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**RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN THE TRANS-FRONTIER  
NYUNGWE-SPEAKING REGION OF THE MIDDLE  
ZAMBEZI, c.1890-c.1970**

**By**

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**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
Department of History**

**School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)**

**University of London**

**29 May 2016**

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Antonio Santos MARIZANE  
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## ABSTRACT

With a few exceptions, earlier studies of religious change in Southern Africa have generally focused on Christianity in select areas, ethnic groups and polities within one state, confined by the colonial boundary. This approach made light of the existence of expansive African traditional religious networks across ethnicities and boundaries. Traditional religion was often relegated to the periphery, with predictions of its imminent demise under the impact of colonial rule, global forces and proselytising world religions. The constantly mutating perceptions of group belonging across established borders were often overlooked. By focusing on the trans-frontier Mid-Zambezi region from c.1890 to c.1970, and reviewing oral histories, documents, primary and secondary literature, as well as carrying out oral interviews, the present study uncovers the survival, continuity and disjuncture in traditional religion in a changing religious landscape across borders. The Mid-Zambezi region was populated by a mixture of Shona groups and pockets of a multi ethnic Nyungwe-speaking group. British and Portuguese imperialists divided the area into what became the colonies of Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. Thus a region which was once the centre of the indigenous Mwene Mutapa State and a key site of earlier Portuguese mercantile and Catholic missionary activity was now rendered marginal by colonial boundary making. State and missionary penetration was slow, and the region became an important source of migrant labour for Southern Rhodesia. Yet this marginality was a key factor in explaining the continued dominance of the royal ancestral *mphondolo* or *mhondoro* traditional religious systems which began to co-exist with the growing but often instrumental adherence to the Christian churches. The change in the religious landscape consisted of adaptations to wider socio-economic changes generated by Christian missionary activities, formal education, wage migrant labour and monetisation. In this flux of socio-economic changes, the religious landscape of the Mid Zambezi was reconfigured.

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to

My paternal and maternal Grandparents, and to my Parents

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Without the support of the following people, this thesis would not have seen the light of day. First on the list is John-Mark Considine who not only generously provided most of the financial support for this study, but went on to take a detour from his other commitments to join me in the fieldwork in Mozambique and to offer some useful insights into writing even though history is not his speciality. I also thank Elisabeth and Charles Bellord, Edmond Bellord, Lupana and Peter Hodgson, Anthony Salter, MJE Foster and John Wilkins - the former editor of the *Tablet* and his Trust, for covering part of the costs over the years.

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especially during my fieldwork in the Murewa district of Mashonaland East and in Mashonaland Central Provinces in Zimbabwe. My acknowledgements would be incomplete without the mention of my colleagues Canon Pat Browne who housed me in London, Canon Christopher Tuckwell and Fr Alexander Master who housed me in the final stages of my dissertation writing.

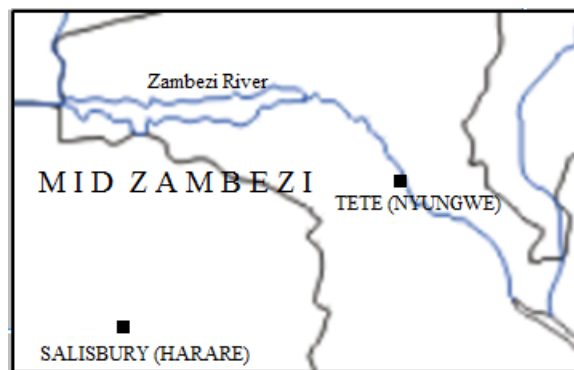


## ABBREVIATIONS

AACJC	African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange
ACC	African Chiremba Council
AIC	African Initiated Church
ARPAC	<i>Arquivo do Património Cultural</i>
BMS	Berlin Missionary Society
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CACA	Central African Chiremba Association
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
DA	District Administrator
DC	District Commissioner
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
GPA	Global Political Agreement (power sharing between ZANU-PF and MDC)
JAH	Jesuit Archives Harare (Garnet House)
LMS	London Missionary Society
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NADA	Native Affairs Department Annual
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NC	Native Commissioner
NMMZ	National Monuments and Museums of Zimbabwe
OFM	Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans)
OP	Order of Preachers (Dominicans)
PF-ZAPU	Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union

