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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Colonial African: Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika and His Struggle For and Against Zambian Nationalism

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Abstract
Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika, the founding president of Zambia's first nationalist organisation, is now remembered as a staunch supporter of colonial rule. Such figures are not uncommon and are often termed "loyalists," a term that is usually understood in the literature as a fixed category that either dwindled in the face of racial oppression or was a choice shaped and hardened by conflict. Lewanika, however, moved easily between different sides, reinventing himself as an anticolonial nationalist, trade unionist, colonial loyalist, and Lozi traditional monarchist as circumstances warranted. The tumult of the mid-twentieth century opened up new opportunities and Lewanika seized roles that were not previously available. Biographies of anticolonial nationalists often argue they turned to political action when their education and ambitions clashed with the highly-circumscribed roles available under colonialism. Lewanika's life was the opposite. He carved out a prominent place for himself in the colonial order and then in independent Zambia.

Keywords: anticolonialism; biography; ethnicity; nationalism; Zambia

This article is about a puzzling transformation and the ability of educated African elites to use the colonial system for remarkable self-advancement, and to do so with relative ease. The transformation in question is that of the founding president of Zambia's first nationalist political party, who became a staunch defender of the colonial order and a determined opponent of the movement he helped establish. Articulate, highly educated, and well-connected, Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika (1905–77) seemed to represent the ultimate turncoat. There is more to his life than this kind of binary between colonialism and nationalism, as we detail below. Lewanika was able to continually reinvent himself as the changing colonial state and later national independence steadily provided new opportunities.

Lewanika emerged as a political actor in the context of the creation of the Central African Federation (CAF), which he initially opposed. The federation was a union of three British colonies in southern Africa consisting of Malawi (Nyasaland), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), and Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia). Founded amidst rising anticolonial agitation across the continent, the CAF ostensibly offered a middle way between African nationalism and apartheid, then tightening its grip on the southernmost part of the continent.[1] Supporters of the federation sought to create a class

[1]Ronald Hyam, "The Geopolitical Origins of the Central African Federation: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1948–1953," *The Historical Journal* 30, no. 1 (1987): 145–72. This supposed middle-way was designed to preserve white political dominance over the region, Robert Rotberg, "The 'Partnership' Hoax: How the British Government Deprived Central Africans of their Rights," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 45, no. 1 (2019): 89–110.

of educated and prosperous Africans who would identify with it and become its supporters.[2] This effort failed, and with near-universal African opposition, the CAF disintegrated in 1963 and Zambia became independent the following year. Until then, Lewanika successfully presented himself as the epitome and representative of a moderate educated class who would support the federation, and benefited handsomely from this.

We examine Lewanika's life amidst the modernising impulse of the colonial state and its subsequent demise. In these years, Lewanika transformed himself from an anticolonial nationalist and trade unionist to become an MP in the United Federal Party (UFP), established to champion the interests of white settlers, and then after independence a traditional ruler of the Lozi in western Zambia. Biographies of anticolonial nationalists usually depict a relatively straightforward trajectory: encounters with oppression, radicalisation, and organised political action against the colonial state.[3] As Khumisho Moguerane recently put it, it is "widely known" how "new influences of racial discrimination… stymied the momentum" of literate and educated Africans.[4] Yet Lewanika's biography does not fit easily into established ways of thinking about nationalism or anticolonialism or loyalism. Figures like Lewanika have been dismissed in nationalist narratives as traitors, while the literature that looks at African allies of colonial rule usually situates such figures in the context of conflicts, with such allies making difficult decisions under difficult circumstances. Lewanika bucks this trend. There was little conflict in Zambia in these years and he never faced especially difficult circumstances. He had in fact considerable agency in making his choices.

Lewanika was instrumental in the formation of two of the most powerful and influential organisations in twentieth-century Zambia: the African National Congress (ANC) and the African Mineworkers Union. On this premise, he can be regarded as the father of Zambian nationalism. However, as will be seen, he was ejected from both organisations he helped to form in quick succession. He has thus been overlooked in the historical record, which in Zambia focused for many years on the main nationalist party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP).[5] Even in the revisionist historiography that has contested this narrative, such as the work by Giacomo Macola or Bizeck Phiri, Lewanika features little.[6]

Lewanika was not a marginal figure at the time. He successfully carved out a prominent place for himself in the colonial order, and was a distinguished figure. He became an MP, author, addressed the British Parliament, met the Royal Family on at least two occasions, and was the first African in Northern Rhodesia to become a British citizen. Subsequently, he became the Litunga, the traditional ruler in Barotseland. His talents and agency were directed at inserting himself into the colonial order and later independent Zambia. The colonial state did not simply seek to enlist the support of Africans, with Lewanika a willing dupe, bought off with modest wealth and tokens of prestige. Lewanika, as will be seen, sought these opportunities for himself and succeeded. Such individuals were not simply

[2]Owen J. M. Kalinga, "The Master Farmers' Scheme in Nyasaland, 1950–1962: A Study of a Failed Attempt to Create a 'Yeoman' Class," *African Affairs* 92, no. 368 (1993): 367–88.

[3]Ciraj Rassool, "Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography," *South African Review of Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2010): 28–55.

[4]Khumisho Moguerane, *Morafe: Person, Family and Nation in Colonial Bechuanaland, 1880s–1950s* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2024), 26.

[5]For a thorough critique of this approach, see Giacomo Macola, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa: A Biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). See also Miles Larmer et al. "Introduction: Narratives of Nationhood," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 5 (2014): 895–98. The organisation of the historical narrative around the main nationalist party is apparent in other countries too. In the case of Mozambique, João Borges Coelho points to "the centrality of a specific account of the liberation" created by FRELIMO as one that legitimates its rule. Borges Coelho, "Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes," *Kronos* 39, no. 1 (2013): 21.

[6]Macola mentions that Lewanika was ousted from the Northern Rhodesia African Congress, as it was then known, in 1951. Macola, *Liberal Nationalism*, 31. Phiri also mentions this detail in his article on the liberal Capricorn African Society, along with brief mentions of Lewanika's role in the group. Bizeck J. Phiri, "The Capricorn Africa Society Revisited: The Impact of Liberalism in Zambia's Colonial History, 1949–1963," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 24, no. 1 (1991): 78.

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pawns or turncoats but were actively and often successfully negotiating their own social and political advancement.[7] The colonial state offered Lewanika what the nationalist movement could not: upward social mobility.

This article is based on archival sources drawn from the National Archives in London, the National Archives of Zambia, and the papers of settler politician Roy Welensky at Bodleian Library in Oxford, with whom Lewanika corresponded extensively. There are regrettable limitations among these sources. Several files about Lewanika's early political activities housed at the National Archives of Zambia appear to have been lost, or at least could not be located by archive staff on successive visits by the authors there. Much of this material would have been useful for understanding his politics and strategy in the 1940s. The National Archives do however house another useful source utilised in this article, contemporary newspapers held in hardcopy there. The final source is Lewanika's own considerable published output, as he was an author of several books, magazine articles, wrote regularly to newspapers, and even published an article in the academic journal *African Affairs*.

The article is divided into six sections. Following this introduction, the second section looks at the literature on African elites in the late colonial period and historical biography. The third short section provides the broad context for colonialism in the region within which Lewanika's life is better understood. The article then moves to Lewanika's role in establishing both the ANC and the African Mineworkers' Union. The fifth section examines his rapprochement with the colonial state and how he utilised this in his own interests. The sixth section looks at Lewanika subsequently reinvented himself as an ethnic nationalist and traditional leader after Zambian independence. The article then concludes with a brief restatement of our arguments.

