

CHAPTER VIII:

EDUCATION AT CHITOKOLOKI, 1914-1924:

A DIFFERENT FORUM

Arnot Memorial School at Chitokoloki is the most beautiful school I have ever seen in Africa. The roof is quite unique, thatched on the Barotse principle, with grass interlaced and cut off short, giving it the appearance of a great impervious mat, and very durable. This thatch is finished off at the top with a straw coping, or ridge, on the Lunda plan, which guarantees all watertight. {1}

William Hoste, 1916

Within only three years of its opening, Chitokoloki's educational program was visibly successful, a stark contrast to Kalene and the two SAGM stations. Two simple reasons contributed to Chitokoloki's success. In this early BSAC era, the socio-political environments of the Barotseland and Kaonde-Lunda 'Districts' differed greatly. With regard to education, the former was 'progressive' and the latter was 'backward'. The main reason, however, was George Suckling.

Although a conservative evangelical like Fisher and Harris, Suckling had a much wider educational vision. He made Chitokoloki's educational program the heart and soul of the mission's evangelical campaign. As Fisher had with his

{1} Links, 6 (1916/7), p. 100.

hospital, Suckling and his educational program became almost synonymous. Consequently, the early dramatic successes and failures of Chitokoloki became those of Suckling himself.

George Suckling's Educational Vision

Publicity enabled Suckling to develop rapidly an unusually comprehensive educational program. As described in Chapter V, this publicity resulted first from Arnot's fame and second from the romantic tragedies that first befell Arnot and later the youthful Lambert Rogers. After the death of the former, Suckling planned a worthy memorial, and Arnot's admirers enthusiastically responded to appeals for support. Then when Rogers died, Suckling became the sole survivor of Arnot's final missionary endeavor. The first visible result of this publicity was the beautiful Arnot Memorial School. {2}

Suckling's character and vision differed greatly from Dr. Fisher's, but were equally determined. They made Chitokoloki and its educational program unique. His letters reveal a strong-willed, sometimes contradictory personality that could alternatively displease, anger, and alienate, or

{2}For two examples of how the publicity of Arnot's death focused attention on Suckling, see Links, 3 (1913/4), p. 204, p. 204 and 5 (1914/5), pp. 6-7. For two examples of appeals for supporting the school as a memorial to Arnot, see William Hoste, 6 Nov. 1915, Links, 5 (1915/6), p. 98; p. 117.

charm and inspire. Like Fisher, he was a conservative evangelical. Unlike Fisher's, his methods were more unorthodox and controversial in Brethren circles.

Suckling's attitude toward Africans contrasted with that of most colleagues. When writing to overseas supporters, many missionaries only stressed negative perceptions of, or facts about, Africans and their way of life. While he was equally anxious to convert Africans, Suckling also tried to convey some of the positive things about Africa. His first annual report, while still at Kalene, reveals his frank and direct ways of dealing with African people and their way of life.

Have you ever thought of the natives of Africa as being of a very dull type, differing but little the one from the other? I confess that is what I expected to find, but I have found the very opposite. There is a delightful amount of character and individuality in almost every one, both as to countenance and character. They have plenty of humour, some wit, and--among themselves--great conversational powers. {3}

Suckling was also more pragmatic than most. For example, while Dr. Fisher was pragmatic when dealing with secular issues such as teaching English, he was not on the issue of personal evangelism. This prevented Fisher from having the accepted hierarchical mission organization through trained African staff. In contrast, Suckling adopted a more conventional mission organization in his own little corner of the world. In the process, he delegated

{3} 5 May 1912, Echoes, 41 (July 1912), p. 274.

work and power to his trained African staff. As his son recalls, "He loved to see men taking responsibility." While this repeatedly got him into trouble with Brethren colleagues, it endeared him to many Africans and enabled him to achieve a great deal with only a few white staff members. Besides the strong 'other world' orientation of all conservative evangelicals, he also aggressively attempted to develop Balovale District. {4}

Suckling's comprehensive educational program, which came into full bloom during World War I, did not suddenly spring forth like Athena from Zeus's forehead. It developed systematically from a humble, conventional, educational endeavor much like those at Kalene and the SAGM missions. Following the drama of Arnot's fatal illness and Roger's serious injury, Suckling moved the mission to Chitokoloki and opened a little school. Here, he revealed his clear understanding of the close relationship between education and evangelism. Consider one of his first descriptions of the initial school's program.

We have already begun school on a small scale with twenty odd scholars mostly from the immediate neighbourhood. . . . We teach them to read and write their own language, and when they are not in school they have to work in the garden or in clearing round the station. In school they are also taught by heart the simple gospel texts and to sing our translated hymns. {5}

{4} Interview with Gordon Suckling.

