

3. The Colonial Juggernaut

Seduced by Concessions

Ambitions of Rhodes and acolytes in establishing the British South Africa Company in 1889 were purely commercial, not altruistic. The provision of roads, telegraph, postal and banking services were vital for Company activity and profit. Transforming feudal economies was far from their minds, and those of British politicians, in the helter-skelter scrabbling over Africa. The vast, sprawling ill-defined territory of Barotseland lay north-west of the malaria ridden Zambezi River. Lewanika, the King, pleaded for British protection, similar to Bechuanaland. He and the Kuta (ruling council) failed to realise this was in the name of Queen Victoria only, on behalf of the British Government. There was no direct association with Her Majesty.

Frank Elliott Lochner was despatched by the Company to conclude a concession agreement in 1890 covering: trade; mining; construction; banking; buying & selling; and manufacture. These activities seemed reasonably clear until it came to the wording of the final section. This aroused concerns for suspicious minds, especially those used to legal drafting as it referred to "unspecified activities as deemed appropriate," and the airy-fairy phrase, "all such things." The clauses were a catch-all, giving the Company latitude to encompass all future activities; a sceptic might add, including those of a questionable nature kept up their sleeves.

The King was to be paid an annuity of £2,000 in perpetuity. The original sum was £500 but missionaries assisting the King protested. It was a hollow victory. Escaping their minds was it might never be paid. No penalty conditions existed, or arbitration in the event of delaying, deferring, diluting, or defaulting on payment. No safeguards existed. The legal agreement was based on trust, neatly tied with a ribbon and stamped with the Company seal.

The Frontiersman

It took seven years for a Resident Administrator to be appointed. Robert Thorne Coryndon, aged 27, was sent by his solicitor father to prestigious Cheltenham College, a finishing school for Empire. He returned to his native Kimberley but the dry, dusty surroundings of the legal profession in a dingy office were not for him. He enjoyed the outdoors and wanted a more exciting life. He soon found it. Provided with a horse, saddle and £10 he was one of twelve young men, known as Rhodes' apostles or lambs. They left for Bechuanaland in November 1889 to prospect for gold. It didn't take long to realise he wasn't going to get rich quickly. Grovelling for gold was not his ambition. Instead, he joined the Bechuanaland Border Police, under control of the British South Africa Company and served in Matabeleland.

His turning point was becoming a mail cart driver for the 500 miles between Salisbury and Kimberly. Occasionally, he transported passengers, one of whom was none other than Cecil Rhodes. On the long journey there was plenty of time for Rhodes to assess the character, personality and potential of the ambitious Coryndon. Rhodes appointed him as his private secretary before his posting to Barotseland where core attributes were fortitude, resilience, enthusiasm and being unfazed by uncertainty and danger. The job required a pioneer and frontiersman. Coryndon was his ideal man.

Dogged and determined, Coryndon possessed enormous energy and strength. He was most content in the saddle for hours, enjoying the natural elements, undeterred if not impervious to misfortune, mishap, malaria or predators. In journal entries he nonchalantly mentioned being bitten by a lion. The unexpected was normal, to be confronted and handled. Rugged,

charming when he wished, self-reliant, and practical, he battled the environment, the King's tantrums, parsimony and politics of the British South Africa Company and the intransigence of the Colonial Office. Neither saw eye to eye. His wish was to see economic development but ambitions were thwarted. Meagre resources and lack of Colonial interest were major issues, in Coryndon venting his frustration to Rhodes. "I do not think anyone south of the Zambezi appreciates what is being done up here. This country is an unhealthy one, and our people must be fed and housed well, or they will die. Everything that has to be done in this country has had to be created." Coryndon was eventually appointed Resident Commissioner of Swaziland, a just promotion for diligent toil, and in keeping Barotseland secure.

Tightening The Screw

The Colonial Office had concerns about the legality of the Lochner Concession, relative to the terms of the Company Charter. Coryndon persuaded the King to accompany him to Victoria Falls to meet Sir Arthur Lawley, senior representative of the BSAC. King Lewanika listened intently to Lawley's flattering proposals. A new agreement was quickly drawn up and signed on 28 June 1898, almost eight years to the day since the Lochner Concession.

