Barotseland between 1801 and 1878, before Lewanika.
By Gervas Clay

Opening remarks:-

If I were a politician I should be asking you for your indulgence in making my maiden speech, because this is the first time I have ever read a paper, and I am, of course, very conscious of the fact that this is a highly distinguished gathering before whom to perform.

I am also particularly conscious of not being a trained historian and of addressing many people who are, so you must not expect to hear me using the vocabulary of a trained man because I simply do not know it. However I am fortified by feeling that I have been lucky enough to be given certain advantages in that, not only have I served as an official in Barotseland for nine years, but that it is nearly thirty years since I first went there so that I have myself seen the very great progress made and I have seen the Barotse peoples as they were thirty years ago. I have also been privileged, between 1958 and 1961 when I was Resident Commissioner, of being in very close touch with the Litunga and the Barotse Government.

To discuss Barotseland in the last century before the advent of Lewanika it is necessary to go back to a time of almost complete barbarism, and I want to make it clear that Barotseland was certainly no worse than other parts of Northern Rhodesia and was probably in some ways better. Had I chosen, for example, the Northern Province, I could have told you about the mutilations inflicted upon their people by the Bemba Chiefs, because when I first came out to Northern Rhodesia in 1930 I saw with my own eyes many Africans maimed in this way, and without their hands, toes, ears etc.

The atrocities committed in Barotseland are atrocities of the time in which they were committed, but it is perhaps salutary for us in these days to realise that such things were going on only seventy years ago.

I have chosen to read a paper about Barotseland, not only because I have personal experience of the Protectorate, but because there is rather more written evidence available than there is on any other part of Northern Rhodesia, and as a collector for the past 25 years of books about this territory, I have been able to read very nearly all the books written about Barotseland, though I have not yet had an opportunity of
reading archival material either in England or in the Federation.

So far as written records are concerned, we have to wait until David Livingstone's first visit to Sesheke in 1851 before the record starts, but it is perhaps worth mentioning that from 1875 onwards there were only four years not covered by the written record of a European visitor. This leads to a considerable imbalance in the historical records for the century, for in the first half we have to rely on an occasional paragraph of reported history in later observers' books, and of course on the extremely valuable history compiled by the late Adolphe Jalla, while in the last fifteen years [of that century] there is almost an embarrassment of written records.

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This paper is concerned with the Barotseland Protectorate, which is a Protectorate within the Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia. Barotseland to-day consists of five districts and lies north-west of Livingstone on both sides of the Zambezi River. It has a population of some 300,000, but it is known that this population was very much less in the last century, for there has been a tremendous influx from Angola in the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties. In size, the present Barotseland is comparable with Ireland.

In the time under review, the Barotse dominions spread into what is now the Southern Province and took in both Livingstone and the Kalomo districts, and probably spread as far as Wankie in Southern Rhodesia.

The Barotse have always had a king since they came into their present country, probably from the north-west some hundreds of years ago. They have also had for many generations a council or parliament, the head of which is known as the Ngambela, who duplicates the functions of Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor. The Barotse kingdom has nearly always been centred on the Barotse flood plain, an area 80 miles long by 20 miles wide, which floods every season from February to June.

The period of history with which I am about to deal covers some thirty or forty years before the arrival of the Makololo and the reigns of the Makololo chiefs, from their advent to the time of the insurrection against them when they were almost
completely wiped out by the Barotse. The paper ends in 1864, when a descendant of the old Barotse chiefs, by name Sipopa, re-established himself in power on the Barotse flood plain.

In compiling this paper, I have used only the sources which are concerned with Barotseland, and this means that I have not attempted to go into the early history of the Makololo or to discover the customs of the Basuto or Bechuana tribes from which they sprang. I have collected the material for this paper from many different sources but all of it is concerned with the Makolole and the Barotse in the country now called Barotseland. The latest and most up-to-date account of the Makololo is to be found in Edwin Smith's book: "Great Lion of Bechuanaland." No-one can write about the early history of Barotseland without making constant reference to "Litaba Za Sichaba Sa Malozi" by Adolphe Jalla, and its translation: "The Story of the Barotse Nation." There is a very great deal of interest in David Livingstone's two books: "Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa," 1857, and his "Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi, etc." 1865. Chapman, in his "Travels in the interior of South Africa," 1868, has also been used. Much of the remaining information comes from a considerable variety of sources, and consists very often of a sentence or two recorded by a traveller who has talked to one of the later Barotse chiefs.

In the past, others such as Jalla have written outlines of the political history of Barotseland. My object in this paper is to indicate some of the social conditions which existed in this part of Africa in the period under review. When the nineteenth century opened, the Barotse were living under their Paramount chief, Mulambwa, also known as Santuru, by which name he was referred to by David Livingstone. Mulambwa had one of the longer reigns in Barotse history and died not many years before the Makololo invaders appeared upon the scene. It will be necessary to look very briefly at the state of the nation in Mulambwa's time before the Makololo under Sebituane invaded the country.

What differences are there to-day in the physical features of Barotseland compared with the position in the first quarter of the nineteenth century? First of all, the Barotse flood plain contained a vast aggregation of game, particularly the red lechwe. Throughout most of the century game drives were held, though these did not take place in one spot more than once in three or four years. (1). To-day, the European shoots francolin on the islands of the flood plain to which they are driven by the rising flood: one hundred and fifty years ago,
the Barotse of that time hunted lechwe which were also cut off in the same way by the rising flood. Apart from the virtual disappearance of game, there has been little change on the flood plain. The type of house used by the Barotse is known from a comment of a later traveller: "We found the king in the kashandi, which is built after the old time model of Borotsi dwellings, much in use before the Makololo had invaded the country. The Borotsi, conservative as they are, continue to build their houses in the old style. The form of this building may be compared to the hull of a boat turned upside down.... Save for the base, the walls of the kashandi are built of reeds. To consolidate them large plaits of black and white reeds are employed. A pitched roof, supported by props of wood, completes the structure. Two small, low doors, on opposite sides, give access to it." (2). This sounds from the description exceedingly like camps made for important visitors by the Barotse up to the present day. I understand from Professor Clark that there are houses of this kind in the Lake Dilolo area of Angola, and this may indicate the place of origin of the Barotse.