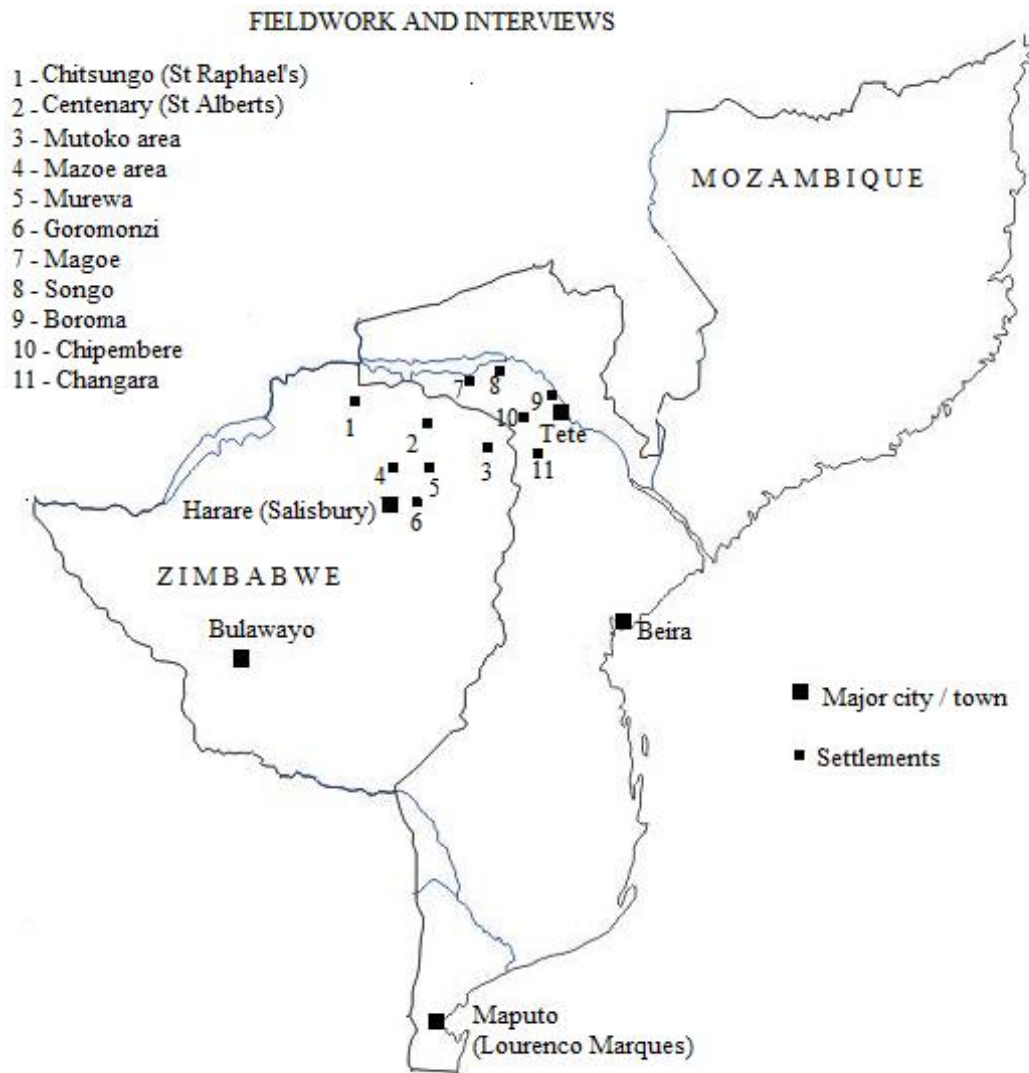
PNC	Provincial Native Commissioner
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SJ	Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
TANHA	True African N'angas Herbalists Association
UEM	Universidade de Eduardo Mondlane
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Front
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference

## MAPS



**Figure 1:** Map of the Mid Zambezi as defined in this study in relation to the region showing the key towns of Salisbury (now Harare) and Tete (also known as Nyungwe).<sup>1</sup>

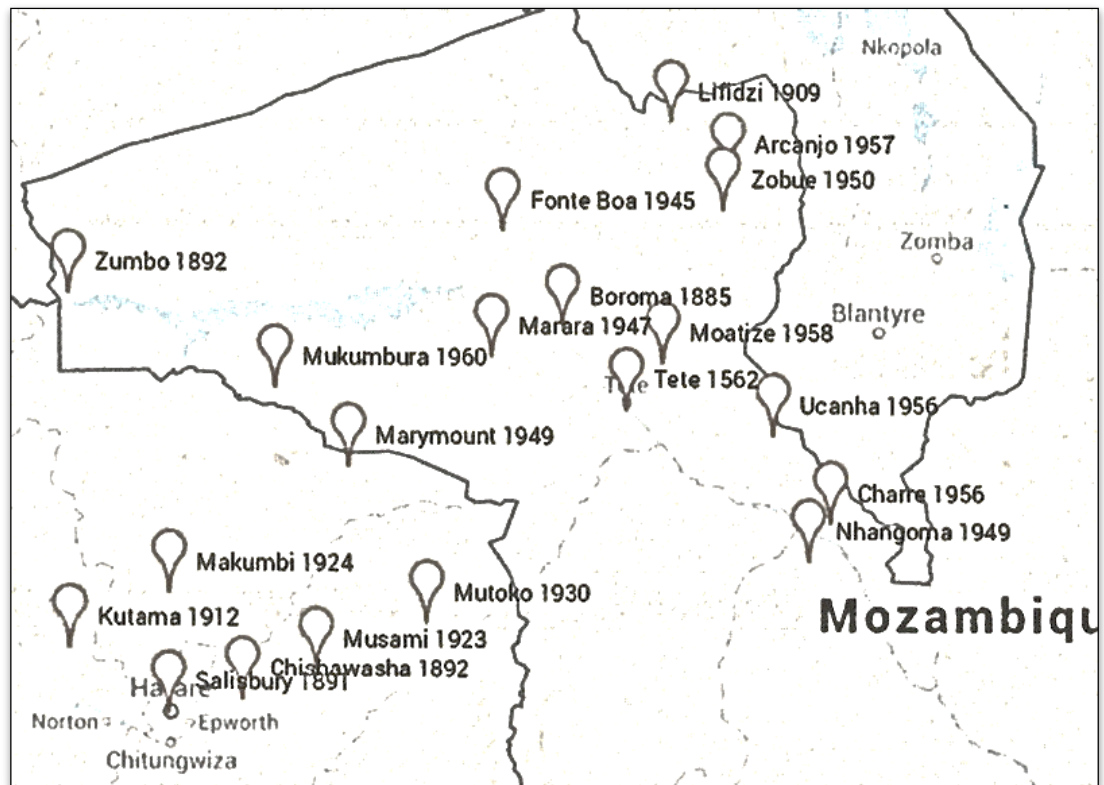
<sup>1</sup> Maps in Figures 1, 2 and 4 were created by the author based on outlines adopted from: <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=outline+maps+of+africa+zimbabwe+-mozambique&tbm=isch&imgil=8UztfaeZ2->