{5} Echees, 43 (Sept. 1914, pt. 1), pp. 334-5.

In 1914-15 after opening this tiny school and while planning the Arnot Memorial School and formulating more comprehensive plans, Suckling visited Kalunda and Kalene Missions. This journey gave him ideas for the Arnot Memorial. Their schools made him "blush for what we call a school at Chitokoloki." Kalunda's industrial programs in both carpentry and printing deeply impressed him. He learned what "may be expected of the A-lunda if ever the need arises to teach them the simpler forms of skilled labour." Thus, his small initial school was only a beginning. {6}

The Arnot Memorial School became a reality in 1915. On a brief visit to Britain during World War I, Suckling gained financial support to begin. Thomas Hansen, a skilled craftsman, returned to Chitokoloki with him. Suckling together with Hansen, Rogers, and African brethren constructed the school. It looked very impressive. {7}

Meanwhile, several lengthy articles about the school appeared in Links of Help, the magazine of the Missionary Study Classes. Many mission supporters in England informally 'adopted' school boys. In fact, the response was so large that the editor reminded readers about continuing

{6} 26 Jan. 1915, Echees, 44 (Apr. 1915, pt. 2), pp. 157-8.

{7} Suckling, 24 Feb. 1916, Echees, 45 (June 1916, pt. 2), pp. 236-7; Suckling, Rogers, and Hansen, 3 June 1916, Echees, 45 (Sept. 1916, pt. 1), p. 317. Links, 5 (1915/6), pp. 117, 144, and 194. Rogers died before Hoste visited and dedicated the school.

needs at Dr. Fisher's boarding school. The end result of this publicity and popular support in England was the visit of William Hoste, a prominent brother who dedicated the school. Just as the buildings impressed Hoste, so did its evangelical potential.

There are 130 boys at present in the school, and continual applications from far and near. It is difficult for anyone who does not know the circumstances of African life to appreciate fully what the existence of a centre like this means, if well-manned and equipped with its Gospel testimony and schools, to a considerable tract of dark Africa where Christ would not otherwise be named. A station like this is truly a lamp in a dark place, and its effect with God's blessing must be incalculable. {8}

Even before Arnot Memorial opened, Suckling advocated the teaching of English so that it could become a lingua-franca. Although the editors of Echoes of Service published one of his letters that treated the issue, they added that "it would be inadvisable to attempt to make English a lingua-franca for native Christians." Even though mild, the rebuke departed from policy in the periodical. Consequently, Suckling did not press the issue so strongly again. {9}

{8} Hoste, Links, 6 (1916/7), p. 100. For other key articles in Links, see: Suckling, 5 (1915/6), pp. 109-11; "R.M.L." [Maurice Lorimer?], 6 (1916/7), pp. 75-7. For the support of school boys and the editors's reminder, see the following two notes in Links, 5: pp. 117 and 132.

{9} 44 (Sept. 1915, pt. 2), pp. 356-7. For this controversy of a European lingua-franca within Brethren mission circles, see App. B.

At Chitokoloki, Suckling continued teaching English to advanced students but with less fanfare. In fact, he restated his plans to make them conform with acceptable Brethren objectives. In two important articles, probably written in late 1915, he reassured readers that his aim was "to teach the boys enough to be able to read and understand the Bible as it was translated for them." He had no desire "to introduce the boys to higher education of either an academic or industrial nature." Such training would only encourage them to go to other districts to earn more money and possibly to forsake their new faith. Instead, he wanted "to teach them just enough for them to be able to earn their own living by rough carpentry or gardening work. They will then be able to teach others, to live intelligent and godly lives, and, be able to teach and preach in their own villages without needing financial support from the missionary." {10}

While suspecting the value of 'higher education' like other Brethren, Suckling believed that he must do more than help Africans read the Bible. His purpose becomes clear to the present-day reader when the phrase "pay their own taxes" replaces "earn their own living." As noted in Chapter VI, Suckling was gravely concerned over the problems created by government taxation. Because they could not earn

{10} Echees, 45 (June 1916, pt. 2), pp. 236-7; "Sun-Dried Bricks in the Arnot Memorial School: the Question of School Work in the Kabompo District," Links, 5 (1915/6), pp. 109-10 (last quotation). The underlining is mine.

money locally, people had to flee the territory or migrate to towns, mines, and farms in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Migration separated and sometimes destroyed families. It also exposed people to the worst sins in the new colonial societies. Possibly more than anything, Suckling wanted to stabilize Balovale's population. He felt this necessary to properly evangelize the district. Thus, he aggressively sought a new solution.

