

# Contributing to an Old and Asphyxiated Geo-Political Debate: The Barotseland Question? Why Secessionism is not the Answer

Tarcisius Mukuka

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, Leicester, Leicestershire, United Kingdom

[DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.805044](https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.805044)

Received: 12 April 2024; Revised: 30 April 2024; Accepted: 04 May 2024; Published: 01 June 2024

## ABSTRACT

This article aims at summarising socio-political research carried out by the author on the Barotseland problem and thereby contribute to a century-old Barotseland-Zambia debate using desk research method, by exploring data from existing documents and previous research. Utilising qualitative research, it explores and provides deeper insight into the Barotseland problem. Previous scholarship has addressed the Barotseland problem in binary terms of political Unitarism or Secessionism. Since the abrogation of the 1964 Barotseland Agreement in 1969, the issue has been discussed in terms of whether Barotseland should continue to remain a part of Zambia or secede and resort to its autonomous state. This article discusses why Lozi secessionism continues to be a thorn in the side of every succeeding Zambian government since independence. This research proposes a federal alternative to secessionism. Advantages of federalism far outweigh disadvantages. These include: better knowledge of the area and its problems by political operatives who live among the people in the states; better and more effective state governance responsive to local problems; freedom to adopt state policies which may not be followed nationally or by any other state; optimal utilisation of local resources while the federal government concentrates on international affairs, such as setting interstate and foreign business regulations, economic and monetary regulation, security and defence of the country.

**Key Words:** Barotseland; Federation; *Litunga*; Mwata Kazembe, Northern Rhodesia; Zambia

## INTRODUCTION

“Unitarism/Secessionism?” or “Compliance/Defiance?” That is the political conundrum of a century-old political quagmire in the Zambian postcolonial geo-political space. This writer was a 7-year-old in first grade, then known as Sub Aat a Ndola primary school when Dr Kenneth David Kaunda, Prime Minister of Northern Rhodesia, Sir Mwanawina Lewanika III, *Litunga* of Barotseland and Right Honourable Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations of the United Kingdom signed the Barotseland Agreement on Monday, 18 May 1964 on the cusp of Zambia’s independence. [1] It was an agreement to end all agreements between erstwhile Northern Rhodesia, Barotseland and the United Kingdom. Hardly 5 years later, in 1969 it was abrogated or repealed — unilaterally, Barotseland would argue. Since then, between Zambia (East) and Barotseland (West), there has never been any love lost. It has been more a matter of Rudyard Kipling’s “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat; But there is neither East nor West, border, nor breed, nor birth, when two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!” [2] There-in lies the crux of the Barotseland Problem which is now akin to a dialogue of the deaf between Barotseland and Zambia.

## The Research Problems/Questions and Objectives

The questions/problems addressed in this article are: 1. What lies behind calls for secessionism or separatism from Zambia by Barotseland? 2. Why has Zambia resisted dialogue over the Barotseland issue? Following these two questions, the research's objectives were: 1. To explore and offer in-depth analysis of Barotseland's drive towards secessionism or separatism. 2. To offer an understanding of why Zambia has resisted calls for secession or separatism. 3. To offer an alternative to Barotseland's call for secession or separatism.

## BACKGROUND TO THE BAROTSELAND PROBLEM

The Barotseland Agreement 1964 was born with dual congenital and fatal flaws. First, the two sides were each signing up to something quite different. At the risk of oversimplification, Barotseland thought it was a quasi-federation of two former protectorates at par or, in the words of Jean-François Bayart, a “reciprocal assimilation of elites.”<sup>[3]</sup> Northern Rhodesia thought it was a suzerain and unitary absorption of a former British South Africa Company vassal protectorate “of geostrategic and socioeconomic value, in particular transport access, water, timber and land for cultivation” (Zeller and Melber 2019). As it turned out, Barotseland was offered limited devolution. Second, the Barotseland Agreement had no inbuilt caveat for abrogation. Since 1969, Barotseland secessionism or separatism has since been fed by “a particularism bred of resentment and poverty” (Hogan 2014: 907), especially by the Barotse royal elite. In part, due to “how decolonisation planted the seeds of Lozi separatism in Western Province” (Zeller and Melber 2019). In this this article, the author avoids the binaries of Unitarism or Secessionism by mooted a federal alternative or full constitutional devolution to the Barotseland Problem — one that is fair to other erstwhile Northern Rhodesia kingdoms such as Mwata Kazembe's Lunda kingdom<sup>[4]</sup> and Chitimukulu Sampa Kapalakasha's *Lubemba* Kingdom. In terms of their relationship to the postcolony, their attitude has been one of compliance rather than Barotseland's defiance to national integration as Pierre Englebort has noted.<sup>[5]</sup> Granted that Barotseland, as indeed other erstwhile kingdoms that now form part of Zambia, has a right to self-determination, secessionism is not always the best solution. This writer is inclined towards federalism even more than devolution. Ved Prakash Nanda sums up this researcher's reticence.

Self-determination and secession pose major challenges for international lawyers — the former for its ambiguity and difficulties of operationalization and the latter for the uncertainty of its status, since it is neither permitted nor prohibited under international law.<sup>[6]</sup>

## State of the Barotseland Debate: King Without a Kingdom and State Without Sovereignty

A king without a kingdom and a state without sovereignty.<sup>[7]</sup> There, in ten words is the answer to the first research question and what drives the Barotseland royal elite to keep its powder dry, ready to pull the secessionist trigger. If you forgive the poetic licence in Rudyard Kipling's “The Ballad of East and West,” at least you may agree that the Barotseland Question, in our Southern Africanlexicalsense of a matter of great concern, is an implacable one. This research has avoided a binary solution to the Barotseland problem and argues instead that there is right and wrong on both sides and unless this is acknowledged, there is no way forward. It has discussed not who is right or wrong but following Jack Hogan, explored why Lozi secessionism or separatism continues to be a thorn in the side of every succeeding Zambian government since independence in keeping with the objectives of the research. As Jack Hogan argues, Barotse secessionism “draws deeply on notions of a powerful precolonial polity to articulate an alternative political vision” and that “persistence of Lozi secessionism over the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, does not reflect a primordial attachment to ethnicity and polity. It is instead a movement fed by a particularism bred of resentment and poverty” (Hogan 2014: 907), to which one might add, Lozi exceptionalism, elitism

and longstanding rancour of a duped nation. First, by Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company, for whom Barotseland was just “the threshold to the coveted wealth of the north.”[\[8\]](#) Second, by Queen Victoria and her successors Edward VII and George V.[\[9\]](#) Third, by Kenneth David Kaunda and his cabinet which included Munukayumbwa Sipalo, Nalumino Mundia, Arthur Wina and Sikota Wina from Barotseland, all on the United National Independence Party [UNIP] ticket.[\[10\]](#)

## IN LIEU OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

The most up to date scholarly contributions to the Barotseland Question are Jack Hogan’s “What then happened to our Eden? The Long History of Lozi Secessionism, 1890–2013,”[\[11\]](#) Mutumba Mainga Bull’s “Reserved Area: Barotseland of the 1964 Agreement,”[\[12\]](#) Klas Rönnbäck’s and Oskar Broberg’s “From Defensive to Transformative Business Diplomacy: The British South Africa Company and the End of Chartered Company Rule in Rhodesia, 1910–1925,”[\[13\]](#) Gerald Lewis Caplan’s “The Elites of Barotseland, 1878–1969: A Political History of Zambia’s Western Province,”[\[14\]](#) O’Brien Kaaba’s “Linyungandambo and the Barotseland Agreement Question: Exploring a Possible Solution”[\[15\]](#) and Wolfgang Zeller and Henning Melber’s “United in Separation? Lozi Secessionism in Namibia and Zambia” (2019),[\[16\]](#) which I would recommend parties to the debate to read as of first recourse. Jack Hogan’s impartial conclusion is apt.

The Litunga and the BRE [Barotse Royal Establishment] are a king without a kingdom and a state without sovereignty. The route running west from Mongu ends in the sandy drifts of the floodplain. Within Zambia, in more ways than one, Western Province is a province at the end of the road. The view from Mongu, bluff out over the plain to Lealui, is now scarred by the vast engineering works being undertaken to push a road out to the Zambezi and into Angola beyond. In that road lies the chance that a new direction might be taken, for until Western Province sees real development, the secessionists will find people willing to listen to them (Hogan 2014: 924).

