards the development of the vast territories named in the concession.[\[37\]](#)

DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS

This segment discusses and explains the finding on the history of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) and contribution to the transformation of Barotseland as a result of their work. According to oral interviews, the Paris Evangelical Missionary contributed greatly to end slavery and slave trade in the colonial societies of Barotseland through preaching of gospel to the indigenous populations.[\[38\]](#) The Africans who were released from slavery were converted to Christianity and also worked hard to the preaching of the good news upon their return to Africa.[\[39\]](#) The dissemination of the word of God was difficult due to language barriers and literacy levels among African but still had a great impact on the transformation of the society. Those that were converted to Christianity improved standard of living and were never the same because they were able to read and write. These were people who lived an exceptional life because they easily mixed with the missionaries freely and benefited from the knowledge and skills which they had.

The PEMS had also great impact on the transformation in Barotseland because they addressed both spiritual and physical needs to the local people with profound impact on the area. The hospitals which were in Barotseland were established by PEMS and were frequently the only available facility of health care, particularly in the area. A number of children continued to be educated in schools which were established by PEMS.[\[40\]](#)

Additionally, oral data also showed that the history of education in Barotseland was started by PEMS educating Lozi children. This was before establishment of colonial government schools which were built after 1905. This was a great milestone in the transformation of the Lives of people in Barotseland and the neighbouring societies. The mission schools were viable because they offered skills training such as carpentry and joinery, knitting, brick laying, basket making and plumbing. The people acquired these skills and became self-reliant by supporting their families.[\[41\]](#) These same people who were subjected to this missionary education were also able to speak, read and write in English the colonisers' language and this was considered as a privilege.[\[42\]](#) This advantage offered the most direct path towards significant jobs in colonial government and European initiatives. However, attending mission schools by PEMS also meant exposure to colonial training.[\[43\]](#) This initial training was mainly focused on norms that PEMS deemed incompatible with the Christian way of living. As they frowned upon bride wealth, female genital mutilation or matrilineality, they held a special grudge against polygamy.[\[44\]](#) This was a great move that helped in transforming the society because people changed their way of living and adopted new European culture in conformity with the fear of God.

A review of literature indicated that the PEMS had a lasting impact in Barotseland beyond their early years. This is because the local people that were more exposed to missionary schools, achieved levels of education, as compared to communities where there were no schools. Some of the constructive development consequences in Barotseland are arguably the result of a permissive attitude towards mission schools.[45] Nonetheless, the bond between PEMS and the Lozi in Barotseland populations had some contradictions. These contradictions were surprisingly more to do with African culture which affected development.[46] The level of education impacted in the transformation of Barotseland as one moved close to the missionary. The schools stressed much on literacy and numeracy. This strategy gave opportunity to the Lozi people to be able to read and write. The reading skills cemented a way for them to study the Bible and learn the word of God.[47] The people who were educated in mission schools became leaders in the Lozi society. Unfortunately, the emphasis on reading gave the impression that literacy was necessary to learn Scripture, and uneducated people were unintentionally alienated.[48] The PEMS had not yet embraced traditional oral instruction approaches like stories and songs, as many have today.

Furthermore, the PEMS unconsciously introduced their cultural preference into the churches which they started. The earliest Lozi converts were taught to sing hymns accompanied by a piano and to listen to sermons while sitting on rows of benches in a concrete building. The well-meaning ministers simply mimicked their own mission experiences rather than encouraged Lozi to develop their own practices.[49] Today, many established churches continued to operate in this Western fashion, even as some newer churches are choosing to worship with drums and dance or to teach God's word using call-and-response patterns while sitting on mats under trees.[50] The desire to train African church leaders led to the establishment of mission stations and Bible schools. This was a great transition in transforming the lives of people in Barotseland.

The PEMS in Barotseland also discouraged polygamous marriages. The committing of adultery was discouraged and people were taught the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis which was very common.[51] The missionaries stressed on moral education and this was done so in order to produce trustworthy leaders. Teachers as trainers had to set a good example of personal discipline. The chiefs and indunas equally denounced polygamy and beer drinking for example, Lewanika persistently warned his subordinates against drunkenness.[52] By setting a good example to the community Lewanika had to let go some of the women he had married. Lewanika's close association with Francois Coillard made him lose touch with his sorcerers, as he eventually lost confidence in them as he embraced the gospel.[53] These measures brought transformation among the Lozi. The missionaries contributed greatly in improving the local people to know how to read and write in their indigenous language. Language teaching in the PEMS out schools was much concerned with teaching of the mechanics of reading and writing in Lozi. African teachers at these institutions were trained and after obtaining their standard II they were made teachers.[54]

Additionally, the PEMS main objective was on the teaching of religions where the bible was interpreted in the local language. Through the bible the people were discouraged marrying two wives and drinking beer. This had a great impact in the transforming Barotse and society. However, the quality of its education. For example, the normal school at Sefula was able to produce qualified teachers by 1918.[55] Those teachers were sent into various out schools of the mission. And for the first time the PEMS demanded a standard IV certificate as a pre-requisite for admission into a teacher training programme. The PEMS began to recruit educationist into their mission stations. Various lower, middle classes were opened at Lukona, Sesheke(Mwandi) and Nalolo (Nangoma).[56] The PEMS also taught personal hygiene and good methods of sanitation and this was done during community welfare periods. From oral interviews conducted, it was ascertain that these lessons were conducted during night schools by the missionaries. The night school was opened for elderly people, those who were married and local indunas, headmen who stayed near the schools. In this direction, the school was community centered because it was designed to help the activities of the Lozi people. The course based on personal hygiene and sanitation was designed to improve the health of the

Lozi community.[58] Oral interviews suggested that the Lozi community benefited from these lessons by the missionaries. This is because only few persons suffered from diarrhea.