African elites in the late colonial period

Historians have long been attentive to the ways that the modernising impulse of the late colonial period inadvertently opened opportunities for Africans to make claims on colonial regimes. A key question, as Frederick Cooper put it, is "how were such openings exploited by African political and social movements, and how and why were they narrowed?"[8] Cooper's own work showed how railway workers in French West Africa used the connection with France as an ideological basis to claim equal wages and benefits to white French workers in the metropole during strikes. This complicated narratives that understood these strikes as part of a broad, intensifying struggle against colonialism.[9] Much of the work on this kind of "claim-making" has focused on how groups, particularly wage workers, used new colonial politics and rhetoric to make collective demands and further their own interests.[10] Yet individuals too could use new structures and discourses aimed at legitimating colonial rule to their own advantage, and this is precisely what Lewanika did. He made a strong claim at equality with the metropole. As will be seen, he became a British citizen when the opportunity presented itself and was even registered to vote in Britain.

[7] As Jacob Dlamini argued in relation to apartheid South Africa, "We cannot make neat distinctions between collaborators and resisters." Dlamini, *Askari. A Story of Collaboration and Betrayal in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2014), 147. Another individual who straddled this boundary between collaboration and resistance is Michael Sata, a colonial policeman turned anticolonial nationalist and trade unionist, see Sishuwa, Sishuwa, "Roots of Contemporary Political Strategies: Ethno-Populism in Zambia during the Late Colonial Era and Early 2000s," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 47, no. 6 (2021): 1061–81; and Sishuwa, Sishuwa, *Party Politics and Populism in Zambia: Michael Sata and Political Change, 1955-2014* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2024), 33–66.

[8] Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African independence in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 173.

[9] Frederick Cooper, "'Our Strike': Equality, Anticolonial Politics and the 1947–48 Railway Strike in French West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 1 (1996): 82.

[10] Lisa Lindsey, for instance, revealed how male Nigerian railway workers used colonial discourse on gender relations to "family wages" to demand that wages should be increased to levels sufficient to build respectable households. Lisa A. Lindsey, "Domesticity and Difference: Male Breadwinners, Working Women, and Colonial Citizenship in the 1945 Nigerian General Strike," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999): 783–812.

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There was an element of loyalism in Lewanika's politics and his becoming a British citizen involved swearing an oath that he would "bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George the Sixth."[11] The loyalty of many African elites towards Britain's empire has a long history, though historians have usually associated it with an earlier period. David Killingray traced it back to the mid-eighteenth century, arguing that educated elites articulated a sense of being British that was shaped by imperial institutions and ideologies. This sense, however, was often "punctured when they encountered the deeply ingrained racial antipathy that permeated official and private institutions," and so eroded rapidly in the Caribbean and West Africa in the late nineteenth century and, he argued, was never in evidence in Southern Africa.[12] Andrew Thompson identified cogent and nuanced forms of loyalism among the African elite in the Cape Colony but argued this faded in the interwar years as it became abundantly clear that Britain would offer no support in the struggle against racial oppression.[13] Hilary Sapire locates the end point slightly later, seeing the 1947 "Royal Tour" of Southern Africa as "a highpoint and the swansong" of loyalism and the end of the "age of deference in African politics" afterwards.[14]

David Anderson and Daniel Branch, however, have argued convincingly that struggles against empire after the Second World War "resurrected loyalty and collaboration as effective strategies within the imperial world."[15] Their work on groups they term loyalists is useful as it takes the narrative beyond the colonial period to examine what happened to these groups afterwards, something we emulate in this article. This history of loyalism is rooted in the understanding that loyalists were not simply puppets of colonialism. As Branch noted in an earlier work on Mau Mau Kenya, opposition to the insurgency "was not solely imposed by colonial masters" and the conflict was "no simple dispute between colonizer and colonized."[16] What emerges from this work is that questions around loyalism were agonised, difficult, and violent, and that loyalist groups were not fixed entities, "put to the test" and "willing to remain loyal to the colonial regime in the face of the nationalist challenge."[17] The same is true of a recent article by David Glovsky where he rejects the "binary nature" of understandings of resistance or collaboration during Guinea-Bissau's war for independence, and argues that "the social condition of war informed decisions about which side to support, assist, or ignore."[18] Where we differ with existing interpretations on loyalism is that this choice of action was not necessarily difficult, violent, or forced by conflict. Lewanika shifted relatively easily between political movements, and without serious adverse consequences. The other limitation of loyalism as a concept in this case is that loyalty is what Lewanika lacked. To term him a loyalist is to diminish him as a political actor, one whose political vision was bounded by colonialism. In fact, Lewanika was a master at political and social entrepreneurship, a man who saw opportunities and acted upon them. Some of these opportunities were associated with the changing form of the colonial state but these allegiances could be lightly discarded when no longer useful. The decades of the mid-twentieth century were a time of great flux, as many things — including the borders and form of the colonial state,

[11]The National Archives, London (TNA), HO 334/267/5689, Naturalisation Certificate: Godwin Akabiwa Mbikusita Lewanika, 1951.

[12]David Killingray, "'A Good West Indian, a Good African, and, in Short, a Good Britisher': Black and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire, 1760–1950," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 3 (2008): 375.

[13]Andrew Thompson, "The Languages of Loyalism in Southern Africa, c. 1870–1939," *The English Historical Review* 118, no. 477 (2003): 639.

[14]Hilary Sapire, "African Loyalism and its Discontents: The Royal Tour of South Africa, 1947," *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 1 (2011): 239–40.

[15]David M. Anderson and Daniel Branch, "Allies at the End of Empire—Loyalists, Nationalists and the Cold War, 1945–76," *The International History Review* 39, no. 1 (2016): 6.

[16]Daniel Branch, "The Enemy Within: Loyalists and The War Against Mau Mau in Kenya," *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 2 (2007): 293–94.

[17]Anderson and Branch, "Allies," 2, 5.

[18]David Glovsky, "Collaboration, Survival, and Flight: Fulbe Narratives of Guinea-Bissau's War for Independence, 1961–74," *The Journal of African History* 63, no. 2 (2022): 229.

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the collective organisations permitted, and even the borders of the new independent states — were not fixed.

Lewanika was not only a loyalist. He was also a key figure in the nascent anticolonial movement in Northern Rhodesia, but his political trajectory did not run from colonial loyalist to anticolonial nationalist after encountering racial oppression. It went the opposite way. In this sense, this article contributes to an ongoing revision of the history of nationalism in Zambia. Harri Englund termed Zambia "a latecomer to the revisionist history of nationalism."[19] Indeed, as Giacomo Macola put it, for a generation of academics "UNIP did not merely serve the interests of the young nation; it was its embodiment," while dissenting voices were "conveniently forgotten."[20] Macola's incisive critique of this was a biography of nationalist leader Harry Nkumbula where he traces a "torturous evolution from socialist-leaning, cosmopolitan ideologue to right-wing liberal spokesman for the predominately rural interests of his core ethnic constituency."[21] This resonates strongly with the way that Lewanika transformed himself.

