

CHEKE CHA MBUNDA CULTURAL & WRITERS ASSOCIATION
COPPERBELT BRANCH

**MINUTES OF THE CONSULTATIVE MEETING (NDTHZANGO) ON THE
WESTERN PROVINCE CRISIS HELD ON SATURDAY 7TH MARCH, 2012 AT 103
FREEDOM WAY, RIVERSIDE, KITWE**

IN ATTENDANCE: DR. BIEMBA MALITI – CHAIRPERSON

MR. CHRIS CHIPUTA – VICE CHAIRMAN

MRS. CHIBINGO MALITI – TREASURER

MR. MUBANGA CHUMA – VICE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

MR. HENRY MAKAYI – SECRETARY

MR. M. SWANA – TRUSTEE

MR. LITWE MALITI – MEMBER

MR. CHIKUWA CHINONGE – MEMBER

APOLOGIES: MR. K. KATOLO

MR. TOBBY MALITI

MRS. KAMBA MALITI

MRS. MUKWATO

MR. PATRICK MALITI

ABSENT: PROF. KAKOMA MASEKA

MS. BUTETE KALIYE

AGENDA

1. Opening prayer
2. Opening remarks
3. The Barotseland Agreement 1964
4. The Commission of Enquiry into the Mongu Riots
5. Cheke Cha Mbunda's BNC Submission
6. The BNC's Resolutions
7. Mbunda Leadership & Structures
8. Concerns and Matters Arising
9. Resolutions – The Way Forward
10. Any Other Business

11. Closing remarks
12. Closing prayer

The meeting started at 15:15 hours with the chairperson requesting Mrs Maliti to give an opening prayer.

The chairperson welcomed the members present at the meeting which he said was an urgent and emergency type and had been prompted by the unfortunate events unfolding in Western Province. He implored all present to be both frank, serious and objective in their discussions since Western Province was our ancestral land, home to many of our kith and kin and whether they liked it or not, those events seriously affected all Mbundas without exception.

1. The Barotseland Agreement of 1964 (BA64)

The chairperson started by introducing the BA64 since it was the causer of all the current confusion in Western Province. He talked about the perceived and imagined extent of Barotseland which covered half of Eastern Angola (Mbundaland), Caprivi Strip in Namibia, Northern Botswana, Western Matabeleland in Zimbabwe and the Zambian provinces of Western, Southern, Eastern, Central, Lusaka, Copperbelt and North-Western. By covering all these areas, some of which were foreign, meant that Barotseland's boundaries were not real but fictitious. Hence the land called Barotseland was a mythical entity only conjured up by the greed of Chief Lewanika himself. This meant that President Kaunda signed an agreement with a representative of a non-existent territory, which was a gross error and misdirection on his part. Further evidence for this is clearly given in the **Conclusion** of the CCM submission to the BNC.

With the above submission, **the meeting resolved that the BA64 document was real (since it exists) but was of debatable legality (since it was signed between a real territory – Northern Rhodesia- and a fictitious one- Barosteland) and not valid (since Barotseland was a fictitious place). Hence the meeting rejected its relevance.**

“Roswi” is a nickname given to the defeated Kololos by the victors, the Mbundas, after a tribe in DR Congo who had been defeated in their wars. Hence use of this name for Western Province is very demeaning to all the people of that province as it labels them to be failures, losers or the defeated people.

2. The Commission of Enquiry into the Mongu Riots

Cognisant of the fact that the Commission of Enquiry set up to investigate the January 2011 riots in Mongu had presented its report to the President of the Republic of Zambia but the report had not yet been released for public scrutiny, the meeting felt that it was important to make some comments on the same since the President had already informed the nation about its major finding – that the people of Western Province had overwhelmingly recommended secession from the rest of Zambia as the solution to solve the problems of the province.

In anticipation of its release, the meeting noted the following shortcomings:

- a) The second Terms of Reference of the Commission stated that “...to enquire into whether the Barotseland Freedom Movement (BFM) was responsible for the riots and what gave rise to the riotous behaviour”.

Since the BFM was one of the entities that were to be investigated by the Commission of Enquiry, how could its chairman – Mr Namushi Nyambe – be appointed to the commission as one of the commissioners? This was grossly anomalous.

- b) The last Terms of Reference stated that “...to ascertain the concerns of the people of Western Province and recommend mechanisms for addressing the concerns”.