Suckling decided to turn Balovale into the rural Christian utopia that Arnot had vaguely envisioned many years before. To reach this goal, he not only had to cope with traditional African 'backwardness', ignorance, and sin, but also with the new taxation/migration dilemma. As a result, Suckling developed comprehensive ideas about education's role in the evangelical effort. For example, Arnot Memorial School would not just be a physical monument to its namesake, but a living memorial to Arnot's spirit and vision. An ever expanding regional system would extend outward from this central school. Village out-schools would be at least partially self-supporting. Modern industrial and agricultural training would be taught. By training people to assume positions in the local cash economy, he hoped to create an environment in which Christianity would grow and flourish naturally. {11}

{11}For the taxation/migration issue as a strong motivation in Suckling's expanding program, see his 1920 letter in App. G and also other statements of his aims and objectives that were published in Echoes: 43 (Sept. 1914, pt. 1), pp. 334-5 and 48 (Nov. 1919), pp. 257-8.

Suckling's educational system became the foundation of an ambitious district development plan. When implemented, it would enable ever increasing numbers of people, especially converts, to pay their taxes and still have money for basic needs. The plan included new cottage industries that, in turn, required retail stores and improved transportation. To complete it, he included the development of local agriculture. Since taxation was permanent, this plan was long-term. [12]

Suckling believed that small, local industries not only had to be started, but also had to quickly become self-supporting. The taxation/migration problem was serious and his funds were limited. Consequently, he encouraged basic agricultural activities, especially the cultivation of crops like groundnuts (peanuts), cassava (manioc), and rice. The people could sell them downstream in Barotseland and Livingstone. He also expanded lumbering operations and encouraged the production of dugout boats, which were much in demand on the Barotse plains. Likewise, he trained carpenters to make high quality furniture for Europeans

[12] Suckling's vision and objectives have to be deducted from: his published letters in Echoes and Links; the reminiscences of Gordon, his only living son; and surviving early African supporters. He never wrote an autobiography and his personal papers were destroyed after his death. His only other writings seem to be two short pamphlets for supporters: Chitokoloki on the Zambezi: A Story of Development (privately printed at Chitokoloki, nd [circa 1946] and Mission Work in the Kabompo Valley (np, 1915). I have only seen the former; the latter, however, is referred to in Links and by Robert I. Rotberg, Christian Missionaries, p. 214.

living in Barotseland, and for the people themselves. Finally, he used the canoes as part of an improved transport system between Chitokoloki and Barotseland. The transport system in turn allowed him to bring in supplies for new retail stores. Here people could buy necessities after they paid their taxes. [13]

In 1920 these new endeavors reached their peak. The Balovale District Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 1920 describes them.

The carpentry boys have been making progress and their number is now fifteen, half of whom can now do useful work. Twenty boys have been taught saw-pit work and others are about to learn. The carpenters and the sawyers who are able to work by themselves are paid piece work and at reasonable rates are able to make from twenty to forty shillings a month. The sawyers make their pits in the neighbourhood of the trees and bring in the planks for sale. In the course of a year they would cut down about a hundred trees but by adopting the method mentioned it is possible to distribute the boys over a wide area. Some of the school boys are taught type setting and distributing and simple machine printing work. The learning of trades, however, can only be accomplished by a few and so the Mission

[13] For details of this comprehensive plan and how it initially developed, see the following: Suckling, 12 Apr. 1919, Echees, 48 (Aug. 1919), pp. 183-4; W. E. M. Owen (NC), Balovale Sub-Dist., in Barotseland Dist. [Prov.] AR for the year ending 31 Mar. 1920, ZA 7/1/4/2 (also ZA 7/3/8), NAZ. In the "Trade and Commerce" section of the latter, the NC describes the new stores that originated from the mission. For a photograph of some products from the carpentry shop, see Echees, 49 (June 1920), pp. 132-3. By 1928, this industrial program included printing, see: Suckling, 30 Sept. 1918, Echees, Vol. 48 (Mar. 1919), p. 65. Also, see Douglas Hume, Voices, 16 (Nov./Dec. 1921), np. Also, in my interview with him, Gordon Suckling described his father's wide interpretation of his evangelical ministry.

encourages cultivation of rice, nuts, grain and manioc. The store . . . provide[s] a market for the natives. {14}

While working to achieve this broad development, Suckling did not forget his final aim: to prepare young men to "teach and preach in their own villages without needing financial support from the missionaries." The teachers would be self-supporting farmers and carpenters, and though modest, their places would be "outposts of evangelism" where Christianity would be stressed. Reading and writing skills would be of less importance. {15}

In 1917 government officials and the people successfully encouraged Suckling to begin village out-schools. He opened the first on the Mumbaji River "at the capital of the Mambunda chief, Chinyama." The people built the school themselves, and over one hundred pupils "representing three different tribes--Mambunda, A-Lunda, and Valwena"--attended. The chief, who had been to the Barotse National School and spoke some English, supported the effort. The teacher was Thomas Chinyama, one of the original members of the Chitokoloki assembly. {16}

The rapid expansion of village schools continued.