### Compliance or Secession is not the Option for Barotseland but Federation or Devolution

There are many historical narratives for the *raison d’être* of the colonisation of Africa and none more honest, if vile, than a supposed Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay British Parliamentary address of 2 February 1835.[\[17\]](#) Whether authentic or not — in this case sadly not — it expresses the real reason why Africa was colonised by the British and the West and continues to be re-colonised by the West, USA and China. The attributed quote below is cited uncritically by Edgar Ngoma as if it were Gospel. Its original referenced India rather than Africa and seems to be inauthentic. The villain of the piece, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, is the kind who, if he did not say it, he should have. Fortunately for him, he was in Calcutta, not London, on 2 February 1835, when the purported speech was supposedly made. In fact, he had left England in 1834 to take up his new appointment as advisor to the British Governor-General of India, Lord William Bentinck and did not return until 1838. The speech is missing from the one place you would bet your mortgage to find it — the several volumes of *Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*.[\[18\]](#) Still, this writer found this red meat irresistible for a postcolonial literary carnivore like me.

I have travelled across the length and breadth of [Africa] and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such calibre that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the [Africans] think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they would become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.[\[19\]](#)

That is as close to what happened during colonisation as you are likely to get. Africa lost her self-esteem. Poetic licence aside and the dubious provenance and ownership of the speech, there have always been beggars around, at least in modern memory, whether in India (the intended target) or Africa (the adopted

target). And whether in India or Africa, it is true that their backbone was their spiritual and cultural heritage, which colonialism managed to knock off their perch. This was certainly the case for Barotseland and North-East Rhodesia (later Zambia). This is where, for Zambia, it all started — the colonisation of Africa by the West — and as the saying goes, the rest is commentary. For Barotseland, its very backbone was already broken in 1890 by proxy, courtesy of the British South Africa Company's duplicitous Lochner concession obtained from a geopolitically naïve African King competing with geopolitical giants like Cecil John Rhodes and Frank Elliot Lochner. 10 years later, it was the turn of North-East Rhodesia to become a protectorate of the Crown in 1900, despite protest from Mwata Kazembe. North-East Rhodesia and Barotse [Barotzi]land-North-West Rhodesia were amalgamated into the Northern Rhodesia Protectorate in 1911, administered by the High Commissioner for South Africa with Robert Edward Codrington as the first Administrator with his Capital at Chipata. This is how Kate Crehan sums up the colonisation of what later became Zambia.

What is now the modern state of Zambia, first became a single political unit under British colonial rule. This began with the recognition in the 1890s (by the relevant European powers) of the right of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to occupy an area north of the Zambezi, although it was a number of years before this formal recognition was translated into effective rule. At first there were two separate BSAC territories, North-Western and North-Eastern Rhodesia. These were combined to form Northern Rhodesia in 1911, and then in 1924, after twenty-five years of company rule, the colony was taken over by the British Colonial Office. Forty years later, in 1964, independence was achieved and Northern Rhodesia became Zambia. As with other colonial borders, those of Northern Rhodesia were primarily the result of struggles between the various European colonial powers as they carved up the African continent amongst themselves. Where particular boundaries were drawn depended on the relative strengths of the different European powers and their perceptions of their strategic needs, rather than on preexisting geographical or social entities.[\[20\]](#)

Regarding Barotseland, during the late 19th century, Lubosi Lewanika (*circa* 1842–1916) had unified the Lozi kingdom, but still faced both internal and external enemies from the Portuguese to the West, the Ndebele and the Boers to the South. Becoming a protectorate of the British was a sure way to secure land and throne. Through François Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), who first arrived in Barotseland in 1886, the first *Litunga* [keeper of the earth] petitioned for the extension of British protection over his kingdom. In 1885, Barotseland's neighbour Bechuanaland had received its protectorate status. In pursuit of protectorate status, on 26 June 1890 the *Litunga* received Frank Elliot Lochner, an envoy of Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC), and signed a concession granting mineral and trading rights over “the whole territory of the said nation,” claimed to be some 200,000 square miles. But, as Jack Hogan points out, “like much of the image of the kingdom held up to the British, in particular its claims to antiquity and organisation, these territorial claims were rather dubious” (Hogan 2014: 909; cf. Mainga Bull 2014: 21). Apropos the Lochner Agreement, it is worth noting, as Mutumba Mainga Bull rightly does, that “The British Government did not therefore ratify the Lochner Treaty and none of its terms and conditions was ever fulfilled” (Mainga Bull 2014: 21) but Barotseland held on to its *de facto* British protectorate primogeniture as its badge of honour[\[21\]](#) for its statehood and continued “territorial nationalism,” to use a phrase from Crawford Young.[\[22\]](#)

The lynchpin of Barotseland's claim to “territorial nationalism” (Young 2004) is based on past glory overtaken by historical realism. Initially it was not a direct protectorate of the Crown but via the British South Africa Company [BSAC]. In fact, the *Litunga* who signed the Lochner Agreement tried to repudiate it immediately he realised he had been duped,[\[23\]](#) realising too late that it was obtained by fraudulent means. The *Litunga* had not been told that BSAC was not permitted to set up or grant any monopoly of trade, yet the Lochner Agreement, reprised in the 1900 Concession, did just that, giving “the sole, absolute, and exclusive perpetual right and power...over the whole of the territory of the said nation” (Concession 17 October 1900). There was also the small matter of Lewanika (meaning unifier) giving away what was not

exactly in his gift. As Gerald Lewis Caplan pointed out in his doctoral thesis:

In effect, then, through the Lochner Concession, the Company assumed the whole of what was to become North-Western Rhodesia; its authority over all the peoples named by Lewanika rested solely on its agreement with the Lozi; no independent agreements were ever signed by chiefs of the Lunda, Luvale, Ila, Tonga or Toka who nevertheless had to submit to Company overrule (Caplan 1968: 132).

The Barotse Royal Establishment were unaware that Frank Elliot Lochner or Robert Thorne Coryndon were representatives of a commercial company. The *Litunga* had granted the monopoly of his Kingdom's natural resources and beyond to a mere mercantile enterprise. All along, he thought that he had been dealing with a representative of the British monarch, instead of Cecil John Rhodes and his men. Assurances were sought for direct protectorate status by Lubosi Lewanika and his successor Yeta III to no avail. The hoped for wealth from the Frank Elliot Lochner Concession probably only benefited the royal elite in Barotseland and that was the Achilles Heel Kenneth Kaunda and the nationalists took advantage of when they signed the Barotseland Agreement of 1964. By the time Northern Rhodesia became one Protectorate of the Crown in 1924, incorporating North-West Rhodesia and North-East Rhodesia, Barotseland's disaffection was just beginning. The worst was yet to come.

By the late 1930s, the gap between these fictions and the lives of many in Barotseland was undeniable, for living conditions fell "short of even the comparatively low standards obtained in other parts of Northern Rhodesia" [Rhodesia-Nyasaland Royal Commission Report (London, HMSO, 1939), p. 236]. Barotseland increasingly became a labour reserve, exporting men to the Copperbelt and mines and farms to the south, many of them travelling under the auspices of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA). Taxes were paid, labour flowed out, but the kingdom stood still, bolstered by a formalised carapace [protective or defensive covering], the increasingly empty shell of the body it was projected as, nearly half a century earlier. Yeta, left paralysed and mute by a stroke in 1939, abdicated in favour of his half-brother Imwiko in 1945 and died the following year (Hogan 2014: 911).

### **A Kingdom and a State without Sovereignty and Autonomy**

One thing cannot be denied by succeeding Zambian governments. Barotseland is unlike any other Zambian chiefdom after the advent of colonialism. While others remained within a colonised demographic space that became Zambia in 1964, Barotseland was the only nation-state with a quasi-British protectorate status as its badge of honour. But I think the Barotse Royal Establishment are in denial here. At first, they were a protectorate of the United Kingdom only by proxy, via the British South Africa Company [BSAC]. After 1924, Barotseland became essentially a nation-state or a protectorate within the larger protectorate of Northern Rhodesia. In return for its first quasi-protectorate status, the *Litunga* gave the BSAC mineral exploration rights in Barotseland. It claimed to be an expansive empire, but so were others such as the Kingdom of Mwata Kazembe. But there is an important difference between the colonisation of Barotseland and North-East Rhodesia. The former begged for it while the latter resisted it, until subjugated by force. [24] Typical of North-East Rhodesia reaction to company rule were Chitimukulu Sampa Kapalakasha and Mwata Kazembe. Although in 1892 the latter had greeted and paid tribute to the BSAC representative, Alfred Sharpe, in 1897 he refused to accept European rule and did not allow the British flag to be raised in his Kingdom. He successfully repelled an army of local and Swahili soldiers led by Blair Watson, the imposed BSAC Administrator. In 1899, Alfred Sharpe, then Governor of Nyasaland, returned with a company of Sikhs and Nyasaland armed forces, killing many subjects of Mwata Kazembe while the king escaped together with his royal coterie. He returned a few weeks later, rebuilt his capital at Mwansabombwe and effectively submitted to BSAC rule, as part of the rest of North-East Rhodesia as Jan-Bart Gewald has detailed. [25]

The ideal demarcation of Barotseland stretched into Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, including half

of eastern and northern provinces of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Katanga Province. Most probably, the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) put paid to that dream of empire greatness. Since then, it has been a series of short shrifts. The major one was the last in colonial British geopolitics, the Barotseland Agreement of 1964. In theory, it recognised Barotseland's right to local self-governance rights over land, natural resources and taxation but it turned into a Trojan Horse cancelling all other agreements enjoyed heretofore by Barotseland. Within a year of taking office, President Kenneth Kaunda of the newly independent Republic of Zambia, in cahoots with Barotseland nationalists such as Munukayumbwa Sipalo, Nalumino Mundia, Arthur Wina and Sikota Wina, began to introduce various acts that slowly chipped away at most of the powers hitherto enjoyed by Barotseland. That has peeved the royal establishment and other sovereigntists to no small measure.