The manual work introduced by the PEMS helped in transforming the Buluzi society. Manual work began and included shop instructions, grass weaving, planting gum trees and making cassava gardens. The school garden was constructed along Kambule stream 10 kilometers east of Mongu where seedlings were planted and a school farm was also opened at Mawawa.[59] The manual work also included making of mats, baskets, collection of materials and gardening flowers. During night school the people were also taught how to take care of tools, practical carpentry, reaping gardening and looking after cattle, sowing (tailoring), planting vegetables and fruit in the orchard. This was taught with an accompaniment of literacy and aimed at merely giving knowledge and skills as would be useful to them in everyday life.[60]

The PEMS also helped by transforming the indigenous Lozi people to be instilled with discipline, more especially those that had graduated from school. During the start of the school, it was reported that learners were very amenable to school and this was to do with rigidity in change of behaviour.[61] According to the records most of the pupils were exemplary in their conduct. After learners were in school for a number of years, it was reported by the school in-charge that pupils were observing school rules. This was a confirmation that education was transforming the community.[62] A few pupils who had shown certain unrest and failed to be controlled were reprimanded and punished. Some of the boys who were drunkards were expelled. The effect of these punishment according to the views of Coillard was beneficial to school authority and the community because people changed their lifestyle for fear of being punished.[63]

The school records indicated that corporal punishment and expulsion were affective means of curtailing unrest which was inspired by elder boys. The school records list the disciplinary problem at the school as beer, drinking, drunkenness, immorality, idleness, strikes, and rebellions.[64] Much time was wasted on strikes and rebellions. The Lozi ruler supported the school authority on maintaining discipline at school. Moreover, the emphasis on strict discipline was one way of achieving the school objectives which was aimed at preparing the Lozi boys to become good citizens and good leaders. This was a great impact which transformed the area brought by the PEMS.

Oral interviews also showed that the PEMS through schools which were opened up managed to introduce agriculture which was difficult but later became successful. The learners were introduced to gardening. The introduction of agricultural gardening was difficult due to infertile nature of the soils of Buluzi.[65]

However, the use of animal manure led to massive introduction of gardening. The narrow strip of land lying along the Kambule stream was the only fertile land which was filled with gardening among the Lozi families who acquired the skills from the missionaries.[66] The PEMS was successful in gum plantation and this brought credit to the local people because this was intended as a demonstration field. The planting was adopted in many areas and the Lozi people planted these trees in order to demarcate their boundaries of their areas with gum trees.[67] The gum trees helped in the supply of timber in the carpentry industry.

Admittedly, agriculture by the PEMS was encouraged from very beginning in schools as a subject and learners acquired skills in agriculture and later practiced with their families which improved food basket other than relying on fishing in Barotseland.[68]

It is obvious that the introduction of elementary education to Barotseland contributed towards the modernization of Buluzi was significant. The reason being that the school produced potential agents of modernization like teachers, artisan, clerks and interpreters. The education pupils obtained from these schools helped the local people to get jobs in the colonial government after 1900.[69] The employment offered to these people helped them to transform their families and societies because they built houses, sowing machines, radios, bicycles and sent their children to school. After being trained as clerks, tailors, carpenters or builders some people could not find jobs in Buluzi because there were not many industries.[70] The colonial government which was a single employer could not absorb all the people. Consequently, most of them went to Livingstone, South Africa's mines, Bechuanaland, South West Africa in search of

employment. The Lozi people were able to occupy these prestigious jobs because of the education from the missionaries. This gave them advantages whenever they migrated to Livingstone and Broken Hill in search of employment. It was always found that they were among the few educated Africa.[\[71\]](#)

CONCLUSION

From information gathered it can be concluded that, PEMS contributed significantly in transforming and improving the lives of people in Barotseland. Before the coming of the missionaries the Lozi people were so inclined to their culture and beliefs. They were unable to read and write and did not have any western medical facility or health care unit. This was a big problem which they had experienced for a longer period of time and the coming of the missionaries was the answer to their challenges. It was also eminent that the spread of the gospel and elementary education through PEMS often happened simultaneously with the spread of colonial rule by British government in Barotseland. The British administration impelled by the aspiration to expand territories and mineral resources, dominated by 1900, in Barotseland through the leadership of Coillard. The missionary efforts, though not necessarily tied to government activity, worked tirelessly with the local people in developing the area. Though the missionaries' principal aim was to bring the word of God to Lozi people. Some Africans considered Christianity a 'white man's religion' that was used to subdue and control them in the process of colonization but in reality it helped to change their area and transformed their lives. Many scholars highlighted that the PEMS had a lasting impact beyond their early years. It can be noted that, Barotseland societies and surrounding areas which were more exposed to mission schools after colonisation, still achieve higher levels of education, when compared to communities where there were no schools. Some of the progressive development outcomes of former British colonies are arguably the result of a permissive attitude towards mission schools.

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