{14} Barotse Dist. [Prov.] AR for the year ending 31 Mar. 1920, Balovale Sub-Dist., ZA 7/1/4/2, NAZ.

{15} Suckling, Echoes, 45 (June 1916, pt. 2), p. 237; Suckling, 10 Sept. 1917, Echoes, 47 (Mar. 1918), p. 72.

{16} Suckling, 28 Dec. 1917, Echoes, 47 (Apr. 1918), pp. 101-2. Also, see Suckling, 20 Sept. 1917, Echoes, 47 (Jan. 1918), p. 20.

At the end of the 1917-18 rainy season, Suckling reported that "the seemingly impossible [had] occurred." Despite the "native church [being] very small," they opened a second village school at Chinonu among the Luvale. Suckling assured his supporters that "already at both places there are those who profess to have found life in the Lord Jesus." Two other schools opened soon after. {17}

In September 1918, Suckling described this rapid, joint educational-evangelical mission expansion.

We have now four out-schools, where native Christians have made their homes, and in addition to teaching the rudiments of education, are carrying on an active evangelistic work. The four schools are as follows: Mumbaji, 27 miles east, in charge of Thomas and his wife Chivivi. Chinonu, 20 miles west, in charge of Ndumba and Sayikumba (the latter's wife is in fellowship). Kakonga, 17 miles south, in charge of David Njapawu and Kamwandi, whose wives are professing Christians. Lwampunga, 22 miles north and close to the Government Post. It has been in charge of Manongu and his wife, who have been helped by Samalesu, but the people are so unresponsive that the work is particularly trying, so we are thinking of relieving Manongu, that he may return here for refreshment and instruction, and of sending other Christians for a month or so at a time to look after the work. {18}

By the end of World War I, less than five years after the mission began, Suckling's very comprehensive educational endeavors started yielding a wide assortment of

{17} Suckling, 15 Apr. 1918, Echoes, 47 (Aug. 1918), pp. 205-6.

{18} Suckling, 30 Sept. 1918, Echoes, 48 (Mar. 1919), pp. 64-5. In an entry dated 12 June 1918, Suckling gave the names of five village schools and their teachers. According to this, they were located at Mumbaji, Chinonu, Kakonga, Lwampunga, and Makundu: KDE 2/30/7, NAZ.

fruits. Hidden inside, however, were several worms.

Suckling, A Dual Barotse Administration, and Africans

Suckling's innovations flourished, at least for a time, because conditions were right. Unlike Kalene and Kasempa/Solvezi missions, Chitokoloki received the general support of both the administration and the people. Even the tensions within the district initially worked in his favor and/or goaded his own educational efforts.

In 1914 the political, economic, social, and even geographical situation for opening a mission in Balovale was very different from opening missions in Mwinilunga in 1906, or in Kasempa/Solvezi in 1910/1911. Unlike these other regions, Balovale had natural water transport. The Zambezi River connected it with Mongu and Livingstone, government centers of the new colonial society.

By 1914 the BSAC and Lewanika, Barotseland's dual government, used each other for their mutual benefit: the Lozi's nominal rule provided the Company with an excuse for entering the district, and Lewanika made his claims of sovereignty over Balovale a reality with BSAC power. Both also found enforced taxation a useful thing. Through the 'bush telephone', Lewanika's visit to England and his ability to talk to the white man in English were widely known. Taxation showed Balovale's recalcitrant Lunda and Luvale

that Lewanika was their ruler and that the white man's gun worked on his behalf. Meanwhile, by collecting tax revenue, the BSAC consolidated its own rule. It also started a stream of black migrant labor down the river to the mines and farms of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. This exploitative dual government wanted missionaries in Balovale to further consolidate its rule and to provide cheap and ameliorating social services. For the same reasons, Balovale societies urgently needed an intermediary, an interpreter, and if possible, a savior. [19]

Despite the general short and long term destruction caused by high taxation, Barotseland received a little tax money back. Unlike other parts of Northern Rhodesia, the BSAC put a small percentage of the collected tax moneys into the Barotse Trust Fund because of an early agreement. "Control of the Trust Fund remained firmly in the hands of the Company, but Lewanika's request that first priority be given to education was accepted." In fact, Lewanika "became the advocate and patron of modern education." Educational projects particularly centered on the Barotse National School, but some money was ear-marked for sub-districts such as Balovale. Consequently, this Fund made Barotseland the most educationally progressive area of Northern Rhodesia

[19] See Chaps. IV and VI for the complexities of this Barotseland political setting.

prior to 1924. {20}

Arnot, Suckling, and Rogers arrived at a crucial time. In 1914 the dual government planned to open an out-school in Balovale District with money from the Fund. Threatened by the prospect, Suckling hastened his own educational efforts.