David Livingstone made meticulous enquiries as to whether Europeans had ever visited the Barotse before the Makololo invasion. He found that, as a result of his own visit, many Barotse had taken European-style names from himself, his family and European objects in common use, but when he first arrived in the country there was no trace of any European-style names in use at all, and he felt that this fact, coupled with the absence of any oral tradition, was conclusive proof that no Europeans had been there before. However, he does record that Mulambwa had once been visited by the Mambari and that: ".... a distinct recollection of that visit is retained." (3). These Mambari (probably half-caste Portuguese traders and members of the Ovimbundu tribe) had come to purchase slaves, and. Livingstone records that Mulambwa and his headmen refused them permission to buy any of the people. (3) Livingstone also recorded that Mulambwa was in the habit of sending men up to the Luvale in order to purchase articles of European manufacture there, which he enumerates as clothes, crockery and beads. (4) It appears that canoes were sent up to barter for these articles (5) It is, however, probable that, like other tribes at the same period of history, the chiefs and important men used European clothing while the remainder, mostly slaves, went almost naked or in skins and bark cloth.

In the Barotse Valley at that time there were few trees and those which were on mounds had nearly all been transplanted by
Mulambwa for shade purposes. (6). Mulambwa also increased the size of various mounds in the Valley (7) and Livingstone records that he ".... made a canoe, of planks sewn together, which was so large it required twenty men to paddle it. It was roofed in with cloth and Sebituane's people destroyed it." (8). It was no doubt the State Barge of the time. It is curious that canoes made of planks sewn together should be the type used in the Indian Ocean and not, apparently, indigenous to Africa.

Mulambwa is known to have had a bow stand and Livingstone records that he presented offerings to his ancestors on it. (9).

Mulambwa was known as a famous law-giver and some of the laws he made are recorded by Jalla. (10). He fought four wars, two against the Makalahari to the west, one against the Ila to the east, and one against the Luvale to the north. This was presumably part of his expansionist policy. No doubt cattle were captured and taken back to Barotseland, and probably slaves also for use domesticaely in accordance with tribal custom before the advent of slave traders.

It was a barbarous age. When a Paramount Chief died, his favourite indunas voluntarily had their arms tied behind their backs and were put into canoes, already holed, and pushed into the river, where they duly sank. (11). Annually, sacrifices were made to Nyambe at the First Fruits Festival, when twelve oxen were killed in a special manner and eaten. Every morning the Barotse prostrated themselves before the rising sun. (12).

Perhaps the most important event in Mulambwa's reign was the advent, at the turn of the century, of the Mbalangwe under Mwanakandala and the Mbunda under Mwenechiengele, who came to seek refuge in Barotseland and were welcomed and settled on the eastern margin of the plain in the region of the present Mongu. (13).

Gluckman estimates that Mulambwa's reign lasted from 1780 to 1830, though I incline personally to believe that he probably reigned for another four or five years. It is curious that Jalla does not mention any reaction by the Barotse to the crossing of the Zambezi by the Makololo, though they must have passed through the southern part of the Barotse domains before settling among the Tonga tribe for some years. One of the early travellers records that Mulambwa fled before Sebituane

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1Bow stand: an instrument made of iron on which bows and arrows were laid. Many tribes in Northern Rhodesia brought these with them from the Congo, and they are retained as relics to the present day.
without striking a single blow (14), and if this is correct, then the Makololo crossed the Zambezi in the time of Mulambwa himself, and this crossing is put by Edwin Smith as having occurred in 1840. (15).

The Makololo, under their great chief, Sebituane, had an original core of Basuto warriors. During the course of many years' wanderings they fought their way through Bechuanaland to the Zambezi, collecting women and cattle from many tribes and arriving in what is now Northern Rhodesia as a heterogeneous collection of people of many origins. Having settled in the Batoka highlands for several years, they were attacked by the Matabele and proceeded north-eastwards and then westwards, right across the present Namwala and Mankoya districts, until they reached the Barotse plain.

Meanwhile, in Barotseland the succession to Mulambwa had been disputed between Mbuwkwana, who had been Chief at Nalolo, and Silumelume, who was chosen by the northern Barotse. Both were sons of Mulambwa. Silumelume was killed by the Mambunda, and Mbuwkwana then came and took possession. At this moment, the Barotse heard that the Makololo had come down into the plain at Kataba. I do not wish to detail the battles which followed, but the Barotse were completely defeated in a series of battles and Sebituane became recognised as Chief of the Barotse dominions. Only to the north and west, at Lukulu and on the Nyengo, were small Barotse independent chieftainships established.