Notably, the Local Government Act of 1965 abolished the traditional institutions that had governed Barotseland, including tax, and brought the kingdom under the administration of a uniform Republican local government system. Then came the killer blow in 1969 when the Zambian government passed the Constitutional Amendment Act, annulling the Barotseland Agreement of 1964. Later that year the government changed Barotseland's name to Western Province and announced that all provinces would be treated equally. At the time of the Barotseland Agreement, the members of the National Assembly of Zambia from 1969 – 1973 were elected on 19 December 1968. Of the 105 elected members, 81 came from the United National Independence Party (the ruling party) and 23 from the Zambian African National Congress, together with a single independent member of Parliament. 5 additional members were nominated by the President. It may be argued that there was nothing unconstitutional about the abrogation of the Barotseland Agreement since the Constitution was thought to trump all other agreements.

That said, the abrogation of the agreement and the ensuing stubbornness, even treachery of successive governments, beginning with the first democratically elected President, Frederick Chiluba up to the incumbent, Hakainde Hichilema, have persisted in hoodwinking Barotseland that some of its power would be restored. Instead, they have ignored repeated calls to restore them, thereby fuelling the region's perennial tension and hopes of secessionism. One of the reasons Kenneth Kaunda revoked the Zambia Independence Act of 1964 is reported to have been that it called for the continuation of Barotseland. I aver that for the foreseeable future, no Zambian President will be courageous enough to open the Pandora's Box that is the Barotseland Question. History continues to be spun by the hegemonic victor and the vanquished subaltern cannot speak,<sup>[26]</sup> to use a Spivakian idiom. But it is in everyone's interest to seek true dialogue. Secessionism in Africa does not boast a good track record.

### **The Small Matter of the Barotseland Royal Inner Circle and Outer Circle**

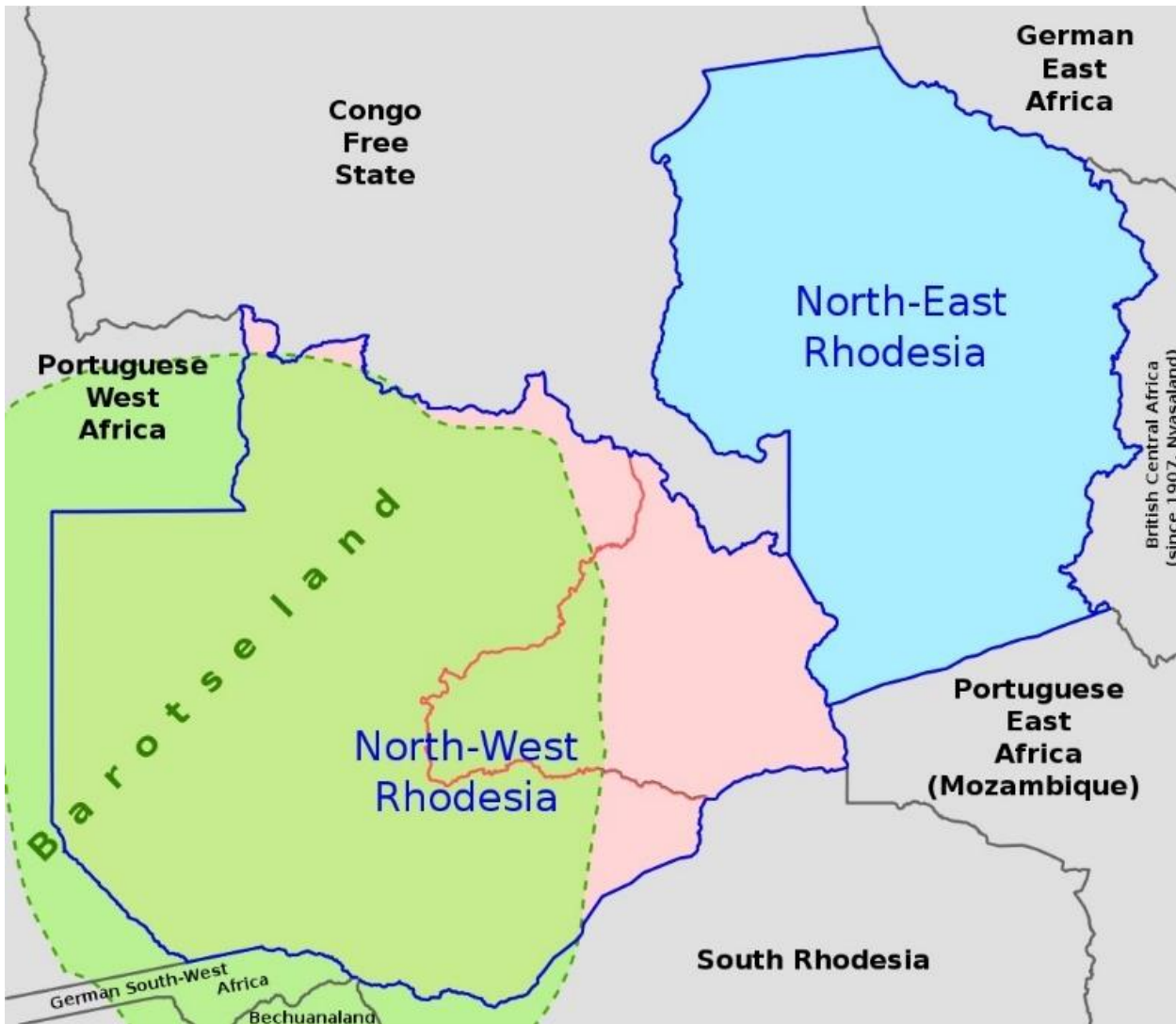
It is worth reiterating here the major strands of what is known as the Barotseland problem or question. It begins with the chronological landmark of 1890 when Lubosi Lewanika was deceived into believing that the British South Africa Company was a branch of Her Majesty's government and that the signed Lochner Concession was with the British government rather than a mercantile company. Gerald Lewis Caplan in many ways goes against the grain by arguing that Litunga Lewanika "signed the Lochner Concession against the wishes of an important faction of the Lozi ruling class."<sup>[27]</sup>

Nevertheless, throughout the reigns of the four Lozi kings between 1885 and about 1959, tension existed within the ruling class, since the interests of its inner elite suffered relatively less under colonial overrule than did those of its outer circle. Partly because opposition was seen to be largely futile, in part because those belonging to the inner core were allowed to retain the facade, if not the substance, of power, they rarely attempted actively to resist government interference in Lozi affairs (Caplan 1968: i).

### **The Three-Rhodesia Protectorate Musketeers**

Use of the three musketeers' metaphor is ironic and at odds with the spirit of the original usage in

*Les Trois Mousquetaires* [*The Three Musketeers*], written in 1844 by Alexandre Dumas. In the novel, “*Tous pour un, un pour tous*” [All for one, and one for all] was the motto of a group of French musketeers named Athos, Porthos, and Aramis who stayed loyal to each other through thick and thin. The same cannot be said of North-West Rhodesia, North-East Rhodesia and South Rhodesia, not for lack of trying, even enforcement on the part of the British government.