These kinds of historical biographies are part of a rich tradition in Southern Africa. While interest in historical biographies has broadly declined amongst Africanist historians, this is less the case in Southern Africa.[22] Political biographies have been of particular interest. Many of these traditionally have been about recovering the lives of "forgotten… veteran politicians who pioneered the fight for independence," as Mwelwa Musambachime put it in his study of the Zambian nationalist Dauti Yamba.[23] Subsequent work focused on the biographies of individuals who fit more awkwardly into the historical narrative of nationalist struggle — such as Megan Vaughan's work on Kenneth Mdala in Malawi and Macola's biography of Simon Jilundu Chibanza III — and on African political actors who had earlier attracted the label "sell-out."[24] This latter group includes Kenneth Vickery's biography of Dixon Konkola, a left-wing nationalist and trade unionist who became a vocal supporter of the CAF, and Allison Shutt's reflections on the self-narratives of Jasper Savanhu, who had a similar trajectory.[25] These are illuminating as they show Lewanika was not alone in his adept use of colonial structures for personal advancement. Lewanika, however, was more successful.

[19]Harri Englund, "Zambia at 50: The Rediscovery of Liberalism," *Africa* 83, no. 4 (2013): 685.

[20]Macola, *Liberal Nationalism*, 2–3.

[21]*Ibid*., 4.

[22]Lisa A. Lindsay, "Biography in African History," *History in Africa* 44 (2018): 18. In one recent edited volume on biography in African history, five of the ten chapters are about Southern Africa. Klaas van Walraven, ed., *The Individual in African History: The Importance of Biography in African Historical Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[23]M. C. Musambachime, "Dauti Yamba's Contribution to the Rise and Growth of Nationalism in Zambia, 1941–1964," *African Affairs* 90, no. 359 (1991): 259–81. In a similar vein see, Marcia Wright, "An Old Nationalist in New Nationalist Times: Donald Siwale and the State in Zambia: 1948–1963," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1997): 339–51, and Walima Kalusa, *Kalonga Gawa Undi X: A Biography of an African Chief and Nationalist* (Lusaka: The Lembani Trust, 2010). There is still a thriving historiography uncovering biographies of overlooked individuals involved in independence struggles, though no longer with the nation-building imperative of earlier work. For recent examples, see Owen J. M. Kalinga, "'The General from Fort Hill': Katoba Flax Musopole's Role as an Anti-Colonial Activist and Politician in Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46, no. 2 (2020): 301–17, and Brooks Marmon, "Transnational Revolutionary: Noel Mukono's Navigation of Zimbabwe's Fractious Liberation Struggle, 1957–77," *The International History Review* 45, no. 3 (2023): 768–86.

[24]Megan Vaughan, "Mr Mdala Writes to the Governor: Negotiating Colonial Rule in Nyasaland," *History Workshop Journal* 60, no. 1 (2005): 171–88; Giacomo Macola, "The Historian Who Would Be Chief: A Biography of Simon Jilundu Chibanza III, 1899–1974," *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 1 (2004): 23–24. On these kinds of biographies of "awkward" individuals, see Nancy J. Jacobs and Andrew Bank, "Biography in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Call for Awkwardness," *African Studies* 78, no. 2 (2019): 165–82.

[25]Indeed, Vickery specifically notes that Konkola's political trajectory was not that unusual as "one-time nationalist icons like [Lawrence] Katilungu, [Dauti] Yamba and Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika also served in the Federal Assembly." Kenneth Vickery, "Odd Man Out: Labour Politics and Dixon Konkola," in *Living at the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late Colonial Zambia*, eds. Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar, and Giacomo Macola (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 103–25. Allison K. Shutt, "Writing Jasper Savanhu's Biography from his Awkward Self-Narratives," *African Studies* 78, no. 2 (2019): 205–24.

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Setting the scene: locating Lewanika in colonial Zambia

Zambia was first colonised by the British South Africa Company (BSAC), a private company acting on behalf of the British government, and this colonisation began first in Barotseland, where Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika would be born in 1905. What is now western Zambia was dominated by a relatively centralised state, the expanding Lozi kingdom. In 1888, the BSAC agent Frank Eliot Lochner arrived here to make a deal with the *Litunga*, the Lozi king. Lubosi Lewanika, the father to the subject of this article who was facing both internal and external threats, readily accepted Lochner's offer of protection.[26] While the company established a threadbare administration across the territory, it did integrate the Litunga and his family into the British Empire at an elite level, with the Litunga attending the coronation of Edward VII in 1902.

Other aspects of this arrangement proved crucial. The BSAC also offered to provide education for the Litunga's children, an undertaking they subsequently fulfilled, and the children of Lozi elite were among the first in colonial Zambia who obtained formal education. Lewanika was sent to the missionary school of Lovedale in South Africa where many prominent figures in the region were educated.[27] On finishing school, Lewanika returned to Barotseland to take up a role in the royal household, by this time headed by Yeta III, who had become Litunga after the death of Lewanika's father in 1916. This period saw the beginnings of far-reaching political and economic changes in the territory. In 1924, the administration of the territory passed to the British government and shortly afterwards the discovery of huge copper deposits triggered a mining boom that would later provide employment for Lewanika.

Lewanika's position in the royal household was short-lived. Around 1932, he was removed as Yeta III's secretary and banished from Barotseland for allegedly plotting against the Litunga.[28] He then moved to Livingstone, where he first became involved in the quasi-political movement then emerging in the colony's new urban centres. Lewanika became the secretary of the Livingstone Welfare Association. In this capacity, he participated in the first meeting of the United Welfare Association of Northern Rhodesia in Kafue which sought to unify the various associations into a single and more political organisation. This was an exceedingly moderate body. Chairperson Clement Mwamba called for the new organisation to "cement the existing friendship between the government, settlers, and the Africans." Similar sentiments were echoed by Lewanika, who in his own speech to the Kafue meeting argued that Africans were not sufficiently advanced to "demand higher things to come to us all at once."[29]

Around 1936, Lewanika was reconciled with the royal household. The death of King George V that year occasioned another invitation to London to attend the coronation of King Edward VIII, secured following sustained lobbying from Yeta III. The colonial administration limited Yeta's party to five and initially Lewanika was not among them, but he managed to persuade Yeta of the value of his services. Yeta subsequently noted that at the beginning of the journey, he "instructed Mbikusita [Lewanika], who acted as my Secretary and Valet, to keep a Diary of our journey with a view to publish a pamphlet."[30] Lewanika had already curried royal favour by authoring a compilation of poems and

[26]Jack Hogan, "'What Then Happened To Our Eden?': The Long History of Lozi Secessionism, 1890–2013," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 5 (2014): 909.

[27]Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 24. Many leaders of South Africa's ANC in the 1950s were educated at Lovedale: Donovan Williams, "African Nationalism in South Africa: Origins and Problems," *The Journal of African History* 11, no. 3 (1970): 373.

[28]Bizeck J. Phiri, "Coping with Contradictions – Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Case of Godwin A. Mbikusita-Lewanika and Zambian Nationalism" (Unpublished seminar paper, Department of History, University of Zambia, 23 July 1992), 4.

[29]Richard Hall, *Zambia 1890–1964: The Colonial Period* (London: Longman, 1976), 118.

[30]National Archives of Zambia, Lusaka (NAZ) BSE 1/8/2, Letter from Yeta III to Acting Provincial Commissioner, Mongu, 20 Aug. 1937.