The years that followed were years of consolidation of the power of the Makololo over the Barotse and other indigenous tribes and of constant battle with Zulu war parties, several of them sent against the Makololo by Mzilikazi, but one at least under an independent Zulu Chief called Ngabe or Nkaba. All these war parties were known to the Barotse and Makololo as Matabele. These Matabele raids into Barotseland were entirely unsuccessful owing to the wiles and stratagems of Sebituane. Ngabe and his impi were wiped out and the impis from Mzilikazi suffered severe reverses, but it became more and more clear that it was the southern boundary that had to be watched and although David Livingstone records that Sebituane came clown to Sesheke and then on to Linyanti specially to see the white visitor for whom he had longed, it seems more probable that he really came down to take up a strategic position where he could watch the Matabele and be guarded against surprise by the swamps of the river Chobe. On June 21st, 1851 David Livingstone met Sebituane at Linyanti,
which is now in the Caprivi Strip, and we are mew in the historical period. David Livingstone, who was accompanied by Oswell and Murray, left a fairly full account of this and subsequent visits and in addition we have some records left by Oswell. The Makololo are described as coffee and milk coloured compared with the much darker black of the Barotse and other Central African tribes. They are also described by Livingstone as having large thighs(15), and as being a "puny, sickly set in comparison with the deep chested Barotse.(16)

Sebituane himself was not a chief by birth but was obviously an outstanding personality with great powers of leadership. Re also had in a marked form the common touch and like to sit down and talk to humble visitors.(17) He appears to have specially favoured members of the Barotse royal family and Livingstone records "So we found him, with even the sons of the chiefs of the Barotse closely attached to his person; and they say to this day, if anything else but natural death had assailed their father; every one of them would have laid down his life in his defence. One reason for their strong affection was their emancipation by the decree of Sebituane, 'all were children of the chief'."(18)

Coillard writing in 1878, records that "all their chiefs (he refers to the Barotse) have been servants or slaves of Sekeletu. It is from these Makololo potentates, of whom they always speak with affection and the highest respect, that they have received their education and formed their ideal of the dignity, manners and power of a sovereign. The warrior tribes of Barotsi, once subdued, had become the most devoted of all to the interests of the Makololo..." (19)

Livingstone describes the ancient costume ef the Makololo as consisting of "the skin of a lamb, kid, jackal, ocelet, or other small animal, worn reund asd below the loins; and in cold weather a kaross or skin mantle was throws over the shoulders. The kaross is now laid aside and the young men of fashion wear a monkey jacket and a skin round the hips, but no trousers, waistcoat or shirt." (20)

Oswell records "Many of Sebituane's followers were dressed in green baize, red drugget, calico and cheap, gaudy cloth, some in garments of European manufacture; and the travellers were at a loss to account for this, as the country was in 18°S. Latitude, 1,500 to 1,800 miles from the sea, until from an explanation given them by the chief, they found they had reached the southern limit of the slave trade".(21)
This question of European dress worn by chiefs and important headmen before Europeans came into the country is one that crops up again and again and is difficult for the European today to comprehend. While it is generally thought that Africans have only worn European clothing since the arrival of Europeans into the country, this is entirely incorrect historically because the earliest European visitors into Central Africa all record that the chiefs were wearing European clothing which they had traded from the coast. Later, on his Trans-African Journey, in 1854, David Livingstone, travelling in what is now Balovale district, records that one of his men "picked up a bit of a steel watch chain of European manufacture on the path at the place where the Mambari were accustomed to crossing the Zambezi."

To revert to the clothing of the Makololo, Livingstone also records that the Makololo ladies drank large quantities of beer which was very nutritious and gave "that plumpness of form which is considered beautiful ... They cut their woolly hair quite short, and delighted in having the whole person shining with butter. Their dress is a kilt reaching to the knees; its material is ox hide, made as soft as cloth, it is not ungraceful. A soft skin mantle is thrown across the shoulders when the lady is unemployed, but when engaged in any sort of labour she throws this aside and works in the kilt alone. The ornaments most coveted are large brass anklets as thick as a little finger, and armlets of both brass and ivory; the latter of an inch broad. The rings are so heavy that the ankles are often blistered by the weight pressing down; but it is fashion, and is borne as magnanimously as tight lacing and tight shoes among ourselves. Strings of beads are hung around the neck, and the fashionable colours being light green and pink, the trader could get almost anything he chose for beads of these colours."(22) "Families of the Makololo were spread over the country, one or two in each village, as the lords of the land."(23) The settlement of the Makololo families among the Barotse may have been on similar lines to the Normans among the Saxons in England after 1066.

Livingstone also records for us the type of house made by the Makololo. "The wife of Pitsane was busy making a large hut, while we were in the town; she informed us that the men left housebuilding entirely to the women and servants. A round tower of stakes and reeds, nine or ten feet high, is raised and plastered; a floor is next made of soft tufa, or ant hill material and cow dung. The roof, which is much larger in diameter than the tower, is made on the ground, and then, many persons assisting, lifted up and placed on the tower and
thatched. A plastered reed fence is next built up to meet the outer part of the roof, which still projects a little over this fence, and a space of three feet remains between it and the tower. The inner door of the hut... was unfortunately small, being only nineteen inches high and twenty-two inches wide at the floor. A foot from the bottom it measured seventeen inches in breadth, and close to the top only twelve inches, so it was a difficult matter to get through it. The tower has no light or ventilation, except through this small door. The reason the lady assigned for having the doors so very small was to keep out the mice." (24)

There is also a delightful description of children at play. "The children have merry times; especially in the cool of the evening. One of their games consists of a little girl being carried on the shoulders of two others, she sits with outstretched arms, as they walk about with her, and all the rest clap their handa, and stopping before each hut sing pretty airs, some beating time of their little kilts of cow skin, others making a curious humming sound between songs." (25)

"In war the Makololo had an advantage over the indigous tribes because they used ox hide shields which had been previously unknown." (26)

Chapman states that "The real Makololo have a manner of tattooing themselves with needles, like sailors; but they all seem to have the same pattern drawn on the face. A straight blue line down the forehead, a semi-circular mark diverging over it from the eyes and another under them and the face generally divided into sections. The Makalakas, their slaves,(the Barotse and other subject tribes) tattoo by puncturing cicatrices with a knife through the skin, marking out figures on the back, breast and belly like the open worked collars which ladies wear." (27)