Former territories under the BSAC: North-East Rhodesia (blue), North-West Rhodesia (pink), and Barotseland (green), which finally morphed into Northern Rhodesia in 1924. Credit: Public Domain

The map on the left side depicts the demarcation of the three Rhodesias: North-West Rhodesia [incorporating Barotseland], North-East Rhodesia and South Rhodesia. The latter was promulgated under the Order in Council 1899. Barotziland — North-Western Rhodesia Order in Council 1899 (SR & O 1901/567), was written with an Em dash between “Barotziland” and “North-Western Rhodesia.” In grammar, the Em dash is used in place of commas or parentheses to emphasise or draw attention to parenthetical or amplifying material. In the mind of the drafters, it meant Barotseland and North-Western were not equal partners. North-West Rhodesia was amalgamated with North-East Rhodesia, to form Northern Rhodesia in 1911. It was this Northern Rhodesia that became one protectorate in 1924 and went on to become Zambia in 1964, acknowledging the status of Barotseland through the Barotseland Agreement, 5 months before independence. What seems odd to the impartial reader is that when Barotseland was amalgamated as North-West Rhodesia, there was no complaint from the *Litunga* because it meant to him more territory and

autonomy but the Barotseland Agreement was another kettle of fish altogether. The latter was a colonial trigeminal nerve or the Voldemort that should never be voiced, to vary the metaphor which took away the autonomy of the *Litunga* and the sovereignty of the state and transferred them to the Republic. This is what the Barotse Royal Establishment wants to claw back. In this sense, this researcher does not agree with the thesis of Zibani Maundeni, Edgar Bwalya and Phana Kwerepe.

Barotse nationalism came about as a result of the joining together of the Barotseland Protectorate and the Republic of Zambia. At the end of protectorate rule (by the British), the Barotseland Protectorate had the choice of becoming an independent state, but opted to join the Republic of Zambia and participated in its normal politics until 2012, when, after four decades calling for enhanced autonomy within Zambia, it began calling for the establishment of a separate state (Maundeni *et al* 2015: 263).[\[28\]](#)

Thus far, we have dealt with the protectorate statuses of North-West Rhodesia and North-East Rhodesia, inaccurately portrayed by Zibani Maundeni *et al* above. This picture would be incomplete without the third member of this triumvirate of the United Kingdom's sphere of influence entrusted by royal charter[\[29\]](#) to a mercantile company, the British South Africa Company — Southern Rhodesia. It was first used officially in the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council of 20 October 1898, which applied to the area south of the Zambezi. In 1889, Queen Victoria had signed a Charter granting the British South Africa Company the power to administer the territory from the Limpopo to Lake Tanganyika under charter. Soon after, in 1890 the British South Africa Company signed a treaty with King Lewanika of Barotseland, fearful of Portuguese incursions (in Angola to the west) and the Ndebele (Matabele) to the east and so wished to have British protection. This is what I mean by Barotseland begging for protectorate status than being imposed on it as was the case on North-East Rhodesia, especially on the powerful Mwata Kazembe's Lunda kingdom. In 1899 Queen Victoria signed the Barotseland–North Western Rhodesia Order in Council, amalgamating what was North-West Rhodesia with Barotseland and establishing over the whole territory protectorate status. In September 1900, Sir Robert Thorne Coryndon was appointed as the first Administrator. He held this post until 1907 when he was succeeded by Robert Codrington, who died within a year of taking up office. The last Administrator was Lawrence Aubrey Wallace. The capital was initially at Kalomo, and moved in 1907 to Livingstone. It looks odd for an impartial observer that Mongu was never in the frame for the Capital. Ostensibly, the line of rail had a lot to do with it. When the protectorate was amalgamated with North-East Rhodesia to form Northern Rhodesia in 1911, the Administrator of Northern Rhodesia became the Administrator of Barotseland–North-West Rhodesia also. It seems throughout this geopolitical evolution, Barotseland played ball. By 1924, Northern Rhodesia was a unitary protectorate of the United Kingdom. It was as part of Northern Rhodesia that Barotseland became part of the federation of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

### **A Mixture of Fact and Fiction in the History of Barotseland Sovereignty and Autonomy**

A major spanner in the works of the Barotseland question since the 1890s is where historical fact stops and fiction (some would say, legitimate aspiration) begins. Give each side an inch and they will take a mile. The geographical demarcation of Barotseland below was ideal rather than actual (with chunks from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), much like the ideal extent of the biblical Promised Land, which at no time was ever operationalised politically (for both Barotseland and Israel). A major landmark in this tortured history is the Barotse Reserved Area, which is historical fact as Mutumba Mainga Bull explains.

The Barotse Reserved Area was established through the 1900 Concessions of Lewanika, the British South Africa Chartered Company (BSACo) and the British Government. It was extended in 1909. The Reserved Area (Bulozi) was the central area of the Lozi Kingdom and the Lozi Kingship, centred on the Upper Zambezi Flood Plain and westward to the Angolan boundary. The Reserved Area was for the exclusive use of the Lozi people under their traditional ruler. Prospecting for minerals and white settlement were



prohibited in the Reserved Area while land was inalienable (Mainga Bull 2014: 11–12).

### A History of Isolationism and Exceptionalism in the Barotseland Question

Isolationism and exceptionalism seem to be at the heart of Barotseland geopolitics. In this researcher’s view, this is not a reasoned position but an ethno-emotive one. When it comes to the Barotseland question, even scholars begin with an emotional investment before proceeding to the logical premises. Take the following assertion by MbinjiMufalo arguing for the restoration of the Barotseland Agreement.

A notable manifestation of Lozi national consciousness is [27 June 1890], when King Lewanika I and the British South Africa Company signed the Frank Lochner Treaty, which made Barotseland a British protectorate under indirect rule.[\[30\]](#)

In what sense the signing of the Lochner Treaty was a “notable manifestation of Lozi national consciousness,” the author does not say. In this article, I argue that LubosiLewanika was duped into signing the treaty. In signing it, the Litunga blotted his copybook for his progeny rather than earned a badge of honour and provided the British South Africa Company access to the rest of the country. MbinjiMufalo errs in opining that the Lochner treaty “made Barotseland a British protectorate under indirect rule.” It marked the colonisation and direct rule by the British South Africa Company. Strictly speaking, British rule did not begin until 1924 as per royal charter.[\[31\]](#)

For the Lozi elite, the Barotseland question is one of isolationism and exceptionalism. That is what explains MbinjiMufalo’s “Restoration of the Barotseland Agreement.” The 1964 Barotseland Agreement was dead in the water long before its first anniversary. The original algorithms for resolving it need to be changed. The argument that Barotseland got a raw deal in the Barotseland Agreement aftermath is only superficially correct. Of the current 10 provinces of Zambia, Western province is hardly the least developed. According to the Human Development Index of 2021, Western Province comes out seventh with Luapula propping up the list in ninth place (Muchinga was not included). Although this is scant consolation for Barotseland, its current lack of economic weal cannot be placed entirely on the shoulders of the abrogation of the Barotseland Agreement.

Regarding the Barotseland Agreement, it seems to this researcher less about what Barotseland was not able to achieve economically as it is about its entitlement to sovereignty and autonomy. As argued above, Barotseland or any other erstwhile kingdoms such as Mwata Kazembe’s Lunda, have a right to self-determination but secessionism is not always the way to go about it. In this sense then, like Scotland, the Barotseland quest for sovereignty and autonomy will never die unless renegotiated. Even though Litunga Ilute Yeta emphatically told President Frederick Chiluba in 1994 that “We are not seceding and we shall not secede from Zambia,”[\[32\]](#) it seems to this writer that Barotseland royal elites are likely to answer in the affirmative David McCrone’s and Michael Keating’s question “Is a struggle between sovereigntists and unionists the inevitable new politics?” (McCrone and Keating 2021:21).[\[33\]](#) But here is a small reality check: a list of Zambian provinces by HMI as of 2021,[\[34\]](#) showing underdevelopment of Zambia’s provinces was not peculiar to Barotseland.

Rank	Province	HDI (2021)
<b>Medium Human Development</b>		
1	Lusaka	0.636
2	Copperbelt	0.631
3	North-Western	0.586
4	Southern	0.562
5	Central	0.561

Low Human Development		
6	Northern	0.520
7	Western	0.517
8	Eastern	0.509
9	Luapula	0.492

The above list needs decoding. First, according to the United Nations Development Programme, “The HDI was created to emphasise that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.”<sup>[35]</sup> On that basis, Barotseland came out seventh. Its low human development status can be attributed to poor postcolonial development priorities by Zambia which continued colonial policies of urbanisation, rehashing failed colonial policies. Even with that, postcolonial governments focused on Lusaka. Given the history of industrialisation in Zambia, the Copperbelt should have come first. What is even more surprising is that the two provinces with arguably the most natural resources with potential for energy and a gateway to East Africa by sea come out sixth and ninth and classed as low human development. Probably more difficult to sort out for the Barotseland question is the extent of the territory, as we have already noted, especially the territory that lies outside Zambia, such as the Caprivi Strip [named after German Chancellor Leo von Caprivi]. Although the Caprivi Strip secessionists, who speak the same language as Barotselanders, have been waging their own war of secession from Namibia, one doubts whether Barotseland ever features highly in their plans. Given that Caprivi Strip featured in greater Barotse claims, it is surprising that the favour is never reciprocated. The Lochner Concession turned out to be a Trojan horse for the colonisation of the rest of Northern Rhodesia to provide labour and mineral resources for developing Southern Rhodesia for the benefit of white settlers. In this sense, Lubosi Lewanika had done the British South Africa Company a huge favour by signing on the dotted line of the Lochner Concession.