Several years later, in one of his letters to the Missionary Study Classes, Suckling explained his opposition to the government school and the 1914 situation.

In the Barotse Kingdom to the south of the Kabompo, a large school had been opened, according to treaty. . . . The education therein is purely secular, and the aim is to fit the natives who attend the school for work in the offices and the mines, or on the farms near the railway to the South. This training does not fit the natives to return to their villages to seek the general uplift of the community. It tends rather to the breaking up of tribal life, and to the drifting of the natives into a worse condition morally and spiritually than they were in before, by introducing them to the example and influence of degraded white men.

In connection with this school the Government proposed opening an out-school in the Kabompo District by sending a trained native teacher to give rudimentary education. His life and teaching would have been irreligious and his influence generally bad. Soon after Mr. Arnot had settled Mr. Rogers and myself in the district we heard of this suggestion and in order to make the opening of such a school with all its possibilities of evil unnecessary, we proposed starting a school ourselves. . . . The Resident Magistrate . . . promised

{20} Snelson, Development, p. 123; Mainqa, Bulozi, p. 205. For the best account of the Barotse National School, see Snelson, pp. 123-6 and H. C. Mortimer, "History of the Barotse National School--1907-1957," Northern Rhodesia Journal 3 (no. 4, 1957): 303-10. Also, see Caplan, Elites, pp. 93-4. I am not certain how much funding came to Chitokoloki and Balovale District prior to 1924, but it was small at best.

not to open a rival school in the district so long as ours proved to be efficient. {21}

After 1914 the Barotse National School and Barotse Trust Fund continued to goad Suckling, just as they had initially. The school provided a yardstick for evaluating Suckling's educational work; the Fund later partly subsidized his efforts. Suckling had to justify his requests, however, since the Fund also gave money to the Paris Evangelical Mission's schools to the south. Even the initial enthusiasm for English must be seen in this educational environment with its special goads and incentives. Unlike Fisher, Bailey, or Harris, Suckling never had the independence to do only as he pleased. {22}

The constant threat of mission competition also kept Suckling active. If he disliked the Barotse National School, the thought of Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists entering the district and opening schools horrified him. Though no other mission actually began work and started schools until the 1930s, the threat persisted from Arnot's days. Unlike the Kaonde-Lunda Province, rival missions considered the upper Zambezi Valley a highly desirable field. Realizing Suckling's fears, the Barotse administration used the threat as its final trump card.

{21} Links, 5 (1915/6), p. 110; quoted in App. E. Suckling also said something very similar in Echees, 45 (Jan. 1916, pt. 1), p. 17.

{22} As noted in fn. 20, I am not certain how much came from the Barotse Trust Fund prior to 1924.

Like the territorial administration, the officials did not want too much competition, but they never objected to a little. Limited competition kept missionaries busy providing social services and kept government expenses down. {23}

Suckling actually worked well with senior officials in this dual administration. His disagreements were generally with junior white administrators or African police/messengers, who exceeded and abused their authority. Available records indicate that his contacts with Lewanika and Yeta, his successor, were cordial. This was even more true with the Resident Magistrate, the senior BSAC official in Barotseland. George Lyons, the BSAC's Resident Magistrate in Mongu, came to Suckling's defense during his troubles in the early 1920s. George Suckling even encouraged his twin brother to become Principal of the Barotse National School. The latter, an Anglican clergyman, briefly served in this capacity from August 1921 to October 1923. {24}

{23} No single available government record shows that officials intentionally maneuvered Suckling, but I get this impression from general reading. Furthermore, these two rival missions had intended to enter the upper Zambezi long before they did.