So much for the Makololo and the views of them by Livingstone and other travellers. Let us now turn to what the Makololo thought of Livingstone himself. It is common knowledge that Livingstone was unable to get on with Europeans and it is generally assumed that despite this fact he managed to get on particularly well with Africans. Personally I believe that anyone who gets on well with Africans will also get on well with another race, and since there is no doubt that Livingstone invariably quarrelled with the Europeans with whom he was associated, it is extraordinary to find him apparently getting on so well with Africans. Personally I believe that
the African tribes in Central Africa with whom Livingstone came in contact and the carriers and servants who accompanied him were frightened of him because they regarded him as a witchdoctor. None of them had ever come in contact with a European doctor before, and it seems likely that his successful medical practices increased his reputation and that the Africans as a whole were frightened of offending him. This is borne out by Chapman's comment that "Whenever Livingstone preaches in the presence or visits the chief, the doctors burn something as a charm to protect them from his witchcraft. Being, as they find, a doctor, he has also a reputation of being a wizard. This makes him either feared or admired, and gives him a certain influence. They give him credit for being a good doctor, and say he has cured many but killed some natives. They do not believe in natural deaths; when a man dies he has been killed. By all accounts the doctor's preaching is barely tolerated by the chief (this was Sekeletu) who is at heart highly displeased at his doctrines concerning rain and polygamy. " (28)

Holub also records that Livingstone "in consequence of not being able to make himself understood by the chiefs, had been taken for a magician who had come down from heaven with the rain ...." (29)

During Livingstone's visit in 1851 the great leader of the Makololo, Sebituane, died. Livingstone records that he died as a result of congestion of the lungs following on a wound he had received in an earlier battle.

The African tradition is to the effect that Sebituane begged Livingstone for a ride on his horse, that the horse shied and that Sebituane was thrown off and died as a result of his injuries.(30) It seems very likely that there is some truth in this tradition because on the one hand Livingstone does not record seeing any horses on any of his visits to Barotseland, while we know that Sebituane came from Basutoland and there is a record that Sebituane had come through "the Southern Kalahari with a large following of Moshesh's malcontents mounted on their famous ponies."(30)

It seems likely that Sebituane had been used to horse-riding in his early days in Basutoland and seized the opportunity of riding again by borrowing Livingstone's rather sprightly horse. The horse shied, and, not having ridden for many years, he was thrown.
Before passing on to the later Makololo chiefs it is worth noting some of the traditions that have come down and been recorded by later travellers associated with Sebituane.

It is recorded by Gibbons that whereas the cattle of the Batoka and Ba-Ila are very small, the Barotse cattle are very similar both in size and appearance to those of the Bechuana "and in all probability are descended from the herds brought with him by Sebituane, the Makololo conqueror, when he invaded the country ...(32)

Gibbons also records that the peculiar industry of the Barotse was wood carving and that as there were no other tribes in the Barotse empire who did fancy wood work it seemed probable that they "learned the art from their temporary masters, the Makololo, whose kin, the Basuto, are likewise very clever at the craft."(33)

Before his death Sebituane had made it clear that he wished his daughter Mamochoisane to inherit the chieftainship and he told her that she must never stick to one husband for any length of time but must change husbands as chiefs change their wives. She tried this out and did not like it and preferred to live as an ordinary women. She therefore gave up the chieftainship to her brother Sekeletu, then a youth of 17 or 18 years of age. In his later visits to Barotseland in 1853, 1854, 1855 and 1860 it was with Sekeletu that David Livingstone had dealings, but there were a number of other travellers who managed to find their way to Linyanti and had dealings with the Makololo, but most of them left no written record of their visits. Nevertheless these intermittent visits by European traders and sportsmen had a considerable influence, not only on the Makololo, but on the Barotse and their future chiefs.

From them they learned a civilised way of conducting themselves, so that later missionaries were constantly surprised at, for example, their table manners.

In May 1853 David Livingstone arrived at Linyanti for the second time and found Sekeletu, son of Sebituane, installed as chief. He records that many of Sebituane's original followers had been cut off by fever and that only a fragment of his people remained.(34) At Linyanti itself, which had now become the capital, there were 7,000 inhabitants.(35)

Livingstone brought with him an improved breed of goats and fowls and a pair of cats.(36)
He found that Sekeletu and the other important Makololo leaders were mounted on oxen(37) following on a suggestion he had made to them earlier that they should use oxen for riding purposes. After a brief visit to the Barotse Valley and the return to Linyanti, Livingstone left for the west coast accompanied by some carriers given to him by Sekeletu. This is not the place to describe Livingstone's journey and it suffices to say that having reached Loanda on the west coast he returned to Linyanti with his carriers and then set out for the east coast accompanied by Sekeletu as far as the Victoria Falls, which he discovered in 1855. He took with him to the east coast some 120 carriers and when he returned to England in 1856 he left them behind at Quelimane, promising to return later and take them back to their homes.

Following on Livingstone's lectures in England, a mission party consisting of Messrs. Helmore and Price with their wives and children, set out for Linyanti which they reached in February 1860. The first question they were asked was where Livingstone was, and there was great disappointment when it was discovered that he was not with them.(58) Whether the many members of this party were poisoned by the Makololo or whether they died of malaria or some other tropical complaint has never been proved, but that only Pride and two of the Helmore children came back to civilisation is certain, and there is no doubt that they were extremely badly treated and their wagons looted by Sekeletu. It seems quite likely to me that this was because Livingstone had previously brought back carriers who accompanied him to the west coast and promised to come back with the much larger number who had gone with him to the east coast. The fact that these had not returned made the Makololo very suspicious and particularly because in the meanwhile another expedition had gone to the west coast in company with an Arab trader and had never been seen again. This party had consisted of 95 persons.(39)

A few months later a traveller called William Baldwin arrived at the Victoria Falls, which he had reached with the aid of a pocket compass.