### The Extent of Barotseland: How Long is a Piece of String?

According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus*, mainly in the United Kingdom, how long is a piece of string is said when you cannot answer a question about the length, size, amount, etc. of something because it could be any length, size, amount etc. The size of Barotseland at the centre of the Barotseland Question is a matter of how long is a piece of string? I raise this here at this point to highlight a major complication if the secessionist route were to be chosen.



Ideal demarcation of Barotseland, with chunks of land from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. Credit: Zambian Observer.

The issue of the limits of Barotseland is a contested one as it crosses inter-national boundaries of what later became Zambia. It partly depended on which *Litunga* you asked and when. Understandably, the Lozi had a more generous delimitation of their Kingdom than the British who had to contend with the Portuguese, especially on the western limit, the Germans and the Belgians. There was also the small matter of spheres of influence between these countries. The British sent out Major Goold Adams at the head of an expedition to determine the limits of the Lozi empire. According to Mutumba Mainga Bull, Goold Adams asked King Lewanika to describe the boundaries of his kingdom, the king was reported to have replied, "I do not know what you mean by kingdom, but I will tell you where my people live" (Mainga Bull 2014: 17). Once back in London, Major Goold Adams submitted his Report with a map showing the total area comprising Lewanika's Kingdom. Goold Adams indicated that a big chunk of Barotse country lay west of the Zambezi and Kabompo rivers, contrary to British and Portuguese earlier *modus vivendi*. The result was that the British declined to accept Major Goold Adams' Report. Closer to the creation of Northern Rhodesia, what was known as the Barotse Reserve Area became Barotse Province under the British South Africa Company. In 1935, the then Governor of Northern Rhodesia, Hubert Winthrop Young divided Northern Rhodesia into five provinces: Barotse Province, Southern Province, Central Province, Northern Province and Eastern Province. Had the United Kingdom's Zambia Independence Act of 1964 recognised these five areas as part of a federal Republic, the Barotseland Question would have been put to bed. Notice though that of the five provinces, only Barotseland self-identified by ethnicity. Even the ethnic identifier Lozi is itself problematic since it was a Makololo imposition. Had it not been for them, we would probably be talking of the Luyana instead of the Lozi. [36] In the annex, I provide an alternative ten-state federal Republic based on the current ten provinces with new names, except for a few. The new names are based on significant landmarks in the state such as rivers, mountains, waterfalls etc.

Since the late 1800s, the history of Barotseland has been one of isolationism and exceptionalism. Blaming the abrogation of the Barotseland Agreement of 1964 on Kenneth Kaunda in 1969 is but a small part of this history. Zambian historian and ex-politician, Mutumba Mainga Bull, the first Zambian woman to hold a PhD, argues that the following succession of *Litungas* "all in their time petitioned for secession from Northern Rhodesia" (Mainga Bull 2014: 13):

Lewanika (ruler 1878 to 1884, and 1885 to 1916) through to his three son-successors Litunga Yeta III (1916 to 1945 when he abdicated following a debilitating stroke), Litunga Imasiku Mwananono Imwiko (1945 to 1948), and Litunga Mwanawina III (1948 to 1968) (Mainga Bull 2014: 13).

Article 8 of the Zambia Independence Act of 1964 of the United Kingdom Parliament, which I cite in its entirety is probably what succeeding Zambian governments have relied on to keep Barotseland as part of a unitary Zambia, especially paragraphs 1 and 3. The only sticking point was paragraph 2, which recognised the Barotseland Agreement 1964, which was subsequently dealt a fatal blow in 1969.

8(1) Subject to the next following subsection, all agreements which immediately before the appointed day have effect as agreements between Her Majesty, or the Government of Northern Rhodesia, and the *Litunga* of Barotseland shall on that day cease to have effect in so far as immediately before that day they confer any rights, or impose any obligations, on Her Majesty or the Government of Northern Rhodesia.

(2) The preceding subsection shall not apply to the Barotseland Agreement 1964 (that is to say, the agreement, dated 18th May 1964, between the Government of Northern Rhodesia and the *Litunga* of Barotseland which provides that it may be cited by that title) or to any agreement, whether made before or after the passing of this Act, whereby that agreement has been varied or superseded.

(3) In this section "agreement" includes any concession, undertaking or understanding, whether given or

made orally or in writing; and for the purposes of subsection (1) of this section it is immaterial, in relation to any agreement, whether Her Majesty or the Government of Northern Rhodesia or the *Litunga* of Barotseland was an original party to the agreement or not or whether there are any parties to the agreement other than Her Majesty and the said Government and *Litunga*.

For succeeding governments of Zambia since independence in 1964, the Barotseland question is a political, historical and constitutional irritant about secession, much like the Caprivi Strip in Namibia, whatever the preceding history. As far as Zambia is concerned the matter was put to bed as far back as 1969 when it passed legislation constitutionally annulling the Barotseland Agreement Act of 1964. Section 2 of the Constitution (Amendment) Act No. 5 of 1969 provided that the Barotseland Agreement shall “cease to have effect, and all rights (whether vested or otherwise), liabilities and obligations thereupon shall lapse.” The British were not consulted in their role as witness to the Barotseland Agreement. This was a sovereign constitutional matter. To be fair, the British had a soft spot for the *Litunga* and Barotseland, given their history, as expressed in a parliamentary debate on Clause 8 of Agreements relating to Barotseland by Ronald Bell, Member of Parliament for Buckinghamshire South.

In case there should be any lingering doubt about that [Barotseland Agreement], I should like to say that the Agreement signed at ten o'clock at night: in London, which is the subject of this Clause, was virtually identical in all its terms with that which had been signed in the full light of day and in complete harmony in Lusaka three weeks before. It would be quite untrue to say that by that Agreement Barotseland passes away its rights and will lose its distinctive way of life or cease to exist as a significant part of Zambia. The contrary is true. Anyone who reads the Agreement, which has been published as a Command Paper will see that on the contrary not only the *Litunga* and his National Council, but also Dr. Kaunda and the Ministers of the Northern Rhodesia Government, were all most anxious that Barotseland should continue to make its distinctive and, in some sense, separate contribution to the total life of the new country (Clause 8, Agreements Relating to Barotseland, UK Parliament Hansard, Volume 698: debated on Friday 10 July 1964).

High praise from the former colonial master. As John Tilney, Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations explained during the same debate:

The purpose of this Clause is to terminate all existing rights and obligations, both of the Crown and of the Government of Northern Rhodesia under the existing agreements, and understandings, except those arising under this Agreement. Similarly, provision was made in the Uganda Independence Act, 1962, terminating agreements between the Crown and the kingdoms in Uganda. The possibility of giving Barotseland the same sort of status within Zambia as the kingdoms had within Uganda was considered, but the parties to the 1964 Agreement decided otherwise. Under that Agreement, Barotseland, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, is part of the unitary State of Zambia (Clause 8, Agreements Relating to Barotseland, UK Parliament Hansard, Volume 698: debated on Friday 10 July 1964).[\[37\]](#)

It appears to the impartial observer, that the inner, royal and elite circle stood to lose in the abrogation of the Barotseland Agreement. This researcher is not so sure about the outer circle of nationalists who supported Unitarism such as the former Vice President, Inonge Mutukwa Wina, wife of Arthur Win a, a member of Zambia's first cabinet. For Barotseland, especially the royal elite, the Barotseland question, despite its abrogation in 1969, is very much alive and active because it is an emotional “movement fed by a particularism bred of resentment and poverty” (Hogan 2014: 907). To which we may add treachery, on the part of Zambia which decided to abrogate or annul the Barotseland Agreement 1964, an act formally repealing a law through an act of legislation, constitutional authority, or custom. In an otherwise poorly presented paper published in the *Zambian Observer* of 11 February 2024, Prof. Edgar Ngoma is right on this point:

It must also be made very clear here ... that the [Barotseland] Agreement 1964 did not create Zambia. Zambia already existed as Northern Rhodesia — one entity that was governed by one governor representing the British colonial power. Barotseland was simply a Protectorate within that Colony of Northern Rhodesia and upon attaining independence Britain made it clear that the protection ended at the independence of Zambia and Barotseland ceased to be a protectorate of Britain especially so, that Barotseland had 25 seats in the National Assembly of Zambia to represent it![\[38\]](#)

