

The Barotseland statehood—in support of Prof. Imenda’s “Barotseland Referendum Irrelevant” article

by S Mwaekwa

In the recent past, there has been so much talk about Barotseland statehood. Some quarters have stressed that Zambia needs to have a referendum to put this matter to rest for good, while others have stood their grounds and vouched never to have a referendum over Barotseland. This issue has left many a Zambian at sea. We find a lot of young people falling prey to Kaunda’s scheme of suppressing the role Barotseland played in the independence of Zambia and old people living only for the day and not bothered to let their minds explore yonder than their comfort zones.

One thing that all should understand is that Barotseland existed long before Zambia was born in 1964. It was and still is a nation with proper administration and legal system. Actually, it had everything that a modern state requires, despite successive Zambian regime’s attempts to destroy them. The sentiments by some leaders that we cannot have a nation within a nation are misplaced and simply expose their ignorance about the history of Zambia. Why do I say that Barotseland has been in existence long before Zambia? It is a known fact that it was only last October when there was a national excitement of the jubilee celebration of a failed unitary state—meaning that Zambia had attained fifty years of a falsified existence.

As way back as 1889, Barotseland as a nation was able to able to sign concessions with internationally recognized entities, including:

- a) 27th June 1889, the Ware Concession;
- b) 26th June 1890, the Lochner Concession; and
- c) 25th June 1898, the Lawley Concession.

In about a decade after 1889 and following advice of his friend, King Khama of the Mangwato of Bechuanaland (current Botswana), King Lewanika requested British Protection, which was granted in 1898. In 1899, the British Government passed the Barotseland-North Western Rhodesia Order in council that created Barotseland-North Western Rhodesia that existed alongside a colony of North Eastern Rhodesia. Where was Zambia at this time? On 4th March 1887, the first school was opened in Sefula some 15 kilometers south of Mongu, along the Barotse plain, with twenty pupils among who were Lewanika’s children. Their teachers were Aaron Manyoro, Reverend and Mrs. Coillard. I do not know when schools were established in other areas. All I know is that it was after so many years later.

In the late fifties when a political wind of change engulfed the North Eastern Rhodesia region, some of the educated Lozi young men at that time found themselves in Politics, initiated by Mbikusita Lewanika, then working for the copper mines. Barotseland was a British protectorate while North Eastern Rhodesia was a British Colony. The two could have had their independence granted separately but the British in trying to make a financial saving opted to grant the two, independence at the same time and hence the amalgamation of the two separate entities to make one. This is

where the famous [Barotseland Agreement 1964](#) that many people do not understand comes in. Zambia was a product of this [Agreement](#) and the “one Zambia one nation” motto is based on the two territories proceeding to independence as one nation and not what most people interpret it to be associated with all the tribes being one in the nation of Zambia. We may live together but should keep our identities even in a situation where the two territories could still have remained as one.

Take away [the BA'64](#), you have no more Zambia as embodied in a unitary state. Therefore, I agree with [Professor Sitwala Imenda](#) who said, “...by terminating [the BA'64](#) by way of constitutional amendment Act No 5 of 1969, the status of the Republic of Zambia as a unitary state was also simultaneously terminated with the result that, as from the effective date of that amendment, the two constituent parts of the unitary state as consummated in 1964 (i.e., Barotseland and North Eastern Rhodesia, respectively) legally became free from each other”.

Legally, talking about Barotseland statehood should not be regarded as treasonable. Dr. L Sondashi and Dr. N Mumba did so during their campaigns for the 20th January 2015 Zambia Presidential elections. No one charged them with treason. However, several Barotse nationals are currently languishing in Zambian prisons just for voicing their opinions over the same issue. Dr. K Kaunda also imprisoned Barotse nationals without trial, without shame, after unilaterally abrogating the [Agreement](#) in 1969, despite his many assurances to the Barotse people as recorded in his book, “State of the nation- volume 1 politics and government-Kenneth David Kaunda”, edited by C. J.J Mohaisha.

Dr. K Kaunda is the same man who forgot all his assurances to the people of Barotseland and on 26th August 1969 he declared, “We cannot have a nation within a nation; Barotseland is to become Western Province. At the time, he had already thrown out [the BA'64](#) through the window, thereby breaking the rivet that held the two nations together. He was right—but in his blindness, he continued to hold on to Barotseland to the point where he declared a state of emergency and arrested anyone who reminded him of his treachery and that we have reverted back to our original state of two separate states. Dr. KK should have been the first person to have been put on his defense for treason in having failed to uphold the constitution of Zambia that he swore to uphold. He planned the unilateral abrogation of [the BA'64](#) and executed it. He should have been accordingly charged guilty thereof but that was to happen for he signed the [Agreement](#) in bad faith.

Now you can understand why I am in support of [Professor Imenda](#)'s “Barotseland Referendum Irrelevant” article. Take away the bonding substance, the two elements revert back to their original state. There was no referendum at the time of the amalgamating Barotseland-North Western Rhodesia and North Eastern Rhodesia to form Northern Rhodesia in 1911 and Barotseland to Northern Rhodesia to form Zambia in 1964, and Northern Rhodesian/Zambia segment broke the deal. Since 1969, many Barotse were pleading to have the union re-instated and recognized but no one cared to listen. Now that the Barotse accepted the separation of the two territories, why should they be forced to uphold a non-existent union after calls to restore it were ignored? There is no retraction from something they have unanimously agreed to uphold. Their position was made

clear through the [Barotse National Council Resolutions of March 27, 2012](#). What they are saying is that they do not want to be fed but they want to feed themselves.

One brother from Kaoma was saying that when the Zambia Republican President Lungu travels to Barotseland to resolve the Barotseland statehood, he should be consulted first because he does not subscribe to the demands of the Barotse. To him I say that his personal opinion does not hold water. The Nkoya people are among the group of people that have continued to play a major role in our tradition, which is a pride of many a Barotse. He may wish to know that the mother to Sir Mwanawina Lewanika, the third KBE, who was among the signatories to [the BA'64](#), was a Nkoya herself. How I wished that Nkoya brother should have consulted more before expressing his misdirected thoughts. One fails to understand what is bothering him. This leaves many of us speculating that he could have had a carrot dangling in front of him. We have seen this over a period of time when ever this issue resurfaced and looks like we will never run short of such distractors. We find them even in the Holy Bible when you read about the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem in the book of Nehemiah chapter 4 verses 1-6. One day the truth will dawn into him. Hopefully, he may be a biblical Saul turned into Paul. Whatever the case may be, I wish him God's many blessing and may the truth be revealed to him.

Let this disengagement process be handled in the same manner as the now failed attempted integration of May 1964 was done—peacefully. There were no arrests and no threats. This this time around, we demand honest and integrity on all sides for the sake of good neighborliness that we were before. Now they have assumed an attitude of “*Sepa sa hao*.” The people have already decided. I believe that this was the general consensus of the Barotse people even during the Dr. R Chongwe commission of inquiry into the Mongu killings of 14th January 2011—Reversion to the original status-guo. The people want this report made public but for reasons only known to the powers that be, its findings appear to be regarded as state secret. This is like hiding a bag of seeds in the sand, one day it will rain, the seeds will germinate and everyone will know who hid them and where.

Tukongote wa mwana nongolo. Kopano ki maata.
God Bless us all, God Bless Barotseland.