He was the second European to visit the Falls and while he was there David Livingstone and his brother Charles Livingstone and Dr. John Kirk arrived from the east coast. Baldwin also ran into trouble with the Makololo who were confining him as some sort of a prisoner and refusing to let him go. As soon as Livingstone arrived the whole atmosphere changed and Baldwin was allowed to proceed on his journey. It is for consideration that the Makololo had been soured by the non-return of their
carriers and as soon an Livingstone arrived with a very considerable number of them the standing of Europeans and particularly Englishmen was retrieved.

By the time Livingstone reached Linyanti a further party of Makololo had arrived beck from the west coast (40) and he records that he was offered by Sekeletu, tea, biscuits and preserved fruit, which had come from the west coast to Linyanti(41) Livingstone of course immediately inquired into what had happened to the Holmore and Price Expedition. Although Livingstone himself does not record this he apparently spoke to them with great indignation. "You have killed and plundered the servants of God, who you invited to your country, and the judgement of God will fall on you."(42) The speedy fulfilment of this prophecy became very well known among all the neighbouring tribes and at a later date was often quoted by the Christians among the Bechuana and Bamangwatos who used to say "Where are now the powerful Makololo; has not God avenged the death of His Servants?"

On his arrival Livingstone was brought a large number of huge pots of beer which were at once tasted by the men who had brought them, to show that they were not poisoned.(43) Today the Barotse will tell you that beer was unknown in their country before the advent of the Makololo but I find this quite impossible to believe. What I do think the Makololo introduced was the swigging of large amounts of beer before all public business was undertaken and this had certainly net been the Barotse custom.

Livingstone has given us an interesting account of the court practices of the Makololo:-

"The complainant asks the man, against whom he means to lodge his complaint, to come with him to the chief. This is never refused. When both are in the kotla, the complainant stands up and states the whole case before the chief and the people usually assembled there. He stands a few seconds after he has done this, to recollect if he has forgotten anything. The witnesses to whom he has referred then rise up and tell all they themselves have seen or heard, but not anything that they have heard from others. The defendant, after allowing some minutes to elapse so that he may not interrupt any of the opposite party, slowly rises, folds his cloak around him, and, in the moast quiet, deliberate way he can assume — yawning, blowing his nose, etc. — begins to explain the affair, denying the charge or admitting it, as the case may be, Sometimes, when galled by his remarks, the complainant utters a sentence of dissent; the accused turns quietly to him, and says, "Be
silent; I sat still while you were speaking; can't you do the same? Do you want to have it all to yourself?" And as the audience acquiesce in this bantering, and enforce silence, he goes on till he has finished all he wishes to say in his defence. If he has any witnesses to the truth of the facts of his defence, they give their evidence. No oath is administered; but occasionally, when a statement is questioned, a man will say, "By my father" or "By the chief. it is so." Their truthfulness among each other is quite remarkable; but their system of government is such that Europeans are not in a position to realise it readily. A poor man will say, in his defence against a rich one, "I am astonished to hear a man so great as to make a false accusation;" as if the offence of falsehood were felt to be one against the society which the individual referred to had the greatest interest in upholding.

If the case is one of no importance, the chief decides it at once; if frivolous, he may give the complainant a scolding, and put a stop to the case in the middle of the complaint, or he may allow it to go on without paying any attention to it whatever. Family quarrels are often treated in this way, and then a man may be seen stating his case with great fluency, and not a soul listening to him. But if it is a case between influential men, or brought on by under-chiefs, then the greatest decorum prevails.

If the chief does not see his way clearly to a decision, he remains silent; the elders then rise one by one and give their opinions, often in the way of advice rather than as decision; and when the chief finds the general sentiment agreeing in one view, he delivers his judgement accordingly. He alone speaks sitting, all others stand.

No one refuses to acquiesce in the decision of the chief, as he has the power of life and death in his hands, and can enforce the law to that extent if he chooses; but grumbling is allowed, and, when marked favouritism is shown to any relative of the chief, the people generally are not so astonished at the partiality as we would be in England."(44)

Livingstone brought with him a letter from the Foreign Secretary on behalf of Queen Victoria and to this Sekeletu replied. The answer as recorded by Livingstone in Sikololo, with an English translation, may well be the only recorded example of the language spoken in Sekeletu's time.(45) Livingstone records that he "carefully abstained from making any suggestion and allowed him to say just what was uppermost in his mind at the time. The letter was read at a public
meeting of the people and the answer may be considered as an expression of the wishes of all the intelligent men of the tribe." The letter itself includes the expression "and Sekeletu says to the Lord of the English, give me of your people to dwell with me, and I shall cut off a country for them to dwell in."(46)

It appears that Sekeletu took a special fancy to Kirk as the young doctor who had treated him for leprosy and so nearly restored him to health. Because Dr. Kirk was of the same age as Sekeletu, the latter was particularly anxious that he should come and live with him.(47) But though Drs. Livingstone and Kirk had ameliorated Sekeletu's condition, he did not have long to live as no doubt the leprosy got worse after their departure, and it has been recorded that at his death his "Body was a mass of ulcers." (48)

Another early traveller, Chapman, did not view Sekeletu as favourably as did Livingstone, who was no doubt prejudiced in his favour by his respect for Sebituane. Chapman describes Sekeletu as "that miserable little despot". (49) Chapman also records that when he arrived at the Falls in 1862 there were Makololo there who had been instructed by Sekeletu that "Englishmen are to be received favourably, Boers, to whom, for some reason or another, they have taken a great dislike, are to be put to death."(50) One wonders if this was the influence of Livingstone who had no reason to love the Boers after they had burnt down his mission station.