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stories on Lozi kingship traditions, proverbs, and protocols at the royal court, which was published in 1938.[31]

This proved to be an influential trip for Lewanika, an opportunity for travel to London and Paris and a chance to mingle with elites from across the British Empire. Yeta's party were received by the royal family at Buckingham Palace, seated in Westminster Abbey for the coronation, and taken to the BBC, where Yeta was filmed for a televised broadcast. After the party's return to Northern Rhodesia, glowing letters of thanks were sent to various individuals in the colonial administration and the British government, including the colonial secretary. These were signed by Yeta III but written by Lewanika, and had his name at the bottom of the page as well.[32]

Subsequently, Lewanika wrote his first book on the topic, a celebratory account of the journey that emphasised how impressed he was with what he had witnessed.[33] This process involved continued correspondence with the colonial administration about editing and printing the book and Lewanika's letter are written with a remarkable air of self-assurance. Writing a brief note to the provincial commissioner to enquire if the book had been printed, he noted, "I trust you know it. It wrote it and it was checked for me by the late Mr J.C. Peacock."[34]

Founding Zambian nationalism

Lewanika's reproachment with the royal household did not last long. Yeta III suffered a severe stroke on return to Barotseland and in the ensuing powers struggle, Lewanika was again ousted and expelled from the territory.[35] This time, he went north to the Copperbelt, now the economic centre of the colony. Here, Lewanika became energetic in establishing new organisations. In the mid-1940s, he founded three organisations that each appealed to different putative constituencies of nation, class, and ethnicity.

The early 1940s were a period of intensified economic exploitation across colonies in Africa. Resources from the continent were crucial for the war effort in Europe and colonial Zambia was a critical source of copper. African employment on the copper mines increased from 21,000 in 1939 to over 30,000 in 1942.[36] Lewanika was not among those labouring underground though. He secured a position as a clerk at Nkana Mine and swiftly ascended the ranks. In 1942, his department head requested that Lewanika be promoted from Grade A — the highest grade for African workers with a salary of 80 shillings a month — to a newly-created special grade with a monthly salary of 150 shillings. This made him by far the highest-paid African employee in the mining industry and probably in the entire colony.[37] Justifying the increase, the mine secretary claimed that Lewanika was

[31]Godwin Lewanika, *Za Sizo Sa Malozi* (Mongu: Barotse National Library and Development Services, 1938). We are grateful to one of the reviewers for suggesting this text and to Akashambatwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, the son of Godwin Mbikusita-Lewanika, for sharing a copy.

[32]For instance, see NAZ BSE 1/8/2, Letter from Yeta III to Colonial Secretary, 1 Sep. 1937.

[33]Godwin Lewanika, *Yeta III's visit to England, 1937* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1940). Danson Sylvester Kahyana, writing about a similar book authored by a member of the Buganda royal court who attended the 1902 coronation, argues that the author highlights both how Britain can help their own country advance and positioning themselves as agents to being about this advancement. Lewanika attempted the same here. Kahyana, "Shifting Marginalities in Ham Mukasa and Sir Apolo Kagwa's *Uganda's Katikiro in England*," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 30, no. 1 (2018): 36–48.

[34]NAZ BSE 1/8/2, Letter from Godwin Lewanika to Provincial Commissioner, Mongu, 25 Jan. 1939.

[35]Gerald L. Kaplan, *The Elites of Barotseland 1878–1969: A Political History of Zambia's Western Province* (London: C. Hurst, 1970), 153.

[36]Elena Berger, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule: The Copperbelt from 1924 to Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 238.

[37]There were only 59 African employees in this "special grade" on the entire Copperbelt and only a handful earned more than 110 shillings a month. Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines archive, Ndola, Zambia (ZCCM) 14.3.3C, African Labour Classification, 28 July 1943.

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"practically replacing a European" and so should be paid something close to a white European clerk's salary.[38]

Other African mine employees did not enjoy these same kind of rapid wage rises and wartime increases in the cost of living provoked serious unrest. In March 1940, following a strike by white workers, African workers struck at Nkana and Mufulira mines. The strike was bloodily repressed, with sixteen strikers shot dead, but it galvanised more efforts towards collective action.[39] African workers formed informal workplace committees and there was a renewed effort to establish welfare societies. Lewanika was closely involved in both of these. He became secretary of the Kitwe African Society, placing him among a milieu of individuals who would become prominent politically in subsequent decades. He also became chairman of the Nkana Works Committee.[40]

Lewanika's ambition was assisted by a change in British colonial policy. Unnerved by a wave of unrest in the 1940s, the British government embraced a modernising impulse and sought to establish a formal system of industrial bargaining with African trade unions. There was also a local imperative in Northern Rhodesia. The white mineworkers' union, which had established a powerful position through wartime strikes, was now threatening to organise unions for African workers.[41] The colonial administration would not countenance this, and neither would Lewanika. He saw clearly that there would be little role for Africans in a union run by white workers. Lewanika engaged in barbed debate in the press with white miners at Nkana who sought to organise this union, accusing them of having "no interest in the well-being and welfare" of Africans and warning African workers not to join with "people who are not sympathetic with them."[42]

Lewanika helped form an organisation at Nkana independent of the white mineworkers' union in 1947. In this, he was assisted by a British trade unionist William Comrie, who had been sent to the colony to help form trade unions for African workers. Lewanika and Comrie became close friends and, in a good example of how he adroitly utilised opportunities presented to him, Lewanika subsequently got from Comrie letters of invitation to prominent trade unionists in Britain.

Lewanika's union ambitions were soon thwarted, however. As chairperson of the Nkana Works Committee, Lewanika ran for presidency of the newly-formed African mineworkers' union at the mine but was defeated by Lawrence Katilungu, a miner who headed the union for the next decade. Even worse, he also lost the election for the position of secretary and vice-chairman of the union, and was frozen out of the leadership.[43] He soon quit the union and subsequently established a rival organisation that caused extended conflict on the mines, as discussed below.

His political ambitions ran parallel to his ambitions in the nascent labour movement. Lewanika first sought an ethnic constituency and in late 1945 formed the Sons of Barotseland Patriotic Society on the Copperbelt, with himself as chairman. This society was a classic ethnic association. The main aim of the society was "to unite all the Barotse together and cultivate true brotherhood and fellowship among them" followed by encouraging loyalty to the Litunga and British Crown.[44] It was no coincidence that the Litunga had rescinded Lewanika's banishment earlier that year.

The Patriotic Society gained little traction among the Lozi on the Copperbelt and there is no evidence that it had a membership larger than the four office-holders whose names append the constitution. Commenting on the prospects for the new organisation, one local colonial official astutely

[38]ZCCM 14.3.3C, Letter from P. H. Truscott to Mine Managers, 20 Mar. 1942.

[39]Jane Parpart, *Labour and Capital on the African Copperbelt* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 83–88.

[40]Ian Henderson, "Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900–1953: A Study in the Limits of Colonial Power" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1972), 227.

[41]Duncan Money, *White Mineworkers on Zambia's Copperbelt, 1926–74: In a Class of Their Own* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 148–53.

[42]Letter from Godwin Lewanika, *Northern News* (Ndola), 10 Mar. 1948.

[43]Kabwe M. Kasoma, 'An Introductory Survey of the History of the Northern Rhodesia African Mine Workers' Union', in *Zambian Land and Labour Studies*, vol. 3, eds. Robin Palmer and M. Shimwaayi Muntemba (Lusaka: National Archives of Zambia, 1973), 109–10. Henderson, "Labour and Politics," 227–28.

[44]NAZ SEC2/1274, Constitution of the Sons of Barotseland Patriotic Society.