Of all the 32 ethnic groups of Western Province, since Lozi is not an ethnic group of a single tribe but of 27 ethnic groups excluding Mbundas, Nkoyas, Luvalas, Luchazis and Nkangalas, the Mbundas are naturally the largest single ethnic group of Western Province and hence cannot be ignored. But we know that the Mbundas or their representatives, Cheke cha Mbunda, were excluded from membership of this commission. This raises serious questions about the purported responses “from the majority of people of Western Province” on which the commission based its major finding of secession stated above. Hence its credibility is seriously undermined.

Hence the meeting resolved that the recommendations of this commission had no basis and should be rejected when the report is released into the public domain. As Mbundas we feel we are not part of the report’s findings since they were contrary to the submissions of Cheke cha Mbunda at Mulungushi Conference Centre.

3. Cheke Cha Mbunda’s BNC Submission

The meeting went on to discuss the “Cheke Cha Mbunda Submission to Barotse National Council 26 – 27th March 2012” which were presented to the BNC by the National Chairman.

Overall, members felt that the report was good and inspiring except for the following concerns:

- Despite the provisions of points 4. And 5. of the Chiyengele-Mulambwa Treaty, the Lozis have consistently throughout the 216 years they have lived together with Mbundas always dominated Mbundas in all aspects. Members thus questioned the value and significance of the presence of Cheke cha Mbunda at this Lozi meeting if not to again reinforce the dominance of the Lozis over the Mbundas.
- **The Relevance of the Mbundas to the Barotseland Agreement 1964.** The meeting rejected the endorsement of the document as a “real and valid and above all still a legal document” for reasons already stated above.
- **Unfair Treatment of Mbundas in Western Province and Need for Mutual Respect and Co-existence between Lozis and Mbundas.** Members overwhelmingly supported the position given by the submission in terms of the few instances cited.
- **Recommendation.** Here the members did not like the statements that “...the BRE and Lozis in general...give the Mbunda Chiefs in Western Province the recognition...they deserve”, “We call upon the BRE and the Government to recognize Mbunda Chiefs”, “We have no problem in submitting ourselves to His Majesty, King Litunga of Barotseland”. Again in reference to the Chiyengele-Mulambwa Treaty points 4. And 5., members felt that these statements reinforced the view that Mbundas were under the Lozis. Recognition for our chiefs and all chiefs in all parts of Zambia comes from the Government of the Republic of Zambia, not from chiefs of other ethnic groups!

The meeting strongly felt that the National Chairman should not have gone to attend the BNC as it perpetuates the domination of Mbundas by the Lozis.

Mbundas were urged to stop feeling inferior to any other tribe and that this was their only country.

4. The BNC's Resolutions

These were considered and members rejected all of them since they all centred on the secession of Western Province from Zambia. The members out rightly rejected secession and vowed to defend the "One Zambia, One Nation" principle forever.

The power imbalance in the province in favour of the Lozis seemed to be the root cause of such egocentric and selfish behaviour among them.

The meeting rejected all the resolutions which seem to have been pre-prepared by the secessionist groups in the province through the Ngambela. Hence they did not represent the wishes of all the people of Western Province.

5. Mbunda Leadership & Structures

Members expressed unhappiness with the issues of leadership and governance structures among Mbundas in Zambia. Many members had been receiving concerns from the general Mbunda populace and other non-Mbundas about the lack of a strong voice on Western Province matters from Mbundas, who are the largest ethnic group there while smaller ones like the Nkoyas were always in the news. The point was made that Cheke's mandate did not extend to political issues but just confined to Mbunda cultural issues, but members wondered why the Kazanga Cultural Association of the Nkoyas was as political as it was cultural, as indicated by its title.

The issue of not having a Mbunda Royal Establishment (MRE) was also a major concern since the views of the Mbunda chiefs in Western Province were conspicuously absent. If the MRE was in place, then it could issue statements on behalf of the Mbunda royals to the general public.

6. Concerns and Matters Arising

Members thus raised concerns about the issues mentioned above including the indifference of Mbundas to matters that affected them as Mbundas specifically and as Zambians in general. Members wondered why some Mbundas continued to behave as strangers in both Western Province and Zambia even after having lived in this country for 216 years! Even groups which had migrated to Zambia long after the arrival of Mbundas like the Kololos felt a lot of ownership to their new homeland.

The Mbundas had defended and protected the Lozis during those ancient times of rampant tribal wars, hence there would be no Lozis today if it wasn't for the Mbundas. The mystery of our times is how the strong (Mbundas) should be dominated and suppressed by the weak (Lozis). This indicates that the Lozis are smarter than the Mbundas who seem not to be good at human psychology and manipulation of others to their advantage.