Sekeletu was succeeded by Mbololo but civil war broke out. Sekeletu had killed many of the Makololo, feeling that they were responsible, through witchcraft, for his leprosy. Sekeletu also put to death many of those whom he did not trust, Makololo, Barotse, and Batoka. By this time the Makololo had been taught to regard the Barotse as dogs and slaves.(51) In addition, as we have seen, the Makololo had been decimated by fever and apparently many had also died of drink and bhang.(52)

It is now time to see what the small independent Barotse chiefs had been doing during the Barotse interregnum.

Mukubwanu, who had been the Chief at Nalolo, found his way to Lukulu where he had a fortified village. Shortly after his arrival, he was poisoned by his wife and was succeeded by Imasiku. Here he withstood a siege by the Makololo.

Eventually, after the garrison had been reduced to eating dogs, the Makololo withdrew, but only to return in the
following year. On this occasion, Imasiku and many of his followers slipped away at night and moved far up the Kambompo River to a place which became known as Lukwakwa.

Meanwhile, another son of Mulambwa, Imbua, had settled at Nyengo. Imbue thought that Imasiku was better off at Lukwakwa and went to attack him there. However, the Mambunda who had supported him transferred their allegiance back to Imasiku, and Imbua returned to Nyengo. Later, the Mambunda assassinated Imasiku and put up as Chief in his place yet another son of Mulambwa called Sipopa (53).

During this interregnum, it is known that the Barotse had the greatest difficulty in fulfilling all the obligations required of a new Chief on his inheritance because he was expected to visit Katulamwa, where Mboo was buried, and as this place was in the area under Makololo control, it was difficult for this to be done. The Royal Family had fled with the Nalikwanda (State Barge) and the Maoma (war drums).

It is recorded that they came down by night, accomplished the rites at Katulambwa, *and the next day, having returned to Nyengo, the drums were beaten and the king was regularly nominated.* (54)

Mbololo, the last Chief of the Makololo, was challenged by another Makololo Chief called Mamili, and a fierce battle was fought between them. Although Mbololo won, the strength of the Makololo was very seriously reduced. The Barotse still living under the Makololo sent messages to Sipopa and he sent his Ngambela (Prime Minister), Njekwa, to invade Barotseland. Mbololo and the Makololo were completely defeated, and Mbololo himself ran wounded into the Zambezi and was never seen again.

Most of the Makololo men were hunted and killed and the women became the property of the Barotse Chiefs. Messages were sent to Sipopa and, on his arrival in Barotseland, he was duly instated as King of the Barotse.

The reign of the Makololo was over and the ancient Royal Family of Barotse land was reinstated. (55)

Sipopa was one of the youngest of Mulambwa's sons and had lived with Sebitwane (56). He had at one time worked as David Livingstone's cook. Compared to the Makololo, the Barotse were notable for their cleanliness for, whereas the Makololo used quantities of rancid butter for anointing their bodies, the Barotse did not use fat in this way and washed themselves frequently. Sipopa himself took a bath every evening in an immense wooden tub (58).
Sipopa was popular with the people for his open-handedness and for being the representative of the old line of Barotse Chiefs: but he became unpopular for taking other people's wives - particularly the Makololo women - for confiscating to himself all the cattle of the Makololo, for being so suspicious of all those surrounding him, and for being always on the move (59).

The European travellers of the time have recorded that no-one could hold anything more valuable than was possessed by Sipopa, which meant that valuable presents were often refused for fear that Sipopa would not only confiscate them but would also kill the owner for being in possession.

The reign of Sipopa is recorded in considerable detail by Jalla who, writing only some thirty years afterwards, was able to reconstruct the history of the reign year by year. Sipopa was a great hunter and Jalla records his yearly hunting expeditions. Apart from the constant danger of rebellion and assassination life was not a very serious matter in those days, and a great deal of time was spent in hunting, dancing, drumming, etc. There is an account of Sipopa leading a game of Follow-my-leader in boats (60).

Immediately after the defeat of the Makololo the Batoka, under their Chief, Sipatunyama, tried to establish their independence but Sipopa brought them to heel by inflicting a crashing defeat on them.

It has been recorded that fifteen Europeans visited the country after Livingstone, so that contact continued to be made with civilisation. (61) It was not, however, until about the year 1871 that another important European came upon the scene. This was Westbeech, who later settled at Panda-Matenga.

There is an interesting account of Westbeech's first visit to Sipopa as follows (62): -

"Westbeech told us how, twelve years ago, he had arrived for the first time with three wagon loads of goods at the Chobe junction, to trade with the natives. Sepopo, the king, came to him with many followers, and told him to take all his personal effects from the wagons and stack them on one side. As soon as this was done, Sepopo, without further question, ordered his men to take all the goods off the wagons and march them off to a town he was then occupying on the other side of the river, and then invited Westbeech to visit him there. Not knowing what course to pursue, Westbeech went over to Sepopo, who treated him right royally, giving him the free run of the
country, and allowing him to shoot as many elephants as he liked. However, Westbeech, tiring of this, begged for leave to go home; but Sepopo detained him, as he said, to make friends. At last, after staying a year and a half, Westbeech insisted on leaving, when Sepopo, with many expressions of kindness and regret, allowed him to go. But while Westbeech was inspanning his wagons to depart, Sepopo came over to him with hundreds of bearers carrying ivory, and ordered them to pack it all on the wagons as a gift for Westbeech to remember him by; then, bidding him goodbye, with tears in his eyes, he turned and walked away. Westbeech realised £12,000 out of the ivory on his return to civilisation, a fact that induced him to return and settle in the Barotzi country, where he founded the Panda Matenga trading station."