### **A Federal Alternative Solution to the Barotseland Problem**

One proceeds gingerly on this matter. The fact that Barotseland gained *de facto* British protectorate status, albeit under the aegis of the British South Africa Company, before North-East Rhodesia did, has given Barotseland something of bigger bragging rights, almost as of primogeniture, over its Eastern nemesis. For the British, this was all par for the course of colonising its sphere of influence from the Limpopo River to Lake Tanganyika. For the British South Africa Company, Barotseland was simply a gateway to the rest of the country and a reserve pool for migrant labour. By 1924, both Barotseland and North-East Zambia were a unitary protectorate under Northern Rhodesia.[\[39\]](#) The transition to Zambia was logical, organic and evolutionary. Taking cognizance of Barotseland's special prior protectorate primogeniture, the British helped to bring both Barotseland and Northern Rhodesia under one aegis, the Republic of Zambia. It seems to this researcher that the demarcation of Barotseland would be an insoluble problem in any secessionist or sovereigntist scenario. As Jack Hogan opines in conclusion to his article, “until Western Province sees real development, the secessionists will find people willing to listen to them” (Hogan 2014: 924). In the meantime, despite campaign promises to the contrary, every succeeding Zambian government has found the Barotseland question in its in-tray but has chosen to ignore it, sidestep it or kick the can down the road for the next government.

Instead of engaging the Barotseland question dialogically and constructively, Zambia has chosen to ignore it, hoping it will go away. The result has been a dialogue of the deaf between Zambia and Barotseland. Modern state boundaries were done without rhyme or reason — only avarice and cupidity. They are actual, based on Western interests since the Scramble for Africa and the Berlin Conference (1884–1885). In the case of Zambia, the citizens had no say and sometimes realism is the best policy. We are where we are, let's make the best of it and consign past glory to history. For Zambia, it may be worthwhile to revisit the original Northern Rhodesia division into five or more provinces: Barotse [Western] Province, Southern Province, Central Province, Northern Province and Eastern Province etc, to form a federal government with devolved autonomy and sovereignty and a Prime Minister. What Barotseland wants are sovereignty and autonomy to carve out its own people's future and that can be assured in a federal government, such as a Swiss style federalism. I would not bother looking at the Nigerian version.

In all the underhand machinations of British colonialism over Barotseland [and North-West Rhodesia] and North-East Rhodesia, the chief villain was Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company. As Klas Rönnbäck and Oskar Broberg opined rather diplomatically, “BSAC was overall the most important [read, underhand], dwarfing most other companies anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Rönnbäck and Broberg 2022: 778).[\[40\]](#) BSAC's dwarfing influence over other companies was well captured by a cartoon illustration, first published in *Punch* Magazine in 1892. It was appropriately entitled “The Rhodes Colossus” [a pun on the statue Colossus of Rhodes, one of the seven wonders of the Ancient World], alluding to the Scramble for Africa during the New Imperialism period. It depicts Cecil Rhodes as a giant astride Africa, holding a telegraph line, in his “Cape to Cairo” bid to connect Africa via road, rail and telegraph line through most of the British colonies in Africa. Part of this road passed through Lusaka, named Cairo Road.



The Rhodes Colossus continues to haunt Zambia and will continue to do so under the guise of the Barotseland Question. If it is not sorted out dialogically and constructively, the end result may be too ghastly to contemplate. For the secessionist or sovereigntist, there are far too many moving parts to consider such as the demarcation of the separated nation-state and the demographics to go with it, to single out two. As someone who has nephews of Lozi descent, this writer is not sure they would be entitled to vote in a referendum on whether Barotseland should secede from Zambia or not.

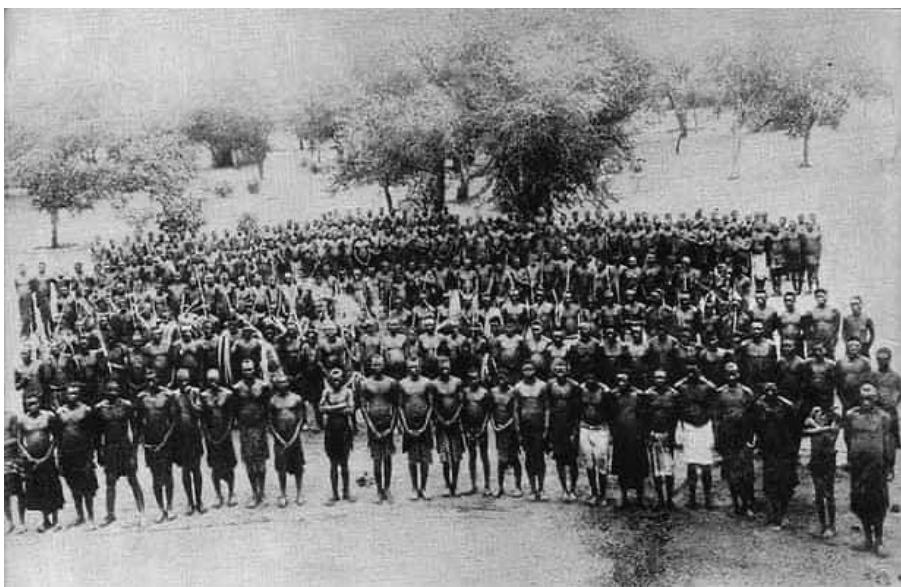
## CONCLUSION

In this researcher's view, based on historical realism<sup>[41]</sup> and the mystique of the independence ideology of "One Zambia, One Nation" which was inculcated in him as a 7-year-old, is that a federal government may be preferable for Zambia as a postcolonial Republic, with states having a shared colonial past and each state — including a renamed Barotseland — exercising autonomy and sovereignty. For a start, it may help to divest ethnicity from the name Barotseland, whichever name is chosen such as *Liuwaland*. For those who know their history, Liuwa, meaning plain, such as the one Lubosi Lewanika used to hunt in, would maintain the link with the Litunga. Remaining together we may be better than separate. Separateness through secessionism may be a harbinger of inter-ethnic violence of Rwandan genocide proportions. The self-proclaimed government of Barotseland (since 8 September 2011) sounds economical with historical realism when it declares that "[Barotseland] was once a British Protectorate but was not given independence when it wanted it, but instead it was transferred to a fellow African Nation called Zambia. The relation between the two nations was based on an Agreement called Barotseland Agreement 1964; the Agreement never entered into force, instead it was unilaterally abrogated by Zambia."<sup>[42]</sup> Having read the present article, the reader

may be in a position to ascertain whether this is the case or not. In the historical realism of the present writer, there is more to the Barotseland question than the Barotse Royal Establishment would have us believe. But what happened, happened. It behoves the beneficiaries of a dysfunctional polity, such as Zambia, to make the best of its contorted colonial history. As the Philosopher George Santayana said in a famous aphorism, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” which we cite below more amply.

Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. In the first stage of life the mind is frivolous and easily distracted; it misses progress by failing in consecutiveness and persistence. This is the condition of children and barbarians, in whom instinct has learned nothing from experience.[\[43\]](#)

If the five or ten-state federation model mooted above is not feasible, since the original quarrel was between two states, perhaps then a federal republic of two states such as the one in Tanzania may be contemplated and negotiated. There are obvious advantages of federalism that may be thrown into the mix, such as those discussed by UK Essays,[\[44\]](#) including: better knowledge of the state-area and its problems by political operatives who live and work among the people; better and more effective governance responding to local problems; freedom to adopt state policies which may not be followed nationally or by any other state; optimal utilisation of local resources while the federal government concentrates on international affairs and defence of the country, providing room for innovation and experimentation in any area of the public domain, be it taxation or education as in the example of Scotland or much like the relationship between a national Catholic episcopal conference and its diocesan ordinaries. There are obvious disadvantages such as: overlapping of work and subsequent confusion between state and federal governments regarding who is responsible for what; too many elected representatives at both state and federal levels which may lead to corruption; threat of secession and the country’s integrity by states who feel they are hard done by as Barotseland felt after 1969. But in this researcher’s view, advantages far outweigh disadvantages. As a priest-sociologist friend, Chaplain of the Zambia Catholic University, Joe Komakoma told me after reading the introduction to this article, “the academic argument [for Unitarism] would outweigh any secessionist counter argument” (*WhatsApp* message, 4 April 2024).