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noted that Lewanika "is surprisingly unpopular with his fellow Africans including those of his own tribe."[45] The society quietly folded sometime in early 1946.

Establishing an organisation aimed at national constituency was a more promising prospect and in this Lewanika initially achieved greater success. In October 1946, he and others formed the Northern Rhodesia Federation of Welfare Societies and ambitions of this group soon grew.[46] At a second congress in July 1948, delegates voted to transform the federation into the ANC, officially the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress. Lewanika was elected the first president of the new nationalist political organisation, the first in the territory.

The new party was soon faced with a serious challenge. White settler politicians from Northern and Southern Rhodesia, led by Roy Welensky, began pushing for a federation that would incorporate Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland (Malawi). The ANC firmly opposed the creation of the Central African Federation (CAF) but faced the difficult prospect of broadening their support base from the small and relatively elite party to a grassroots movement.[47] This was complicated by disagreements over strategy. Lewanika opposed federation but his opposition was tinged with a strong degree of loyalism. In a speech in April 1950, he argued that Welensky's plan for federation:

> means self-government for the whites only. He fears that when Africans are educated and civilised enough, the Colonial Office would hand over the government of the country into their hands. Therefore, he wants to take us by surprise and unconditionally before we reach maturity… We are satisfied with and have great faith in Colonial Office rule.[48]

This encapsulates the carefully phrased loyalist case that opposition to federation was simply because Africans did not wish to lose the protection of the Colonial Office. Others in the ANC and anti-federation campaign were much more radical, notably Harry Nkumbula and Simon Zukas. Lewanika was opposed to Zukas' involvement on political grounds because he thought it inappropriate that Zukas, a white person, had a say in matters affecting Africans. Wellington Sikalumbi later identified this moment as the beginning of Lewanika's political downfall within the ANC.[49]

In this period, more of Lewanika's energy and ambition are evident. He began to travel widely. In July 1950, Lewanika visited the UK again and utilised contacts through missionaries in Northern Rhodesia and the trade unionist William Comrie to meet a range of prominent political figures. Comrie's introductory letter noted that Lewanika took "a very prominent part in affairs of Northern Rhodesia" and that he, Comrie, was very happy to consider him a friend.[50] Lewanika spent three weeks in London and met with his London publishers, the Fabian Colonial Bureau, Labour politicians including Arthur Creech Jones, and addressed a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Here, he attacked the colour bar and urged opposition to the federation.[51] He also met Vincent Tewson, the longstanding head of Britain's Trades Union Congress (TUC) and made a good impression. Tewson later remarked to Comrie that Lewanika was "a most likeable fellow, highly intelligent and with a remarkably balanced outlook."[52]

It is worth noting, however, that his diligent use of connections could not open all doors. Lewanika had sought a meeting with the colonial secretary but officials strongly advised against it because

[45]NAZ SEC2/1724, Letter from D. B. Hall to Provincial Commissioner, Ndola, 15 Nov. 1945.

[46]Hall, *Zambia*, 123.

[47]Rob Power, "'The African Dimension to the Anti-Federation Struggle, ca. 1950–53: 'It Has United Us Far More Closely Than Any Other Question Would Have Accomplished,'" *Itinerario* 45, no. 2 (2021): 304–32.

[48]"N. Rhodesia Africans Protest Federal Plans," *Northern News* (Ndola), 19 Apr. 1950.

[49]Wittington Sikalumbi, *Before UNIP* (Lusaka: Neczam, 1977), 5.

[50]Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (MRC), MSS. 292/968.1/2, Letter from William Comrie to Vincent Tewson, n.d.

[51]TNA CO 537/5888, The African Point of View on Northern Rhodesian Problems.

[52]MRC MSS. 292/968.1/2., Letter from Vincent Tewson to William Comrie, 21 July 1950.

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"Lewanika has no official position among Africans in Northern Rhodesia at all… Admittedly he is President of the Northern Rhodesian African Congress… [but] the Congress is in fact a small not very representative body."[53] It would only be later, as a figure in the colonial establishment, that he would meet freely with political elites in Britain.

Anticolonial connections did open other doors. Later in 1950, Lewanika visited India and met with politicians in the new independent government including the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. He secured from the Indian government two industrial scholarships for Africans students from Northern Rhodesia and a third one from the Indian high commissioner for East Africa, who he met in Nairobi on his way back home.[54] One beneficiary of these scholarships was Simon Kapwepwe, a future vice-president of Zambia. Some months later, in 1951, Lewanika was in Switzerland as a guest of the international spiritual movement Moral Re-Armament. The movement owned a hotel in Switzerland and invited prominent politicians from around the world, including many anticolonial nationalists.[55]

The visit to Switzerland, however, came only after a sudden reversal in his political fortunes. At the ANC elective congress held in Lusaka in July 1951, Lewanika was ousted from the president by Harry Nkumbula, a man who Lewanika had recently appointed as organising secretary.[56] The vote was a humiliating rebuff of Lewanika's leadership and political approach. Nkumbula received twenty-four votes while another candidate, Safeli Chileshe, got three votes. Lewanika only managed to secure a single vote.[57]

Shortly after, Lewanika attended the world assembly of Moral Re-Armament. This made a great impression him. He interacted with political figures from around the world including several from Africa including the paramount chief Naakwazi Afrani III of Ghana, Mrs Azikiwe, the wife of the president of the National Council of Nigeria, E. W. Mathu, the only African representative on Kenya's Legislative Council, and Fred Kubai, a Kenyan nationalist and trade unionist. What made the greatest impression on him though was the respect that he was accorded by those he encountered, who he emphasised were intellectuals and political leaders: "My first deep impression was the absence of any discrimination on account of race or colour" and that delegates from round the world "live at the same hotels and receive the same treatment."[58]

At this time, Lewanika was still signing his letters as "Founder and former president of the Northern Rhodesia African Congress."[59] Increasingly, however, he acted independently of the ANC. At the Moral Re-Armament meeting, he announced that he would reconcile with Roy Welensky, who had been his "bitterest of enemies. He speaks for the Europeans, and I speak for the Africans." He then wrote to Welensky to arrange a meeting to discuss federation.[60] Welensky agreed and in December 1952 Lewanika organised a roundtable discussion with several settler politicians and figures from the ANC. Here, he reiterated his opposition to the CAF and showed he was attuned to details in the plans of settler politicians that pointed to wider objectives, namely effective independence from Britain under white minority rule. Settler politicians had proposed a category of federal citizenship and Lewanika argued this

> is a clear indication that the motive behind the whole federal scheme is to attain Dominion status [self-governing with the British Empire]. Africans do not want anything that will cut

[53]TNA CO 537/588, Memo to Mr Lambert, 20 July 1950.

[54]Sikalumbi, *Before UNIP*, 5.

[55]Ismay Milford, "A New World in the Swiss Alps: Moral Re-Armament, Religious Internationalism and African Decolonisation," *Cultural and Social History* 19, no. 5 (2022): 587–603.

[56]Macola, *Liberal Nationalism*, 31.

[57]Sikalumbi, *Before UNIP*, 9.

[58]Welensky Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford (WP) 62/5, Letter from Godwin Lewanika to all African leaders throughout the continent of Africa and abroad, 29 Sep. 1952.

[59]*Ibid*.

[60]WP 62/5, Service de Presse et d'Information du Rearmement Moral, 5 Sep. 1952.