After this, Westbeech became persona grata, not only with Sipopa but with his successors. Unfortunately, the early journals of Westbeech have disappeared so that his own account of his early dealings with the Barotse are not on record.

In 1875, a Czecho-Slovakian doctor called Emil Holub came up to the Zambezi and visited Sipopa, who was then living at Sesheke. Holub has left his description of Sipopa and of his entourage at that time (63):

"A crowd of natives in leather and cotton aprons announced that the king was waiting to receive me, and after proceeding another 200 yards I stood face to face with his majesty. He was a man of about five-and-thirty, dressed in European style, with an English hat upon his head, decorated with a fine white ostrich feather. He had a broad, open countenance, large eyes, and a good-humoured expression that betrayed nothing of the tyrant that he really was. Advancing to meet me with a light and easy tread, he smiled pleasantly as he held out his hand, and after greeting Blookley in a similar fashion, he bestowed a nod of recognition on our servant April.

He was accompanied by some of the principal court-officials, only one of whom wore trousers; two others had woollen garments fastened across their backs, whilst the rest were only to be distinguished from the general mob by the number of bracelets on their arms. The most noticeable part of the procession was the royal band; on either side of the king were myrimba-players bringing out the most excruciating sounds with a pair of short drumsticks from a keyboard of calabashes suspended from their shoulders by a strap; these were preceded by men with huge tubular drums, upon which they played with their fingers, accompanying the strains with their voices. Followed by this motley throng, we were conducted to a tall
mimosa, where we were met by a man in European costume, whom Sepopo introduced to me as Jan Mahura, a Bechuana, who had resided three years with him as interpreter.

And again (64):

"I was invited . . . to join the king at supper. He was in a little cemented courtyard sitting on a mat; we were accommodated in a similar way, and conducted to our seats upon his left hand, the queen and some officials being placed upon his right. The meal consisted of boiled eland flesh served upon plates, and this time we found ourselves provided with knives and forks, which had been introduced by the traders from the west coast. As sauce to the meat we were offered manza, a transparent sort of meal-pap, that upon analyzing, I afterwards ascertained was very nutritious. After supper some impote (honey-beer) was brought in a round-bodied gourd-shell with a twisted neck, and poured out into large tin mugs that had been a present from Westbeech. The butler, after clapping his hands, sat down in the open space in front of the king and drank off the first goblet; the king took the next and, after sipping it, passed it to the queen on his left, and then received it back from her and offered it to us; although several of the chiefs that were present were allowed to partake of the beverage, no one but ourselves was permitted to put his lips to the royal cup. When the drinking was over, the king rose from his seat, took off his boots, and gave them to the waiting-maid who had brought in the meat, and retired to his house, though not until he had invited me to breakfast with him in the morning."

Of the style of dress at this time, Holub recalls (65):

"In the style of their mantles, too, the Marutse subjects show a marked difference from the other branches of the great Bantu family. They prefer those of a circular shape, something like a Spanish mantilla, and reaching to their hips. Small mantles made of letshwe and puku skins are also worn. The sovereign and some of the principal officials occasionally attire themselves in European costume, but more often than not they wear nothing but their aprons, covering themselves in a woollen wrap in rainy weather. The waistband is made of every variety of material; sometimes of the hide of gnus, gazelles, or elephants, sometimes of the skins of water-lizards, boas, cobras, and other snakes, and occasionally of simple plaited grass or straw.

"Boys go entirely naked until some time between their sixth and tenth years of age. Little girls on attaining their fourth
year begin by wearing tiny aprons made of twisted cords about
ten inches long, and sometimes ornamented by brass rings; when
ten years old they have small square leather aprons fastened
to a belt. Many of them, who are affianced when very young,
wear two aprons, a short one in front, and a longer one
behind.

"Married women have short petticoats of roughly tanned
leather, generally cowhide, with the hair inside; these reach
to their knees, and are fastened on by double waistbands. A
red-brown substance tint is prepared from bark, and has a
somewhat agreeable odour, is rubbed into the outer surface.
Women who are suckling their infants wear mantles of letchwe-
skin like the men, which are generally thrown across their
back, and drawn over their bosom on the approach of a
stranger.

"In bad weather the women, and sometimes the men too, wrap
themselves up in a huge circular leather cloak reaching to the
ankles, and fastened at the throat with a strap or a brooch of
wood or metal; it requires to be held together in front by the
hand. As a rule the people go barefooted, which is much more
practicable on their sandy soil than in the thorny districts
south of the Zambesi; for long journeys, however, they wear
sandals made of rough leather, which are fastened to the great
toe and ankle by a strap across the instep."