The first recruits of the Barotse Native Police at Lealui in Mongu, circa 1898. Credit: *Zambian History in Pictures Facebook*, Public Domain

From the point of view of national security, there is evidence to support political Unitarism bringing together Barotseland and Northern Rhodesia under one aegis,[\[45\]](#) rather than separatism. Unitarism seems to have been historical, evolutionary and organic, as intimated earlier. Given that both were subjects of the BSAC, it was inevitable they would unite. The evidence comes from the development of the Northern Rhodesia Police,[\[46\]](#) which combined the Barotse Native Police and the North-East Rhodesia Police as chronicled for example, in Charles Mwalimu's "Police, State Security Forces and Constitutionalism of Human Rights in Zambia."[\[47\]](#) The first to be set up was the Barotse Native Police in 1891, which "primarily functioned as a buffer against Arab slave traders and protected commercial interests of the B.S.A. Company" (Mwalimu 1991: 218) rather than as a sign of statehood. North-East Rhodesia Police goes back to 1895, being officially recognised by the Crown in 1911 and as Charles Mwalimu explains:

It was also in 1911 that the two Rhodesias in the East and West were fused. Consequently, the Northern Rhodesia Proclamation No. 17 (1912) was issued to form combined civil police, designated as the Northern Rhodesia Police (Mwalimu 1991: 219).

Both the Barotse Native Police and Northern Rhodesia Police were part of the coloniser's hegemonic control. Policing was never intended for the greater good of the natives but of Empire as captured in the motto of the British South Africa Police of "*Pro rege, pro patria, pro lege*" [For the king, the fatherland, the country]. Daniel Egiegba Agbibo has described the colonial police in Africa as "White men's dogs."[\[48\]](#) Their postcolonial Avatars in the form of contemporary politicians behave pretty much the same way, if not worse. As an aphorism by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr puts it, "*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*" [The more things change, the more they remain the same]. The same has been true of governance in general in Zambia. This colonial legacy has been shared by both Barotseland and Northern Rhodesia and can only be corrected together through collaboration in a federation-style Republic. At the root of present neo-colonialism, both internal and external, is the purported reasoning of Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay. African statehood, education, economy, politics and Christian religion were colonised. The backbone of Africa's spiritual and cultural ethos was broken by the coloniser by sucking out its self-esteem and dichotomising African life into different and hermetically-sealed compartments. African life continues to be broken and compartmentalised further in the postcolony. This cannot be easily repaired. It can only be repaired by dialogue, collaboration and reclaiming Africa's holistic, spiritual and cultural ethos. Dialogue and spiritual/cultural reclamation need to be preceded by decolonisation of mind and spirit by both Barotseland and Zambia. As Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay supposedly reminds us:

I [the coloniser] propose that we replace her [Africa's] old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the [Africans] think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they would become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.[\[49\]](#)

The Barotseland question is unlikely to be resolved unless and until decolonisation of mind and spirit are undertaken by both sides, preferably together. As Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou rightly pointed out:

By plundering Africa's resources and carving it up into artificial states, Europe's colonial powers created vicious cycles of violence, poverty, and authoritarianism that are playing out to this day. But overcoming this legacy will require much more than toppling statues...[\[50\]](#)

Many critical observers of African politics would agree with the above characterisation of the postcolony, such as Zambia, and that a major legacy of Africa's colonial past is consumed by "vicious cycles of violence, poverty, and authoritarianism that are playing out to this day." Separatism and secessionism, such as the Barotse Royal Establishment hankers after, are simply symptoms of colonisation of mind and spirit,



of that broken backbone of spirituality and culture attributed to Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay. According to Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou, this is what happens when the postcolony fulfils its colonial legacy of separatism. The post colony continues to feed neo-colonialism and its currency of dysfunctionality and Barotseland secession would no doubt continue to do so. Colonialists sowed the wind of divide and rule and Africans have continued to reap the whirlwind of separatism through ethno-violence and even genocide as in Rwanda.

Not only are partitioned ethnicities’ historic homelands battlegrounds between government forces, militias, and rebel groups, but civilian violence in these areas is more intense compared to non-partitioned areas close to the same border.[\[51\]](#)

Without need for scaremongering on the part of Zambia or erstwhile North-East Rhodesia, there are significant downsides to secessionism which will need to be factored into the Barotseland question, as evidenced in African conflicts such as Ethiopia–Eritrea, Somalia–Somaliland, Nigeria–Biafra, Sudan–South Sudan, Angola–Cabinda, Democratic Republic of the Congo–Katanga, South Africa–Cape Republic, South Africa–Zulu Kingdom, Zimbabwe–Mthwakazi Republic and Namibia–Caprivi Strip to name a few, with one thing in common —arbitrary colonial borders. As the British Prime Minister at the time of the initial colonisation of Barotseland and North-East Rhodesia by the British South Africa Company, Lord Salisbury put it, “we have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man’s feet have ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.”[\[52\]](#) Colonialists and neo- colonialists would respond that the alternative to the Scramble for Africa was to let the African kings, later demoted to chiefs, slaughter and barbecue each other for territory, with the winner taking all. Political officialdom would add, in the case of Zambia-Barotseland, that it was Lubosi Lewanika who got the colonial ball rolling in the first place before the rest of the territory East of the Zambezi by requesting the protection of the British Crown. Elsewhere, such as in Mwata Kazembe’s Lunda Kingdom and Chitimukulu Sampa Kapalakasha’s Bemba kingdom, British South Africa Company rule was resisted. In the case of Mwata Kazembe, submission was only realised with a little help from Sikh and Nyasaland armed forces led by Alfred Sharpe. In North-East Rhodesia, the British South Africa Company was ironically abetted by the first Catholic Missionaries led by Joseph-Marie-Stanislas Dupont, with unintended help from Chief Mwamba Chipoya.[\[53\]](#)

As it turned out, whether by design or by default, the colonisation of Barotseland by the British South Africa Company was also facilitated by a missionary, François Coillard, who smoothed the way to the colonisation of the rest of Northern Rhodesia, no thanks to Lubosi Lewanika. Like many other African kings, and unlike Mwata Kazembe and Chitimukulu Sampa Kapalakasha, he chose collaboration over resistance. Lest we are accused of being too harsh on the Lozi potentate, there appeared no other viable choices for him at the time, apart from the binary one of collaboration/resistance. Neither was Lubosi Lewanika unique. Many other African kings chose to collaborate with the colonisers, as they did with slave traders. Collaboration offered many incentives, such as pecuniary income from providing cheap native labour and above all, provision of security through policing the land. But as Vincent B. Khapoya puts it:

[Colonial] Labor conscription accelerated the African people’s perception that the chiefs were part and parcel of the colonial establishment. Many of them were, more than ever before, alienated from their own people.[\[54\]](#)

**Annex: From Republican Provinces to Ten-State Federal Republic**

Current Province	Future State	State Capital City
1. Central Province	Mulungushi	Kabwe

2. Copperbelt Province	Mukuba	Ndola
3. Eastern Province	Luangwa	Chipata
4. Luapula Province	Luapula	Mansa
5. Lusaka Province	Lusaaka	Lusaaka
6. Muchinga Province	Muchinga	Chinsali
7. Northwestern Province	Mutanda	Solwezi
8. Northern Province	Chishimba	Kasama
9. Southern Province	Mosi-oa-Tunya	Livingstone
10. Western Province	Liuwaland	Mungu

### Author's Note

I am grateful to the peer reviewer for constructive criticism of the article, especially pertaining to methodological aspects and in-house journal style. The peer reviewer's views were seriously taken into account in the final submission of the article, especially pertaining to issues of methodology, journal style and references.

### Author's Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*.

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## ENDNOTES

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The literature on Barotseland’s bid for statehood is vast. Some of this is captured in Ancietos Mwansa (2017), “Barotseland and the advocacy for statehood: A case entailing the complexities of statehood and state recognition in public international law,” *African Journal of Political Science and International*

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[3] See: Jean-François Bayart (1979), *L'État au Cameroun*, Paris: Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques [FNSP], *L'État en Afrique: La Politique du Ventre* (1993), Paris: Fayard. *L'État au Cameroun* contains a discussion of “les débats essentiel qui portent sur quelques-uns des notions clefs — d'assimilation réciproque des différents segments d'élites” [the essential debates which relate to some of the key notions — of reciprocal assimilation of different segments of elites] (Bayart 1979: 192).