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> them off in that way from direct touch with the UK and refer therefore to retain their citizenship as British subjects and British protected persons.[61]

Lewanika was here referring to his own situation. He was among the first people in the region to realise that the 1948 British Nationality Act made all residents of the British Empire and Commonwealth eligible for British citizenship. In January 1951, he became the first African in Northern Rhodesia to become a naturalised British citizen, and he registered his six children as British citizens.[62] Lewanika was keen to advertise his citizenship status. Sikota Wina recalled that Lewanika's decision to take up British citizenship caused great suspicion among other ANC leaders and contributed to his removal as president.[63]

Becoming a colonial African

Neither the moderate loyalism of Lewanika nor the increasingly militant protests of the ANC halted the CAF, which was established in 1953 with an official ideology of partnership between Europeans and African. Lewanika would subsequently adroitly exploit this discourse for great benefit. At this time, he was still employed at Nkana Mine and an opportunity there soon presented itself for personal advancement.

The African Mineworkers' Union (AMU) soon dashed the hopes of the British government that it would be a moderate body. The union embarked on a series of successful strikes and secured major pay increases, causing great unease among the mining companies over rising labour costs. This occurred alongside greater stratification of the African workforce on the mines. When Lewanika joined the mines, the workforce had been divided into three grades: A, B and C (albeit with a special grade for Lewanika and a handful of others). This had expanded to eleven grades by 1955.[64] The new grades reflected the growing number of administrative and supervisory roles for African employees, some of whom began pushing for a separate union for senior employees. In May 1953, a small group of employees at Nkana Mine subsequently established the Mines' African Staff Association (MASA).[65] Lewanika was at the centre of these efforts and became the president of the new body. This infuriated his former comrades in the AMU and when African miners went on strike in September 1953 one of their specific demands was for Lewanika to be sacked.[66]

MASA was a self-consciously moderate organisation and sought to steer clear of nationalist politics, while seeking favour with their employers. While the AMU pushed for equal pay with white mineworkers, MASA publicly declared their position was that "it would not be fair to pay white and African employees the same wage since white employees had a higher cost of living," echoing colonial logic.[67] Lewanika softened his critique of the colour bar and claimed that African workers would only be promoted to skilled jobs "when Africans were prepared to be loyal, efficient and punctual employees."[68] This kind of moderation was rewarded by the mining companies and members of MASA did well in the 1950s as the mines expanded a paternalistic system for new higher-grade African workers. New, larger houses were constructed for senior African employees

[61] WP 88/7, Minutes of a meeting held in the Legislative Council chamber to discuss Federation, 15 Dec. 1952.

[62] TNA HO 334/267/5689, Naturalisation Certificate: Godwin Akabiwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, 1951.

[63] Interview with Sikota Wina, Lusaka, Zambia, 22 Jan. 2019. The late Sikota Wina had a long political career in Zambia and knew Lewanika personally.

[64] ZCCM 201.3.3, S. Taylor, Memorandum on African Labour Classification, 30 July 1956.

[65] NAZ WP 1/14/11, Meeting between the Chief Secretary and Representatives of the African Mine Workers' Union, 16 Oct. 1953.

[66] "A Sad Month on the Copperbelt," *The Times* (London), 5 Sep. 1953.

[67] Government of Northern Rhodesia, *Report of the Board of Inquiry Appointed to Inquire into the Advancement of Africans in the Copper Mining Industry in Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka: Govt. Printer, 1954), 26.

[68] "African Advancement Claim," *Northern News* (Ndola), 27 June 1955.

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with electric lighting, indoor plumbing and gardens, their wages were increased, and greater training provided.[69]

Although MASA remained a small organisation, with only 700 members in 1955, it provided a platform for Lewanika.[70] In his capacity as a union leader, he could meet with mine managers, executives, and colonial politicians. In 1956, for instance, he met with the colonial secretary and urged him to lobby the mining companies into providing more supervisory and administrative positions for African workers and thereby build up an African middle class. His efforts to meet with the colonial secretary in his capacity as an ANC leader only a few years earlier had been unsuccessful.[71]

Lewanika's former comrades in the AMU were incensed by the formation of MASA. Worse was to come though. In June 1955, the mining companies announced that all senior African employees would be promoted to staff status, where they would receive a monthly salary. This had financial benefits but promotion rendered these employees ineligible for membership in the African Mineworkers' Union. The union interpreted this view as an existential threat to their organisation and initiated a series of wildcat strikes aimed at abolishing staff status and abolishing MASA, whose members were publicly vilified in Copperbelt towns during the strike.[72]

Lewanika weathered this criticism and used his platform as a union leader to reenter political life. In August 1956, Lewanika was in London again where he addressed a group of Conservative MPs and explained his shifting politics, arguing that:

> although Africans were unanimously opposed to the Federation, it was not true that all Africans were seeking ways and means to wreck Federation…. I am quite certain that any demonstration of practical partnership on the part of Europeans would not only help Federation to succeed but will create mutual understanding.[73]

What is significant here is the use of the past tense. Africans had been opposed to federation but now were not. Lewanika had himself experienced greater material benefits and rising social status since the CAF was established. His position as MASA president had secured him a scholarship to study industrial relations at University College in Swansea. Lewanika even appears on the electoral register there.[74] He was, after all, a British citizen. There were other opportunities to mingle with elites too. Lewanika was also invited to speak at the first Commonwealth Study Conference convened by the Duke of Edinburgh in Oxford in 1956. At the conference, he met prominent political and industrial figures from across the empire, including Harry Oppenheimer, later head of Anglo-American, the largest company in Northern Rhodesia and Lewanika's employer.[75]

Lewanika's politics in this period could be described with what Harri Englund called anti anticolonialism, with the former founding father of Zambian nationalism reserving his most serious criticism for the ANC and the AMU.[76] Increasingly though, he was moving towards public support for colonial rule. In early 1958, he took the highly unusual step of joining the United Federal Party (UFP),

[69]Albert Matongo, "Urban Housing within a Colonial Political Economy," in *Zambia Land and Labour Studies*, vol. 4, ed. M. Shimwayi Muntemba (Lusaka: University of Zambia Press, 1983), 65–66.

[70]"Africans' Strike is a 'Losing Battle' – Lewanika," *Northern News* (Ndola), 20 Jan. 1955.

[71]TNA CO 1015/1979, Meeting between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Representatives of the Northern Rhodesia Mines African Staff Association, 4 Jan. 1956.

[72]Parpart, *Labor and Capital*, 145–47.

[73]Phiri, "Coping with Contradictions," 14.

[74]West Glamorgan Archives, Swansea TC 231/145/1, 2, Godwin Lewanika, Swansea electoral register, 1956.

[75]Anglo American owned Nkana Mine. For a list of attendees, see *His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh's Study Conference on the Human Problems of Industrial Communities within the Commonwealth and Empire* (n.p., 1960), 3.

[76]Harri Englund, "Anti Anti-Colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 1 (2015): 221–47.

the mainstream party of the white settler elite and big business. It appears Lewanika did this at his own initiative. For one thing, settler politicians did not have a high opinion of Lewanika. Welensky astutely noted that Lewanika had "little if any following at all among the Africans in Northern Rhodesia."[77]

Lewanika wrote a lengthy public justification of his decision to join the UFP. He explained that he had been the first African in the territory to join the party not because he sought: "to placate or to betray Africans interests as some of my opponents have claimed. Nor have I done so out of selfish ambitions. My all-heartened conviction is that the time is long overdue for Northern Rhodesia Africans to be represented in the governing party of the country."[78] Lewanika emphasised that a party's policy "is to place the government into the hands of civilised men" and that it would be "insane to give the vote to everyone" as "the country would revert to semi barbarism." He acknowledged that he was "bitterly opposed to the creation of the Central African Federation" but now supported it and saved a barb for "the political immaturity of the majority of Africans" who would not understand his decision.