Reference must be made to Sipopa's cruelty, not only to his
own subjects but to his visitors. Holub recalls that "the few
white men who had attempted to deal with him as traders or
hunters had all, in the end, been brutally treated." (66)

As regards his cruelty to his own people, this was no doubt in
accordance with the custom of the time, but it is reported
that Sipopa used to take the child of an induna, cut off its
fingers and toes and put them in the Royal Drums, throwing the
mutilated corpse to the crocodiles. The drums were then beaten
in all districts and the soldiers gathered round their chiefs
and surprised the tribes to be attacked. (67) Holub, referring
to the War Drums, states that "the skins were painted all over
with red, to represent blood, and they were full of fragments
of dried flesh and bones, these bones being principally the
toes and fingers of the live children of distinguished
parents, and supposed to be amulets to protect the rising town
of Sesheke from fire and sword, and to guard the kingdom
generally from assault and rapine." (68)

Holub also gives a gruesome account of an execution which he
himself witnessed. (69)
It has already been remarked that Sipopa was frequently moving his residence. Eventually, he went down to Sesheke and lived there, and his reasons seem to have been threefold:— First of all, he wished to take advantage of the very large herds of elephant that still remained in the area at that time and to spend much of his time hunting them. Secondly, he preferred to trade with the English and Afrikaner traders from the south rather than with the Portuguese and half-caste traders who visited the Barotse flood plain from the west; and thirdly, he wished to be near his friend, Westbeech. (70)

A curious reason for the eventual fall of Sipopa is given in Holub (71):—

"In Sepopo's employment there were likewise two old wizen-looking magicians or doctors, Liva and his brother, who exercised almost a supreme control over state affairs.

They had practised their craft for more than sixty years; they had served under previous sovereigns, and their experience enabled them now to minister to Sepopo's suspicions, to manage his temper, and to foster his superstitions. They enjoyed a kind of hereditary reputation, as in spite of the atrocities which they were known to have encouraged, they were regarded by the various tribes with awe rather than with hatred. That there had not been a revolt long ago against Sepopo's tyranny was mainly to be attributed to the belief that he had those in his secret council who could divine any plot beforehand and frustrate any stratagem that could be devised, and even when his despotism grew so great that the life of the highest in the kingdom was not secure for a day, not a man could be found to lift an assegai against him. At last it happened that a certain charm which he had publicly exhibited and proclaimed to be infallible failed to produce its proper effect; scales as it were fell from the eyes of the populace; they discerned that all his pretensions were hypocrisy and deceit, and proceeded forthwith to expel him from the throne."

The Ngambela of Barotseland at this time was Mamili (not to be confused with the member of the Makololo Royal Family, both of this name). When Sipopa heard of the grumbling because he was living at Sesheke, he sent a message to Mamili to tell him that, if he wanted him to return, he must first remove certain persons. When the Ngambela refused, the Chief sent his own emissary with his people to kill these men. This frightened the Ngambela, who then raised an army, marched on and entered
Nalolo and scattered Sipopa's emissaries. He then set out with a large army to attack Sipopa, but the latter fled by water and was shot at and wounded by one of his own servants as he left the land. It seems that he intended to take refuge with his old friend, Westbeech, but he died in August, 1876, three weeks after he was wounded. (72)

The Ngambela, Mamili, then set up Mwanawina, another member of the Royal Family, who was elected in October, 1876. According to Jalla, Mamili took upon himself many of the royal prerogatives until the new Chief and his indunas conspired together and put him to death. Jalla states that Mwanawina would have ruled wisely had it not been for his maternal relatives in the south, who conspired against the northern indunas and caused much dissatisfaction amongst the people in the north. One of the leading indunas, Mataa, led the malcontents, who raised an army and attacked Mwanawina. The latter was deserted by the people from the south and fled. Jalla states that, having gone to the Mashi, hoping to link up with certain people there, he was disappointed and went on to the Batoka county and thence to the Kafue-Zambezi confluence, where he joined the Makupekupe Angoni. With their aid he appeared in Sesheke in 1879 and burnt the town.

Meanwhile, in Northern Barotseland, the people had chosen Lubosi (afterwards to be known as Lewanika) as their Chief. Mwanawina, with his allies, was completely defeated by Lubosi's army at the Lumbe River. According to Schulz and Hammer (74)

"Three times Ngwanaweena forced Lebossi to retreat, fighting heroically against fearful odds but, overwhelmed at last by superior numbers, his forces fled, and he, obliged to follow, crossed the Zambezi at the Nghambwe cataracts. Simbwye, the chief here in charge of the crossing, followed in the night, and with murderous assegai killed him, thus ending the career of one of the fiercest and boldest natives that ever trod the Zambezi Valley." This account varies in some respects from that given by Jalla.

There is some mystery as to who the Makupekupe / Angoni were, and there are different accounts of them. Major Serpa Pinto, who records that Mwanawina was seventeen years of age at his succession, states that he fled to the white elephant hunters and later that the Lozi were attacked by north-eastern tribes known as Makupikupj.

Dr. Benjamin Bradshaw, who was a colleague of Westbeech at Panda-Matenga, records that Mwanawina was deposed in May,
1878, and that this was followed by severe war between the Barotse on the one side and the Masubias, headed by Mwanawina, on the other. He says that the Masubias were assisted by "a tribe from the north-east called Ma-kupi-kupi, which tribe I am unacquainted with." (76) I believe, however, that the correct clue is given by Schulz and Hammar (7), where it is stated that Mwanawina "fled on to the Mujakunda people, to whom he made great promises, hoping for their help to reinstate him on the throne." The word Mujakunda must refer to the Chikunda, and these people are described by Lane-Poole in the following terms: "Whenever a local conflict arose, one party or the other would endeavour to gain the assistance of the Chikunda, who thus became, like the Condottieri in mediaeval Italy, the mercenary force ready to hire itself to the party offering the highest reward for its services." (78) Brelsford describes the Chikunda as followers or soldiers of the Portuguese and states that there was much mixed Portuguese blood in them.

Lubosi, the next Chief of Barotseland, ruled until 1916, so that this is an appropriate place to end this paper.

The Barotse passed through a period of tribulation under the Makololo chiefs followed by a time of wars which were to continue during the first years of Lubosi's - that is, Lewanika's - reign. These years of tribulation provided the background history of the men and women, chiefs and commoners who saw the advent of first, missionaries, and later the British South Africa Company officials into their country.

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