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[5] Pierre Englebert (2005), “Compliance and Defiance to National Integration in Barotseland and Casamance,” *Africa Spectrum* 40(1): 29–59

[6] Ved Prakash Nanda (2001), “Self-Determination and Secession under International Law,” *Denver Journal of International Law* 29(4): 305–326

[7] What I wish to underline here in part is what drives the Barotseland Question. This is well captured in Clifford Geertz's question “What is a State if it is not a Sovereign?” See: Clifford Geertz (2004), “What is a State if it is not a Sovereign?” *Current Anthropology* 45(5): 577–593

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[9] Lewis H. Gann (1969), *A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953*, New York: Humanities Press, page 325

[10] Zambia's first cabinet comprised 18 members including the President. Four of the cabinet came from Barotseland, some with parliamentary seats from outside Barotseland. See: <https://maidstonemulenga.com/zambias-first-cabinet.html#> (Retrieved 15 March 2024). In Zambia's first cabinet, Sikota Wina was Minister of Local Government and later Minister of Information from 1969–1973 and therefore at the heart of negotiations leading up to the 1969 Constitutional Amendment Act annulling the Barotseland Agreement 1964. Cf. William Tordoff (1974), *Politics in Zambia*, Berkley and California: University of California Press, page 29

[11] Jack Hogan (2014) ““What then Happened to our Eden?” The Long History of Lozi Secessionism, 1890–2013,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40(5): 907–924, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03057070.2014.946172> (Retrieved on 26 February 2024). Also helpful is Jack Hogan's 2014 doctoral thesis, *The ends of slavery in Barotseland, Western Zambia (c. 1800–1925)* [University of Kent, Canterbury]

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[17] A viler, if sincere view is Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden," *The Kipling Society*, [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems\\_burden.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_burden.htm) (Retrieved on 14 March 2024)

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[20] Kate Crehan(1997), *The Fractured Community: Landscapes of Power and Gender in Rural Zambia*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0779n6dt&chunk.id=d0e3932&toc.id=&brand=ucpress> (Retrieved on 3 March 2024)

[21] There is a modicum of justification for the bragging rights. As William Tordoff explains, of all the treaties leading up to the colonisation of Southern Africa by the United Kingdom, "The most important treaty was that signed with Lewanika, the king (Litunga) of Barotseland, in 1890, for it became the basis of the company's subsequent claim to mineral rights over country far beyond Lozi control" (William Tordoff [1974], *Politics in Zambia*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, page 2).

[22] Crawford Young (2004), "The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics," *African Affairs* 103(410): 23–49

[23] It was not as if the Litunga was oblivious and had not been warned. George Middleton, criticising Lewanika's concession to Harry Ware, told the Litunga that he "had 'sold the country' to white men, and it was the missionaries who had duped him into doing so" (Gerald L. Caplan [1970], *The Elites of Barotseland, 1878–1969: A Political History of Zambia's Western Province*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, page 50).

[24] Gerald Lewis Caplan (1969) describes it as "Barotseland's Scramble for Protection," *The Journal of African History* 10(2): 277–294. Barotseland's special protectorate status was addressed in the UK Parliament during debate for the Zambia Independence Bill 1964 (HC Deb 07 July 1964 vol 698 cc229–91), <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1964/jul/07/zambia-independence-bill> (Retrieved on 18 March 2024)

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[29] In the context of this article, a royal charter was a formal grant issued by the British monarch under royal prerogative as letters patent. One such royal charter germane to our discussion is the British South Africa Company Charter of 1889, <https://www.rhodesia.me.uk/charter/> (Retrieved on 19 March 2024)

[30] Mbinji Mufalo (2011), “Re-examining the Argument for the Restoration of the Barotseland Agreement” [Paper presented to the CPD National Conference on Traditional Authorities, Decentralisation and Rural Development, Lusaka, Zambia 28 February–1 March 2011]

[31] See: Andrew Roberts (1976), *A History of Zambia*, Cape Town: Africa Publishing Company provides a general account of Zambian history from prehistoric times up to 1974. Lewis H. Gann (1964), *A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953*, London: Chatto & Windus deals specifically with the colonial period. Munyonzwe Hamalengwa (1992), *Class Struggles in Zambia, 1889–1989 and the Fall of Kenneth Kaunda*, Lanham MD: University Press of America looks at the whole period 1899–1991.

[32] Litunga Ilute Yeta, 1 February 1994 Letter to President Frederick Chiluba, cited in: O’Brien Kaaba (28 November 2022), “Linyungandambo and the Barotseland Agreement Question: Exploring a Possible Solution,” Makanday Centre for Investigative Journalism, <https://www.makanday.com/posts/exploring-a-possible-solution> (Retrieved on 10 April 2024)

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[36] See Mutumba Mainga Bull (1973), *Bulozi and the Luyana Kings: Political Evolution and State Formation in Pre-Colonial Zambia*, New York: Longman

[37] UK Parliament (10 July 1964), “Clause 8, Agreements Relating to Barotseland,” UK Parliament Hansard, Volume 698: debated on Friday 10 July 1964,” House of Commons, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1964-07-10/debates/994a5550-ba54-47b5-b60c-3f1a120f911f/Clause8%E2%80%9494\(AgreementsRelatingToBarotseland\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1964-07-10/debates/994a5550-ba54-47b5-b60c-3f1a120f911f/Clause8%E2%80%9494(AgreementsRelatingToBarotseland)) (Retrieved on 29 February 2024)

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[39] Kate Crehan 1997), *The Fractured Community: Landscapes of Power and Gender in Rural Zambia*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0779n6dt&chunk.id=d0e3932&toc.id=&brand=ucpress> (Retrieved on 3 March 2024)

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[41] I use the term historical realism in the sense employed by Michael C Williams in his chapter “Historical Realism” as a resource for understanding the complex historical trajectories giving rise to contemporary politics. See: Michael C Williams (2023), “Historical Realism” in: Mlada Bukovansky (ed.), Edward Keene (ed.), Christian Reus-Smit (ed.), Maja Spanu (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press [Pages 35–48]

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[44] UKEssays (November 2018), “Advantages and Disadvantages of Federal and Unitary Government,” <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/advantages-and-disadvantages-the-federal-and-unitary-government-politics-essay.php?vref=1> (Retrieved on 6 March 2024)

[45] Sibeta Mundia cites the formation of the Barotse Native Police as evidence of “Barotseland’s sovereign status before Zambia’s independence” erroneously, I think. See: Sibeta Mundia (15 March 2018), “Barotse Native Police — Proof of Barotseland’s Sovereign Status Before Zambia’s Independence,” *Barotseland Broadcasting Network*, <https://www.facebook.com/Barotsenetwork/photos/flashbackbarotse-native-police-proof-of-barotselands-sovereign-status-before-zam/1765024666869657/> (Retrieved on 16 March 2024). The formation of the Barotse Native Police allowed the British South Africa Company to carry out its mercantile activities unhindered by native disorder. As the Royal Charter put it, “the preservation of public order” (BSAC Royal Charter 1889, par. 3).

[46] See: Tim Wright (2001), *The History of the Northern Rhodesia Police*, London and Bristol: BECM [British Empire & Commonwealth Museum] Press

[47] Charles Mwalimu (1991), “Police, State Security Forces and Constitutionalism of Human Rights in Zambia,” *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* 21:2: 217–243, <https://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/gjicl/vol21/iss2/3/> (Retrieved on 7 March 2024)

[48] Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa (2014), ““White Men’s Dogs’: Colonial Policing and the Enforcement of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa,” DOI:10.13140/2.1.4832.6725. As Sally Engle Merry (1991: 891) explains, the law “served to extract land from precolonial users and to create a wage labour out of peasant



and subsistence producers. Yet, at the same time, it provided a way for these groups to mobilize the ideology of the colonizers to protect lands and to resist some of the more excessive demands of the settlers for land and labour.” See: Sally Engle Merry (1991), “Legal Pluralism,” *Law&SocietyReview* 22(5): 869–896

[49] Edgar Ngoma (11 February 2024), “Barotseland, What Everyone in Zambia Needs to Know: Where is the Misunderstanding with the Zambian Government?” *Zambian Observer*, <https://zambianobserver.com/barotseland-what-everyone-in-zambia-needs-to-know-where-is-the-misunderstanding-with-the-zambian-government/> (Retrieved on 26 February 2024)

[50] Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou (2021), “European Colonialism in Africa Is Alive,” *Project Syndicate*, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/europe-africa-colonial-era-lasting-effects-by-stelios-michalopoulos-and-elias-papaioannou-2021-07> (Retrieved on 20 March 2024)

[51] Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou (2021), see above

[52] Quoted in: Joseph C. Anene (1970), *The International Boundaries of Nigeria, 1885–1960: The Framework of an Emergent African Nation*, New York: Humanities Press, page 3

[53] See: Marja Hinfelaar (2003), “Remembering Bishop Joseph Dupont (1850–1930) in Present-Day Zambia,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*[*Expressions of Christianity in Zambia*] 33(4): 365–376

[54] Vincent B. Khapoya (2012), *The African Experience*, New York: Routledge (page 130)