{24} Information on these personal relationships between George Suckling and other members of the colonial elite is limited. Likewise, so is information on F. C. Suckling. For the latter, the best is given in the "History of the Barotse National School," by Rev. P. R. Holland, 1932, ZA 1/9/119/2/1, NAZ. Also, see Stanley R. Coad, Nov., Echees, 51 (Mar. 1922), p. 64. Gordon Suckling also

The mixed population of Balovale also supported Suckling's educational innovations. First of all, they knew that he directed his efforts to everyone in the region, not just particular groups. Although he spoke Lunda, he continually stressed Chitokoloki's non-ethnic, district-wide ministry. As he, Hansen, and Rogers explained in 1916:

Some have thought of us as working among the Va-Lovale (or Va-Lwena); some as being entirely confined to the Va-Lunda. Neither idea is right. We feel that this station is more for a district than for a tribe. In the district, there are representatives of at least seven different tribes, of which the Lunda and the Lovale are the most numerous. {25}

Second, Suckling's program balanced evangelism and social service in a manner acceptable to the local population. Lack of interest among Africans is mentioned infrequently in the early records, so the contrast between Chitokoloki and especially the SAGM missions is striking. For example, in mid-1919, less than six years after Chitokoloki opened and at a time of grave crises both at Kalene and the SAGM missions, one visitor marveled at Chitokoloki's size. He recorded, "We . . . saw something of the extensive educational and industrial work there. One

kindly supplied information about his late uncle in a letter dated 18 Oct. 1982. He especially informed me that his uncle later changed his name to McDonald and served as Principal of Dr. Barnardo's Homes in Britain.

{25} 3 June 1916, Echoes, 45 (Sept. 1916, pt. 1), p. 317.

day [we] preached to 350 people." [26]

Suckling's early success was achieved, at least in part, because he worked well with the people, instilled confidence and loyalty in them, and even defended them. As described in Chapter II, when he arrived in Balovale, fifteen young men "none over seventeen years of age at most" walked from Kalene to be with him. Although most left because they could not deal with the warmer climate, Suckling quickly attracted other able young people. He identified the most capable, trained them for specific tasks, and gave them the power and authority they needed to help him in his work. His defense of the local people was described in Chapter VI. When at one point some Barotse police/messengers cruelly mistreated tax violators, Suckling came to their aid. [27]

Suckling's faith in people was returned. A far higher proportion of his best trainees remained with him. Fewer went off to the towns than did the SAGM's young adherents. These young assistants received minimal salaries for their work, and were not necessarily satisfied. They were, however, able to earn money locally by using skills learned at the school. Their general support in turn

[26] 10 July 1919, Douglas T. Hume, Echees, 48 (Nov. 1919), p. 257.

[27] Suckling, 15 Mar. 1914, Echees, 43 (June 1914, pt. 1), pp. 215-6. See also Suckling's Chitokeleki on the Zambezi. For the latter incident, especially see fn. 4 and 17 in Chap. VI.

enabled Suckling to expand rapidly despite having few missionary colleagues at Chitokoloki.

Suckling and many Balovale Africans used the possessive form of speech when referring to each other. Just as Suckling considered everyone as 'his' people, in the best sense of paternalism, Africans regarded him as 'our' missionary. Lozi overlords lumped the Balovale peoples together as inferior wike and the British rulers did the same. Missionaries in the Zambezi Valley prior to this time centered their work further north in Angola or further south among the Lozi. Suckling was the first member of the new elite to consider the Balovale peoples as important, both as individuals and as a group. Also, as Silas Chizawu recalled, Africans liked the way his "door was always open." Suckling proved to be a worthy white friend: he was their interpreter of the new political economy and a potential buffer against administrative abuses. They appreciated and remembered his intervention. {28}

Suckling's Fading Vision

Despite its impressive beginnings, Chitokoloki almost abruptly closed down in 1921. Just as its initial success focused on Suckling, so did its travail. He kept the mission alive, but his comprehensive educational vision

{28} Interview with Silas Chizawu.

slowly faded by 1924.

Suckling's business methods caused the immediate crisis. In his enthusiasm, he over-committed his budget and over-estimated his ability to keep control of ballooning enterprises. The formal school system at the station and in the villages made up only one part of his comprehensive educational program. His stores, trading down the river, selling of crops, lumbering, and boat building were not only too much work for him to direct, but too peripheral to his personal evangelical ministry. When he realized that his complex, multiple endeavors were getting out of hand, he requested help. {29}

In response to his pleas, several Brethren businessmen formed the Kabompo Trading Syndicate, a limited company with two thousand pounds sterling. In 1920 a Mr. and Mrs. M. Rodgers from Johannesburg arrived at Chitokoloki to represent this company. {30}

Problems began. The Rodgers totally disapproved of Suckling's methods. When he left the station on overseas leave, these newcomers sent strong letters to his main supporters in England. As Suckling himself reported, Rodgers wrote: "All my reports about the work are inaccurate and untrue; that I hinder Hansen from doing

{29} Echoes, 49 (Oct. 1920), pp. 230-1, especially the first paragraph.