A preamble entitled the Company to all proceeds, free from royalties or deduction. The final clause in the first part had a catch all, "to do all things incidental or conducive to all or any rights, powers or concessions." The next section was more contentious, giving the Company monopoly rights. Most sensitive was the right to make grants of land for farming purposes to white men, approved by the King in specific areas. In return, no prospecting was to take place in the heartland of Barotseland.

The Company pledged assistance in the education and civilization of the Chief's subjects, to reserve large specified tracts of land for sole use by the Barotse people and to pay an annual subsidy that plummeted by nearly 60% to £850. At least it would be paid, unlike the sum of £2,000. All revenues from farming, mining or other activities were poured into the coffers of the Company that had all adjudication rights if disputes occurred. They not only drafted the terms but were judge and jury and, for good measure, sole beneficiary too, apart from the annuity. Once again the King and Kuta were confronted by legal intricacies of agreements, complex wording, vague meanings and obfuscation.

There was a further complication. The Colonial Office sought to tidy up the administration of North-West Rhodesia to protect its broader interests. The Lawley Concession of 1898 was no longer deemed legally operable if the territory it referred to did not have absolute authority. A new agreement was needed with the King hoping this would be direct with 'Her Britannic Queen Victoria,' noting the link between the Privy Council and Her Majesty.

What was to become Western Province of North-West Rhodesia was to be administered by the High Commissioner for South Africa, under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In a sleight of hand, authority and power transferred from the British South Africa Company to the Colonial Office. The Lawley Concession was rendered null and void. No longer was there conflict with Clause 20 of the Company's Charter as the British Government was now in the driving seat and could permit other companies to be set up, if it so wished.

Even Machiavelli would have been impressed by subsuming an area slightly greater than the size of France into a slightly smaller one. It was a masterstroke of guile and ingenuity. The authority of the King was now replaced by that of the Queen Victoria, acting in the name of the British Government. As African historian Gerald Caplan says the 1900 Concession was

nothing short of blackmail. The Barotse knew military force never lay far below the surface as borne out by the savage overthrow of fierce Lobengula in adjacent Matabeleland.

A Personal Invitation

With a coronation to take place, King Lewanika received a letter from Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office to visit England and one too from Lord Abercorn on behalf of the British South Africa Company. Colin Harding, in charge of policing and security in Barotseland, was the King's escort, adviser and bodyguard. The King and his entourage voyaged on the Union Castle from Cape Town. Early evening on day one, he grew anxious, asking how and when the this vessel would tie up for the night and how it was steered. These were the least of his problems. As gales lashed the Union Castle he was confined to his cabin with mal de mer.

After docking at Southampton, and now on the terra firma of England, the contingent sped by train to Sherborne, north Dorset, where a civic reception awaited. At first the train was a novelty. Harding recorded that "Lewanika assumed the air of a contented traveller, admiring the scenery, grazing cattle and green grass." The train then entered a tunnel. Alarm, panic and fear were understatements as not a single tunnel existed between Bulawayo and Cape Town. On emerging, the King remarked, "I don't like your trains which fall into holes." After an enthusiastic welcome at Sherborne they journeyed to Marston Magna. On arrival, church bells rang, flags waved in the breeze and guns were fired a salute to honour the first African King to visit England. A civic reception and mayoral party was held at nearby Yeovil

The King and his retinue resided in the rectory at Marston Magna for a few weeks thanks to the kindness of the vicar, Rev Joseph Williams who vacated the property. Thanks were due also to the extreme generosity of the wealthy Mardens who later accommodated the vicar and his family at nearby Marston House. Local historian Irene Davis comments, "The King, always cold at night, huddled in his bedclothes with his teeth almost chattering."

The coronation of Edward was scheduled for 26 June 1902 but just two days before he was diagnosed with appendicitis. The coronation was postponed for six weeks so what to do with King Lewanika, and all the food prepared for the royal banquets! London's poor were beneficiaries. Soup kitchens and halls enabled the impoverished and destitute to acquire new and short-lived tastes in consuming: 2,500 quails, 300 legs of mutton, Dover sole poached in Chablis, oysters, prawns and snipe, all devoured with gusto. Give three cheers for his Royal Highness. A festive coronation was held on 9th August but without such extravagant fare.