The land which Mbundas were given to settle on when they came from Angola was given by the Aluyis and not by the Lozis. And does it make sense that once a gift (land) is given to someone then the giver has to consistently remind the receiver that it was not his land. Since there was no land tenure ship regarding the customary land which the traditional rulers

control on behalf of the President of Zambia, then no one should claim ownership of such land since it was communally owned.

Members observed that there was no other province in Zambia where the traditional authority over-controlled in terms of all issues like the case of the BRE in Western Province. The issue of “Ki mubu wa mulena” was cited whereby some potential investors had to go through hell just to obtain a plot of land on which to build their businesses in Mongu town, e.g. Shoprite and Barclays Bank to name just two. In such a hostile environment where investors (who are really the agents of development) are made to feel unwelcome, how on earth can development come to Western Province? But the Lozis instead blame GRZ for the serious lack of development in Western Province instead of carrying out a deep self-assessment of their own attitudes. Secession or no secession, it is going to require a miracle to bring development to Western Province given the traditional attitude of the Lozis.

7. Resolutions – The Way Forward

In view of all the foregoing, the meeting resolved as follows as a way of safeguarding the Mbunda nation in Zambia:

- There is urgent need for the establishment of a body to be called **Mbunda Royal Establishment (MRE)** to look after the interests of all Mbunda chiefs in Western Province.
- There is urgent need for one of the Mbunda chiefs especially in Kaoma to be elevated to the position of Senior Chief to lead the MRE after recognition by GRZ. We appeal to our government to facilitate this so as to address the power imbalance in Western Province. This can introduce reasonableness in terms of dealing with matters of interest to all stakeholders in the province.
- Western Province is the poorest in Zambia today because of the BRE which does not facilitate meaningful development coming to the areas, therefore there should be positive change in the attitude of the BRE.
- Mbundas need to be sensitized strongly to remove the serious inferiority complex which they have suffered for more than 2 centuries and one of the major reason for this state of affairs is the low level of educational attainment amongst them. We implore all Mbundas to ensure that their children value education and strive for higher achievement in the education sphere. People of humble education will always be taken advantage of, manipulated in addition to not being taken seriously or just ignored completely. Hence the ignoring of Mbundas by the GRZ in many issues affecting Western Province and Zambia.
- Because of the point above, there is almost a complete absence of Mbundas on the management of most influential print and electronic media in Zambia. Hence Cheke for example is not always given any coverage at all as compared to Lozis. We strongly recommend that to address this handicap, Cheke should sometimes buy space in some newspapers to issue press statements on critical national issues like this Western Province matter. This also reassures the rest of the Mbundas that they are not alone.
- The setting up of a Mbunda radio station in Kaoma should be actively considered by Cheke since the majority of Mbundas live in Western Province as compared to Kabompo.
- Cheke should not only focus on the past history and culture of Mbundas but even more important is the survival of the Mbunda nation, its people and their integrity in Western Province and Zambia as a whole. Anything that threatens the welfare of

Mbundas should be of concern to ALL Mbundas in the whole world. In unity Mbundas shall once again become as strong and influential as they once were.

- The NEC of Cheke should call for an extraordinary meeting on the Western Province issue and the BNC to be attended by Cheke officials from all provinces and districts. This was both to show leadership and unity among the Mbundas to all who may have underrated them.
- Mbundas were sick and tired of their domination by the Lozis for over 2 centuries and there is now strong need to firmly reassert ourselves. Mbundas need to be smarter so as to see through the manipulations of the Lozis.
- Government was urged to quickly set up a commission of enquiry to determine the **real root causes** of the severe underdevelopment of Western Province and its composition should include all key stakeholders both within and outside the province.

8. Any Other Business

The chairman expressed sadness at the low turnout of members to such an important meeting even after there having been no meetings for quite a while due to such apathy.

He wondered what it was that was going to make Mbundas to be serious about matters that affected them as compared to other ethnic groups in Zambia. He concluded that leaders, both at the local, provincial and national levels can only be as good or dedicated as their members. If members are not interested in their groupings then a single leader cannot turn such an entity into a success because it is supposed to serve the larger interests of the group and not just those of the leader per se.

9. Closing remarks

The chairperson thanked all those who had spared their precious time to come and discuss such important issues which seriously affected Zambia and Western Province.

10. Closing prayer

Mr. Swana was requested to give the closing prayer and the meeting ended at 18.15 hrs.

BIEMBA MALITI (Dr)

Chairperson

HENRY MAKAYI

Secretary