{30} Ibid., "Extracts from the Annual Report of the Barotse District [Province] for the Year Ended 31st Mar. 1920," p. 1, ZA 7/3/8, NAZ.

proper missionary work by imposing industrial work upon him; that there is no spiritual work carried on." A very sensitive situation developed. The Resident Magistrate in Mongu supported Suckling and became deeply involved. No case came to court, but seemingly only because the Brethren preferred not to use secular courts. In the process, the new company broke up. [31]

Brethren supporters in England asked Dr. Fisher to make a personal investigation. Fisher's report no longer seems to exist. Because of the controversy, however, Fisher mused that Suckling "seems very anxious minded about the report sent to Mr. Vine. . . . [We] are sorry that he shows no signs of sorrow for the mistakes he has made, and I fear if reproved by Mr. Vine will sever his connection with ~~Echees~~ for which we are very sorry." [32]

Suckling did not sever his connection and survived the crisis by sheer stubborn determination. His big plans for an educational program that moved far beyond direct evangelism and rudimentary education, however, received a fatal blow. When the crisis started, Suckling told Lyons, "It is impossible now to carry through the scheme for industrial development until confidence is re-established in

[31] Suckling to Lyons, 4 Nov. 1920; also, Mrs. M. Rodgers to Lyons, 22 Dec. 1920 and Goodman (London) to Lyons on 22 Dec. 1920. All this correspondence contained in "Barotseland: Mission, School, 1920 January--1922 December," KDE 2/30/8, NAZ.

[32] Fisher to Darling, 4 Apr. 1921, Fisher Papers, folios 1752-5, NAZ.

me." Actually the scheme had died, and his industrial and development plans, unprofitable at least on a short-term basis, had to be permanently abandoned. Not only did support decrease, but his remaining friends now strongly opposed the scheme's continuation under the auspices of the mission. In his Annual Report for 31 March 1923, the local Balovale official lamented:

The chief industrial work is still carpentry and some of the work turned out is very good. I understand, however, that the work has been a failure financially with the result that the elders of the Mission have strongly advised Mr. Suckling to close down this branch of the work. This is to be regretted, as the work employed directly and indirectly several hundreds of natives during the year, and this is a district where work is difficult to find. {33}

Suckling's formal educational system contracted because of this crisis. The number of new village schools stopped increasing and several closed. Likewise, the decline in financial support forced Suckling to abandon boarding at the aging Arnot Memorial School. Its glitter, now tarnished, failed to inspire as much overseas support. Nor did it command the original attention and enthusiasm of the Balovale populace. In 1922 he described the formal educational system and its troubles:

We are not sufficiently settled to have a regular boarding-school as before, and we find it so difficult to ensure that each boy allocated to supporters will remain for a complete year, that we shall not attempt just the same arrangement. The money we are receiving

{33} Suckling to Lyons, 4 Nov. 1920, KDE 2/30/8, NAZ. Bruce Miller (Ag. Assistant Magistrate), Barotse Prov. AR for the year ending 31 Mar. 1923, Balovale Sub-Dist., ZA 7/1/6/2, NAZ.

at present we are using for general school expenses. . . . Carpentry seems the only form of employment that we can give to many boys without incurring loss. . . . From the villages around us, we have nearly 200 boys in school, . . . Although we are thus able to have quite a large school without boarding many, we cannot have many boys from distant villages. . . . Schools cannot be opened everywhere; there is no doubt that the school in the past enabled us to reach a very much wider area than is usual within so short a time. . . . As we are given opportunity, therefore, we shall still try to gather boys from the distant villages and have them living on the place while attending school. {34}

The gloom in Suckling's letter is obvious. His vision faded fast. Furthermore, the tide continued to ebb and until the end of this period. The educational program remained mediocre.

Suckling's problems have another dimension. He had dreamed an impossible dream, not only for himself, but also for his overseas supporters and for the Africans around him. For him, education became the symbol of a rural Christian utopia in Balovale. This dream was progressive, but unrealistic. It attempted to resist the unresistable. The central BSAC government/business enterprise did not just want tax money; it desired men to migrate to the towns. It did not expect development in this district. Consequently, local BSAC officials did not hinder Suckling, but except for moral support neither did they help. He sank quietly beneath the weight and burden of his own development dream.

{34} 30 Sept. 1921, Echees, 51 (Jan. 1922), pp. 14-5. For another good description, see Henry Faulkner, 2 June 1922, Echees, 51 (Sept. 1922), pp. 208-9. The latter notes that the school met weekly from Monday through Thursday and the pupils were younger than before.