At last the message came for a personal audience with King Edward VII. In London, a royal carriage awaited and a growler, a horse-drawn, four wheeled, glass fronted carriage that sported two ivory tusks to the amazement, amusement and interest of the swelling crowd. Chamberlain ensured that Lewanika was kitted out with appropriate morning dress, courtesy of the British Government. A Savile Row tailor was summoned and Harding then arranged for the King to be suitably hatted by a tailor in St James.

On bended knee, giving the Royal salute, Lewanika paid homage to the revered Monarch of England. King Edward chatted for some while. He was noted for his humour and quips and remarked casually to Lewanika about having left so many friends behind. He was referring to Lewanika's harem, or as Punch put it his twelve little wives. Lewanika presented the King with an ivory tusk. This was, for Lewanika, the greatest day of his life. On returning to the Royal carriage he commented to Harding, "Besides being a great King he is a kind man."

Whilst in London there was another audience, this time at York House where King Lewanika met HRH the Prince of Wales. In discussion about London, the Prince asked Lewanika if he had noticed that the whole of London's traffic was controlled by the wave of a policeman's hand! The Naval Review at Spithead was viewed aboard the SS Nigeria where the King was introduced to Mrs Chamberlain who organised a special dress uniform. A Coronation medal was fixed securely on the King's lapel with an impressive sword by his side, displayed at the correct angle. Lewanika was so very proud to be a King of the British Empire.

Soon King Lewanika was to meet Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary. He was assured a new commission would be established to define the western boundary of Barotseland and he would do all he could to suppress the hideous slave trade, abhorrent to both. He cited Colin Harding who had seen straggling lines of thirsty and exhausted captives, shackled together, and expected to carry huge loads of rubber. Harding expressed his disgust seeing skeletons of those too weary to continue left on the roadside, their bodies picked clean by vultures and hyenas. On one long journey, Harding saw over 1,000 dead strewn along the dusty tracks.

Lewanika raised British imposition of a hut tax on all dwellings, a sensitive issue as he would benefit little. Chamberlain reassured him, saying a tax would not be levied without consent but quite what that meant was unclear. Lewanika then raised the issue of concessions in the hope they would be reviewed at least, but the Colonial Secretary was not prepared to budge. The British Government regarded these concessions as carved in stone and a foundation that would form the basis for negotiation later with the aim of prising yet more from Barotseland.

After the merry-go-round of state pomp and ceremony, Lewanika and Harding were pleased to escape London for the open expanses of Scotland as the special guest of Aberdeen, born and educated, Robert Williams, a business associate of Cecil Rhodes. The entire party was whisked around Scotland in a cavalcade of cars, staying in luxury and comfort wherever they went. They even visited Balmoral. A few early mornings were spent catching trout, followed by a sumptuous breakfast of fresh fish at 8.00 am.

Williams was a pioneer explorer, mining engineer, railroad developer and entrepreneur who invested heavily in the rich copper seams of Katanga in the Congo and North East Rhodesia. How much was revealed in conversations with the King is unknown as awkward questions might have arisen about the location of these mines and yields, in what King Lewanika might have regarded as within the purview of eastern Barotseland.

Back in London, Williams invited the King to a special dinner at the Savoy where a toast was proposed to the achievements of Cecil Rhodes. Besides the formality of official events, the King was entertained with a visit Madame Tussaud's waxworks museum. Harding recalls with hilarity that "occasionally, attendants posed as wax objects," only for the King to prod them to test if they were made of wax. After Madame Tussauds, the King was entertained by an acrobatic performance at the Hippodrome.

Shopping was a joy for Lewanika, especially buying dresses and other garments for his many wives who Harding remarked were very fond of him, and much concerned for his continued welfare. Whether they were pleased with the King's choice of purchases is another matter, as to Harding the sizes appeared far too small. Lewanika was unconcerned, merely stating, "You do not know the size of my wives."