Lewanika proved an ardent supporter of colonial rule. In his capacity as president of MASA, he addressed the Royal Commonwealth Society in London in July 1958 at a meeting chaired by Earl De La Warr, a prominent member of the British aristocracy. Lewanika praised the government's proposals for constitutional change, saying he found them "impartial, realistic and fair to all inhabitants of Northern Rhodesia."[79] Lewanika then listed several examples of how the government was implementing racial partnerships, noting that there was an African headteacher at two schools in Southern Rhodesia and two African doctors at a hospital in Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia. In the same speech, Lewanika claimed that "I was the first African in the whole of Central Africa to oppose" federation. But "now [that] the federation is a fact," he said, "let us all join to make it a glorious thing, a sunlight example to the world of how the white, the black and the brown men can give their talents and, if need be, their lives for the idea of a common multiracial citizenship."

In November 1958, Lewanika was elected as an MP for Luangwa to the Federal Assembly on the UFP ticket, becoming one of twelve African MPs (white voters elected forty-seven MPs). The Federal Assembly was hardly a beacon of racial partnership and in this period and "Hansard is littered with aggressive, demeaning remarks during Black MPs speeches."[80] This was the case even though the African MPs elected were decidedly moderate. The federal election had been boycotted by nationalist parties and turnout from eligible African voters was minimal. Nevertheless, his election as a federal MP secured Lewanika greater status. He now communicated regularly with leading settler politicians and continued to travel extensively. In 1959, Lewanika visited the United States, where he sought to promote the CAF and counter what he termed the propaganda of African nationalists.[81] There are also indications that settler politicians needed Lewanika more than he needed them. One UFP official tried unsuccessfully to curtail Lewanika's travel, even traveling to the airport in Lusaka to persuade him to stay in the territory before he boarded a flight, because "he is invaluable here and worth many others."[82]

This enhanced status brought other tangible material benefits. Lewanika arranged for the overseas education of several of his relatives and secured grants to support this. His eldest son Albert and nephew George both went to study agriculture at California State Polytechnic College, paid for with grants from the mining industry, while his son Charles was at the Oxford College of Further

[77]WP 674/7, Letter from Roy Welensky to Don Taylor, 28 Apr. 1954.

[78]Godwin Lewanika, "Making Partnership a Reality in Central Africa," *Africa World*, Mar. 1958, 9–10.

[79]Godwin Lewanika, 'The Problems of a Multi-Racial Society in Central Africa', *African Affairs* 57, no. 299 (1958): 284–86.

[80]Jane Parpart, "Silenced Visions of Citizenship, Democracy and Nation: African MPs in Rhodesian Parliaments, 1963–78," in *Redemptive or Grotesque Nationalism? Rethinking Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe*, eds. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and James Muzondidya (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 192, 198.

[81]WP 636/12, Letter from Godwin Lewanika to Roy Welensky, 30 Oct. 1959.

[82]WP 534/6, Memorandum to Roy Welensky, n.d. [c.1960].

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Education. Another son Gilbert was at Napier Technical College in Edinburgh and Lewanika had arranged this while on a visit to the city to address the Royal Commonwealth Society.[83]

His election as a federal MP marked his transformation into an energetic supporter of colonial rule. His new politics were encapsulated in his submission to the Monckton Commission, which the British government had appointed to examine the future of the federation. He insisted that "it is most desirable that the Federation should become a sovereign state independent of the United Kingdom control" and argued the "time is not yet opportune for the introduction of 'one man, one vote' in Central Africa."[84] This was a clear shift towards a more pro-colonial stance as nationalist campaigning intensified. Only two years earlier, he had publicly opposed independence for the federation as "such action would create ill feeling and discontent among the majority of the Africans."[85] He now opposed the demands of white liberals to gradually expand the number of African voters, calling for a ten-year moratorium on changes to voting qualifications so as to "keep the governments in the hands of civilised men of all races."[86] His opposition to African nationalism became more bitter and he wrote letters to prominent British politicians and to *The Times* claiming Britain was "surrendering to terrorism" by entering into talks with the "savages" of UNIP.[87]

Most supporters of the CAF assumed that Monckton Commission would endorse the idea of Dominion status and were wrongfooted when its report instead emphasised the strength of African opposition to federation. Events were moving out of the hands of settler politicians. African nationalist parties demanded the British government convene talks on the question of majority rule before any discussions were held on the future of the federation, and got this.[88]

Becoming an ethnic nationalist

In some sense, Lewanika's support for colonial rule was short-sighted in career terms as nationalist agitation intensified. Yet Lewanika soon realised something his white counterparts did not: that the federation and colonial rule north of the Zambezi were finished. He repurposed his defence of colonialism to become a defence of Barotseland, beginning a shift to a new constituency. In his new guise, he would become a Lozi ethnic nationalist, though it would take some years for this strategy to bear fruit.

Lewanika began to ingratiate himself with the Litunga Mwanawina III as the two shared a hostility to the nationalist movement, one that Mwanawina saw as a threat to his royal prerogatives. Lewanika began to spend more time in the Litunga's winter capital Lealui as an advisor to Mwanawina and in this capacity began to push for the secession of Barotseland from Northern Rhodesia. He repurposed his defence of the colonial order as a defence of Barotseland. The federation was necessary, in his new view, to preserve Barotseland and its traditional institutions. Without it, he warned, "an independent Northern Rhodesia dominated by the Pan-Africanists could easily crush Barotseland and destroy its Monarch."[89]

Lewanika was involved in several futile schemes to push for the secession of Barotseland as colonial rule crumbled, including attempting to persuade the British government that Barotseland could form its own federation with Southern Rhodesia.[90] This was perhaps the culmination of his political

[83]WP 756/1, Letter from Godwin Lewanika to Roy Welensky, 2 Aug. 1967.

[84]WP 206/4, Memorandum of Evidence to the Monckton Commission Submitted by Godwin Akabiwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, 31 Jan. 1960.

[85]Lewanika, "Multi-Racial Society," 284.

[86]WP 206/4, Memorandum of Evidence to the Monckton Commission Submitted by Godwin Akabiw Mbikusita-Lewanika, 31 Jan. 1960.

[87]WP 637/11, Letter from Lewanika to Editor, *The Times* (London), 13 Sep. 1961.

[88]Owen J. M. Kalinga, "Independence Negotiations in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia," *International Negotiation* 10 (2005): 249–50.

[89]WP 154/3, Letter from Godwin Lewanika to Roy Welensky, 5 Jan. 1963.

[90]Hogan, "History of Lozi Secessionism," 912–14; Kaplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, 195–212.