Because of his forceful personality and enthusiasm, both Suckling's overseas supporters and Chitokoloki's African parishioners also dreamed their own impossible dreams. To each, the little school system became a golden key. To overseas supporters, God seemed to be using Suckling in a wondrous fashion to glorify His name. In the comprehensive educational program they saw the hand of God bringing salvation to the district. The 1921 events awakened them. To African supporters, Suckling offered a superior program. He unintentionally raised their hopes for a better life in this world and the next faster than he could fulfill them. The 1921 events that hurt Suckling's finances and diminished his programs also awakened them.

Suckling began his 1922 lamentation by stating that "Satan" had been at work. The result was that "some of the Christians have stumbled very badly." Of these, some returned to 'pagan' customs and/or migrated to other places to seek work. By 1924 these included some of his finest Christian leaders. {35}

After Suckling stubbed his toe in 1921 and new development projects ended, young African church leaders fell. Voluntary funding, which Suckling coaxed from overseas, had permitted his big development schemes. These, in turn, enabled young African Christians to earn their tax money and sometimes a little more besides. Consequently, Chitokoloki and its environs placidly prospered in the midst of crises

{35} Echoes, 51 (Jan. 1922), pp. 14-5.

resulting from taxation/migration, World War I, and influenza.

As noted above, however, much of this funding came from supporters dubious of projects stretching far beyond personal evangelism. When the events of 1921 increased their doubts and they reduced their support and government showed no interest, development had to end. This change hit the new African Christian leaders the hardest. They lost their chance to earn their tax money locally. Since the mission could not so readily fulfill their more mundane needs, Christianity's vague promises of heavenly riches had much less appeal. Hopes had been artificially raised and the ensuing reality brought gloom. 'Pagan' ways developed renewed appeal, and the Congolese copper mines now seemed to promise what Suckling had failed to fulfill.

Among those who stumbled was Mwondela, Suckling's right hand man. In 1916, Mwondela came from Kazombo as an African Brethren 'missionary'--i.e., without a guaranteed wage. His purpose was to help Suckling establish Chitokoloki, and his Luvale complemented Suckling's Lunda. Although Mwondela had no regular salary, he not only industriously assisted Suckling at the mission but also employed other men to run his own farm. Suckling repeatedly praised Mwondela's work to overseas supporters. But by 1924, Mwondela left both the church and the area to seek work in the Congo. The exact reason for Mwondela's change of heart and the total split with Suckling is not clear. Nonethe-

less, Mwondela kept touch with his wife, small children and extended family near Chitokoloki. {36}

The departure of Mwondela and other young leaders never became a continual exodus of Chitokoloki's best young men, at least in comparison to that among the SAGM missions. The hardships of the journey caused some to return to the fold. Mwondela's pre-mature death in 1927 probably further discouraged others from following in these dissenters' footsteps. {37}

With the dual loss of overseas supporters and of key African church elders in 1924, Suckling's greatest schemes died. Though failing in many ways, Suckling planted a seed between 1914 and 1921. It took a longer time to germinate than he anticipated, longer than his lifespan. However, these early efforts were not forgotten. They became part of the district's traditions and would be re-examined when the

{36} For three specific laudatory descriptions of Mwondela, see Echoes: 3 June 1916, 45 (Sept. 1916), p. 317; 12 Apr. 1919, 48 (Aug. 1919), p. 183; and 19 July 1919, 48 (Nov. 1919), pp. 257-8. No writer said much about Mwondela's leaving the church at the time. Oblique references to his departure many years later, however, indicate how deeply Suckling felt the loss. See for example, Suckling, 14 Mar. 1931, Echoes, 60 (July 1931), pp. 159-60. John Mwondela spoke at length about his father and what he knew of his work in the Congo. However, in my interview with him, he did not mention the split with Suckling, let alone the cause. Although I now regret it, I hesitated in directly posing questions to him on this delicate, but key, topic.

{37} With possibly a touch of glee, Suckling described what befell three of the Christians who attempted to proceed "secretly" to the Congo in 1919. See Suckling, 19 July 1919, Echoes, 48 (Nov. 1919), pp. 257-9. For Mwondela's death, see the interview with John Mwondela.

Zambian Government attempted to implement large-scale development plans in the 1960s and 1970s. Suckling's timing was off, but he alone had a legitimate educational vision in the NWP in the BSAC era. {38}

{38} Chitokoloki's total evangelical programs would always be wider than most NWP missions as indicated by Suckling's later pamphlet, Chitokoloki of the Zambezi. Nonetheless, there would be considerable differences between these early efforts and those later. In looking back on my days in the NWP during the post-independence era, I am surprised at how often Suckling's early endeavors were mentioned, even as high as the Provincial Development Committee.