Hours were spent at Liberty's the fashionable department store where tall, elegant ladies with slender figures paraded on a catwalk in long flowing dresses and skirts in front of the King. The time came to settle the bill. Harding produced a cheque book and wrote a cheque for a

hefty sum. Lewanika refused to sign, insisting payment for all purchases was to be in cash. A mere cheque, rather than a huge stack of notes, was not deemed adequate currency and hardly reflected the abundant and expensive purchases. A heated argument ensued and payment operations were suspended for the day. King Lewanika and Harding, neither in the best of tempers, proceeded to North London where they were due to attend a function.

For whatever reason, Harding refused to use the royal carriage, claiming the horses were too tired. He abandoned it at Baker Street in favour of a growler hired on the spot but Lewanika refused to ride in it as he thought it too small. Another spat ensued with Lewanika claiming, not without justification, that the horses of the growler looked even more tired. The horses of the royal carriage were restless with inactivity and to the astonishment of onlookers they pranced up and down Edgware Road. Eventually, with a shrug of the shoulders, Lewanika climbed into the growler with the assembled crowd bemused by this extraordinary incident.

During the journey of about 45 minutes nobody spoke. On arrival, the King was still fuming and when it came to the prayers he refused to kneel and stood when he should have been sitting. No goodnights were exchanged on arriving back at Wilton Crescent. At Libertys the following day payment was transacted by cheque with barely a murmur from Lewanika. The incident was closed and forgotten.

By now, in mid-August 1902, the London Season was virtually over. It was time for the King to return home. At Waterloo, surrounded by vast quantities of luggage, small talk was about a wonderful Coronation service at Westminster Abbey, the pageantry and Lewanika's special audience with King Edward VII. He would never forget and neither would his people with his frequent and repeated telling.

The voyage to Cape Town was uneventful. At Kimberley, when stepping onto the platform, the King was stopped and questioned by a native ticket collector. The clear implication was he was trespassing. Forget that Lewanika was a King in his own country, that he was given a free pass to travel anywhere on the railway system in Britain by Government officials, and that the station master at Waterloo had bowed. The final indignity was spending two nights in a railway carriage as accommodation in Kimberley was 'unavailable.' Connecting transport was provided for the final leg home to Barotseland. The visit to Britain had spanned nearly six months.

Securing The Ratchet

In a speech to the Kuta, ruling Council of Barotseland, three types of white man existed said Adolphe Jalla, chief missionary of the Paris Society in Africa. First were those in government, or their representatives, whom you should fear as they possess power. Then there were the traders out to devour you so consume them first, and finally missionaries who are ours. This analysis was played out with laser accuracy. The Colonial grip on Barotseland tightened with far greater control too of the British South Africa Company, responsible for administration of Northern Rhodesia with a land mass of about 290,000 square miles of which Barotseland, with its ill-defined territorial borders, laid claim to over 75%.

The Company continued their policy of minimum expenditure and direct intervention in the affairs of people governed in order to maintain civil order, and administer Colonial affairs. For many officials, most Africans were seen as inferior to Europeans. Frank Worthington, assistant to Robert Coryndon was not atypical in his view in saying "The Barotse had not

learned to treat a white man with the respect his colour demands." This merely restated expectations and was a presumption of white supremacy.

A chief of the Lozi, the major tribe in Barotseland, astutely summed up the attitude using the anecdote of the camel and an Arab. "The camel first asked to put his head in the Arab's tent, then each of his legs and finally his entire body. The camel then saw there was not enough room in the tent for both of them -and threw the Arab out." It is a fitting analogy in regard to land ownership, carve-up of territory, absorption of Barotseland into North-West Rhodesia and in due course creation of Northern Rhodesia as an entity.

Hardly had Coryndon unpacked his bags when the Foreign Office announced regions beyond the Zambezi would be known as Northern Rhodesia with a dividing line at the Kafue River to delineate East and West. The Order in Council of 1899, initiated by the Colonial Office and approved by the British Government, confirmed that Barotseland now fell within North-West Rhodesia, despite Lewanika laying justifiable claims east of the Kafue River. There was good reason for this split that had everything to do with its enormous economic potential.