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transformation. As a nationalist, he had decried the creation of the CAF as destroying Northern Rhodesia by subsuming it into settler-dominated Southern Rhodesia. Now, he pushed for the breakup of Northern Rhodesia to preserve the federation and join it together with Southern Rhodesia under a white settler government. Lewanika also manoeuvred Duncan Sandys, then secretary of state for Commonwealth relations, to travel from Salisbury to Mongu in Barotseland to meet with Mwanawina and discuss secession in early 1962:

> He [Sandys] was invited by Godwin Lewanika to make a trip to Barotseland and flew down secretly from Salisbury in a Royal Rhodesian Air Force plane. This was done over the head of the Governor and the Colonial Secretary, Macleod. While he was there, Sandys was given a document signed by the Litunga and his most senior adviser, calling for a separate Barotseland within the Federation.[91]

UNIP responded by arguing it would be justified in overthrowing the Litunga if he persisted with such a scheme and Sandys subsequently disavowed the plan.[92]

Throughout his career, Lewanika had a knack of claiming to represent a constituency amongst whom he had very little actual support. The same was true among the Lozi. In 1962, he formed the Barotse National Party as part of frantic efforts by settler politicians to secure a pro-federation majority in the elections that year. He used his connections in Salisbury to secure financial support and practical assistance from the UFP for the party.[93] Lewanika used his association with the party to try and to cement his position in Barotseland. For instance, he had the party write a letter to the Litunga urging him to appoint Lewanika as *Ngambela* (prime minister), on the grounds of popular acclaim.[94] To say this party had no popular support is hardly an exaggeration. Among the 79,801 people who voted on the "lower roll" of African voters in the 1962 elections, only 143 for the Barotse National Party.[95] Barotseland's secession was a non-starter.

The break-up of the CAF in December 1963 and Zambia's independence the year after were major blows to Lewanika's status. International travel ceased, connections dried up, and he faced financial difficulties after losing his parliamentary salary. His position was reduced from MP to clerk at a colliery in Southern Rhodesia. This was a job with lower status than the position he had held at Nkana Mine twenty years earlier and one with limited prospects for advancement under the strict colour bar enforced in the territory's mines. Lewanika was reduced to calling in favours and sending begging letters for loans from settler politicians. The cheques he sent to repay the loans bounced.[96]

Once again, however, Lewanika reinverted himself, as his efforts to ingratiate himself with the Barotse royal house finally achieved some result. Here, we can see how the skills Lewanika honed in the late colonial period to take advantage of new political structures and embrace former enemies as allies were critical. By 1967, Mwanawina was seriously unwell, and Lewanika returned to Barotseland the same year to find an altered political situation in Zambia.

Factional battles in the now ruling UNIP had led to the exit of several Lozi elites who went on to found a new opposition party, the United Party. UNIP's national leadership, now dominated by those from the northern and eastern parts of the country, sought to prevent this party from gaining traction and to exploit divisions in Barotseland while at the same time removing powers of the Litunga. Shortly after his arrival from Southern Rhodesia, Lewanika was appointed to Zambia's House

[91] Hall, *Zambia*, 240.

[92] "Wina Attacks Secession Demand," *Central African Mail* (Lusaka), 27 Feb. 1962.

[93] The party was also known as the Sicaba Party, meaning party of the masses. Kaplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, 198.

[94] WP 154/3, Letter from Muinui Wamunyimo to Mwanamine III, 31 Dec. 1962.

[95] The convoluted franchise for this election involved two electoral rolls: a predominantly European "upper roll" and an African "lower role." David Mulford, *The Northern Rhodesia General Election 1962* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964), 147, 190.

[96] WP 756/1, Letter from J. L. Bridge to Godwin Lewanika, 20 July 1964.

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of Chiefs by President Kenneth Kaunda, which, alongside his royal post of Natamoyo, made him the de facto successor to Mwanawina.[97] UNIP had initially envisaged no role for traditional leaders in an independent Zambia but quickly realised that the state could not function in rural areas without their involvement. As a result, Kaunda established the House of Chiefs in 1965 as an advisory body to government.[98]

In making the appointment, Kaunda had sought to placate Lewanika and prevent him from working with the United Party that became the channel of Lozi discontent. When Mwanawina died the following year, Lewanika was chosen as the new Litunga in controversial circumstances. Many Lozi figures, especially those in UNIP, appealed to Kaunda to block the ascension of his old foe to the kingship.[99] Kaunda declined and attended Lewanika's installation ceremony — though he declined "giving a speech apparently because of the rains."[100] The colonial African had been reborn as an ethnic nationalist and traditional ruler. He remained Litunga until his death in 1977.

Conclusion

Lewanika's world was suddenly circumscribed by decolonisation. The independence of Zambia was a serious, albeit temporary, reversal of fortune as the position and status he had achieved collapsed with the colonial order. There seemed to be no place in the new nation for a man widely regarded as a turncoat. He complained melodramatically about his prospects in Zambia, claiming rumours were circulating that "I shall be executed in public… [yet] I am not afraid, I am ready to die for the right cause."[101] What Lewanika saw as "the right cause" changed completely over the course of his career, and more than once. He moved seamlessly between constituencies and causes that he claimed to represent. He fought against the creation of the Central African Federation, and then fought against its dissolution; he presented himself as a modern, progressive trade unionist, and as a traditional royal leader.

What is remarkable is that Lewanika successfully presented himself as a representative of different groups without any real support from those groups. He achieved dismal votes in leadership elections in the African Mineworkers' Union and later in the ANC. The other trade union he founded recruited only a few hundred members, the political party he established in Barotseland received a mere 143 votes, and his installation as Litunga was heavily disputed in the royal family. Indeed, throughout his career, observers and those who knew him continually noted this. This did not matter. These organisations, however small and unpopular they were, nevertheless put Lewanika at the centre of political events. For Lewanika, progress was measured not by the support he attracted but by what he gained by it.

How was it possible for Lewanika to do this? Part of the answer is his own skill and agency at creating and exploiting opportunities within the changing structure of the colonial state, and later the postcolonial state. "Agency," especially in African history, is often celebrated as something positive, with the tacit understanding that individuals and groups with agency use this to do positive things, often resist colonial rule. Lewanika, when it suited him, used his considerable agency to do the opposite, furthering the aims and objectives of the region's colonial rulers. Other political figures and trade unionists in the federation tried to do the same, but none achieved the same level of success. Lewanika became the epitome of the colonial African, a British citizen who was received at Buckingham Palace, the House of Commons, and the Trade Union Congress. His advancement barred by failure in the nationalist movement was achieved by inserting himself into the colonial

[97] The Natamoyo is the Minister of Justice. Kaplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, 214–16.
[98] Kalusa, *Kalonga Gawa Undi*.
[99] "Storm over New Litunga's Installation," *Times of Zambia* (Ndola), 23 Dec. 1968.
[100] Kaplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, 216.
[101] WP 756/1, Letter from Godwin Lewanika to J. L. Bridge, 27 July 1964.

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order, but was not restricted to it. He flourished too in an independent Zambia, realising astutely that the new state could not function without engagement with traditional leaders.

The period after the Second World War was a time of tumultuous political change, and this proved to be fertile ground for the establishment of new organisations. This made it relatively easy for individuals to move between different organisations or establish new ones. Lewanika could be a kind of political chameleon as the boundaries and conflicts between the organisations he moved between were not so strictly drawn.

Lewanika's reversal of fortunes at Zambian independence was temporary and he managed to insert himself into the postcolonial state. Thirty years after the Litunga banished him from Barotseland, he was installed as the Litunga. This was a third reinvention in his life: from anticolonial nationalism to ardent colonialist and now traditional leader. Close connections with colonial rulers had been useful for his self-advancement, but, ultimately, he didn't need them. Far from being a willing dupe or pawn of settler politicians, it is arguable that it was Lewanika who used them.

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