Robert Coryndon was appointed Administrator for North-West Rhodesia whilst, in the North-East, Marlborough educated Robert Codrington was appointed Deputy Administrator and, on passage of the Order in Council in 1899, to the post of Administrator. North-East Rhodesia was the economic powerhouse, requiring a skilled Administrator with vision, and leadership capability to drive forward the economy. Codrington possessed these credentials in spades.

Whilst he and Coryndon had a similar background within the Bechuanaland Border Police, it was Codrington who gained rapid promotion to the irritation of Coryndon who felt he had a much more onerous task. He did in ensuring security and dealing with the grumblings of the King and Kuta and the minutiae of mundane duties, whilst Codrington focused on economic and social development. These were the very elements lacking in North-West Rhodesia in spite of the best efforts of Coryndon, hampered and hamstrung by the intransigence of Colonial authorities and parsimony of the British South Africa Company.

North-East Rhodesia formulated regulations and procedures for justice, raised revenue and had a broad remit for peace and effective government. It was little wonder Codrington soon earned the title of, "Lord High Everything" as he was de facto Governor. The contrast with North-West Rhodesia was stark. Based at Fort Jameson, Codrington created a township with fine houses, tree-lined streets, a community centre and hospital. He believed in educating Africans, employed trained artisans and clerks from Nyasaland, and developed a civil service comprising university-educated men with teaching experience, not a military background.

The hut tax provided useful additional income for the Company with over 96% of revenue retained, given the low costs of collection. This would help offset the costs of the Resident Administrator and his support, including police, but the hut tax was a ploy insists historian Gerald Caplan. The policy ensured that Barotseland remained undeveloped because many Barotse were unable to pay. The policy was cynical. The only way out was migration to the diamond mines to the south and, in due course, copper mines to the east where they could be used as a cheap source of labour.

Thousands of Barotse left from 1909 onwards, feeling they had no choice. Payment had to be found somehow. Today this policy would be regarded as ethnic cleansing through the forced removal of people from their homeland. Colin Harding, the Commandant of Police, talked of huts being burnt down and of repressive measures taken against those unwilling or unable to pay. He was not alone in criticism as the King and Adolphe Jalla complained many

Lozi had been beaten up by Company officials for not showing 'proper respect.' Lewanika protested to the High Commissioner. He magnanimously conceded that bowing was to be for dignitaries only but, in the presence of other officials, clapping was still required, or other 'salute of a lower degree.' It was with more than a sigh that the King referred yet again to the Barotse being subjugated and humiliated.

The Demise of Barotseland

If imposition of the hut tax was controversial, disbursement of land had all the hallmarks of plunder. Land allocation was not a *fait accompli* but the Company had its foot wedged firmly in the door. With the 1899 Order in Council firmly in place, the position of Barotseland in regard to land management was looking fragile. The land ratchet was fixed in position and tightened in 1904 when, in a letter of 19 August, Coryndon requested Lewanika to give him "the authority to issue land all over your territory" to bona fide farmers or settlers. The bait was no land in the Barotse Valley or near Sesheke would be allocated without the approval of the King, inferring a precedent had been set as missionaries had been allowed to settle in Barotseland and had build mission stations. That missionaries were there with the King's personal approval, and could be removed at any time, was conveniently ignored.

Coryndon received a swift but vaguely expressed reply from Lewanika, confirming agreement to the Company issuing land for farming purposes. A year later in 1905 the King agreed the Company could 'dispose' of land in Ila and Toka country and apparently gifted an area within a fifteen mile radius of the Victoria Falls and other parcels of land the Company required for townships. The King was to receive £100 for each block. Whether the offer of payment was made formally and transacted is difficult to verify.

Another bait for the King was enlargement of his reserved areas in the west and north-west regions. These were of little economic value but any benefit was questionable as most of this territory had already been assigned to him. The King thought the Company's offer a good deal. The impression was he was not unduly concerned about relinquishing lands to the east in exchange for greater security from marauding Portuguese to the north-west. The fear was genuine as correspondence between Colin Harding and Earl Grey shows.

Secretary of State Joseph Chamberlain, not satisfied with the legal authenticity of the King's letter of 1904 and arrangements, requested Lewanika to sign a formal legal document. After considerable hesitation he signed the legal deed on 23 January 1906, witnessed by his Prime Minister, giving "the right to dispose of land to settlers." These words gave the Company the right to use land in whatever way it wished. In his despatch of 14 July, Lord Elgin was more forthright, "This amounted to a land grant of the whole of North-West Rhodesia, excepting Lewanika's own reserves," Lord Elgin was implying the damage was done in 1900 when the Barotse conceded the 'grant' of land, presumably with the aim of protecting Barotse reserved areas. It was a fatal and irretrievable error.

King Lewanika owned all designated land and thought grant meant farm, lease or tenant as a right or privilege that may be withdrawn. The term disposal raised questions on duration, review, or extension as 'contracts' might infer in perpetuity, tantamount to ownership. White farmers, reluctant to accept short leases, sought long-term agreements. Investing in plant and machinery was expensive and required a healthy return on capital expended. Outright ownership of land was the next logical step.

Rental, lease or hybrid schemes were quietly squashed as the King might impose stringent conditions and, besides, commercial farming could be risky. Farmers wished to own all land cultivated which meant acquisition was the only viable economic option. The quid pro quo was protection in remoter areas where Lewanika had minimal control. In ceding tracts of land, he would in theory still retain authority, with greater security too given the presence of white people. Complex legal conveyance agreements and practical administration shattered any illusions he would be the final arbiter in land disposal.

The words 'grant' in the 1900 Concession, 'issue' in Coryndon's letter of 1904 and 'dispose' referred to in the 1906 deed were deliberately vague and could imply give, assign, hand over or even sell. Lord Elgin believed that the real intention of the Barotse was to protect lands in their heartland and also keep the Company out, a view shared by Caplan who believes their Prime Minister, Mokamba, may have suggested this strategy. If so, there was a huge price to pay in not retaining control and oversight of land elsewhere with a resultant loss of rents and the full proceeds of disposal. The British Government had virtual carte-blanche to do as it wished outside areas specifically reserved for the people of Barotse land who would suffer. There was no incentive whatsoever for economic development. The destiny of Barotse land was assured in remaining an economic backwater.

Confrontations

Colin Harding, Commandant of Barotse Police, cites the constant sniping of Colonial politics. He refers to reports well researched, very detailed, meticulously prepared, complete with red sealing wax – "reposing in a dusty drawer in Bulawayo, unopened, untouched and unread." Colonial shenanigans were one thing; wildlife confrontations quite another.

With a vast territory to cover Harding's travels were usually for weeks at a time. One day, with only Peter his houseboy for company, he rounded a bend in his 'Spider' wagon and saw what he thought was a small herd of hartebeest, 500 yards distant. The mules were edgy as they drew closer. A pride of six lions basked in the sun. Harding's trusty rifle was somehow left back at camp so he used his Lee Metford. A single shot hit lion and the pride dispersed. Tracking the wounded animal, it suddenly leapt at him from dense shrub. Harding reeled backwards and lay prone when a hammer-blow hit him in the right shoulder. The lion stood over him, shaking him like a rag doll. Only Peter's arrival saved his life. With a broken right shoulder and deep leg wounds infection was feared. In making a full recovery, Harding then offered four pieces of advice. Do not use a .303 rifle or solid bullets, do not treat a lion with contempt as if stalking a rabbit, do not lose sight of the lion at any time and, above all, do not hunt alone; If using a shotgun, hold your nerve until the lion is only seven to ten yards away. His final comment was a statement, if not plea. May God help you!

A different confrontation awaited him in 1905 when instructed to burn the hut of a local chief who declined to pay the hut tax. Harding unintentionally set light to adjacent huts and this incident greatly played on his mind. He vented his feelings about the iniquitous hut tax to Lord Milner, High Commissioner for South Africa but Coryndon saw this as an act of betrayal, disloyalty and insubordination. Harding's post was terminated due retrenchment! The least of confrontations was with Barotse people who "for the most part regard their white advisers and protectors with friendly confidence." He also applauded the unstinting efforts of "a large band of Colonial officials" who gave of their best in the interests of Barotse people, and their own safety. Harding's modesty excluded rightful mention of his own sterling efforts.