**Figure 2:** Map showing the places where the author carried out oral interviews in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Interviews were carried out in Bulawayo, Harare, Tete, Beira and Maputo and in the marked and enumerated localities.



**Figure 3:** Map of the Old Mutapa state Showing the historic settlements, towns and *feiras* in relation to modern Cities. (Source: Mudenge S.I.G., *A Political History of the Munhumutapa C. 1400-1902* (Harare, London, 1988), p. xxvii).



**Figure 4:** Map showing the Colonial boundary separating British Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi) and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) and Catholic missions and their founding dates. (Sources: created from Google Maps; Dias, Dr Rui Dos Anjos, *Anuário Católico de Moçambique*, 1966 (2º Anno de Publicação) Edição e Propriedade da Conferência Episcopal de Mocambique; and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference (ZCBC), *Annual Directory* (Harare, 2008).



## Introduction

### **Religious Change and Identity in the Trans-Frontier Mid Zambezi <sup>1</sup>**

The conclusions by some scholars in the 1960s and 70s that the ‘confrontation’ between religious cults in eastern Central Africa on the one hand, and the ‘combined forces of world religions, modern technology, and the bureaucratic state’ on the other, was ‘the collapse of some cults and the decline of many others’ need to be more nuanced.<sup>2</sup> These conclusions suggested an imminent demise of African traditional religions under the relentless impact of global forces. But the continuance of such religions in the twenty-first century suggests that the reality, now and then, was much more complex. With the advantage of hindsight and without diminishing the colonial impact, the fact that traditional religion was deeply embedded in the culture of the people made it unlikely to wash away over the eighty years or so of colonial rule which David Beach described as no more than the span of a person’s life.<sup>3</sup> Yet during this period, interesting things and profound changes did take place which constitute the subject matter of this thesis. The religious landscape changed under the instrumentation of colonial policies, missionary education, increased

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<sup>1</sup> Given the size of the Zambezi River, the meaning of ‘mid Zambezi’ needs clarification. From its source in the north-western corner of Zambia, the Zambezi flows through eastern Angola and brushes through Namibia and Botswana in the Caprivi Strip area before taking a sizeable length of its flow between Zambia and Zimbabwe, and then through Mozambique to empty into the Indian Ocean. In *Crossing the Zambezi*, JoAnn McGregor, considers the stretch of the river separating Zambia and Zimbabwe as falling under the designation of ‘mid-Zambezi’. However, for the present study, ‘mid Zambezi’ has been adopted to refer to that section of the Zambezi River from the confluence with the Luangwa River near Zumbo, to Tete town downstream, particularly the region falling to the south bank of the Zambezi, stretching across the border well into Zimbabwe. Here we find the highest concentration of *chiNyungwe* speaking people.

<sup>2</sup> J. Matthew Schoffeleers (ed.), *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults* (Gweru, 1979), p. 24. Also see Michael Gelfand, *Shona Ritual* (Cape Town, 1959).

<sup>3</sup> David Beach, *Mapondera: Heroism and history in northern Zimbabwe 1840 – 1904* (Gweru, 1989), p. 5.



human movements driven by waged labour, the use of money and the emergence from these processes of new elites who could no longer fit easily into the traditional religious mould. Religious change was hinged upon new patterns of thought, new social connections, conditions and structures that were largely independent of the religions themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The forms in which African religions survived ranged from those reminiscent of precolonial conditions, to those that (to varying degrees) incorporated the new realities, to taking-on a distinctly Christian camouflage while remaining fundamentally indigenous in character. Much of what passes for African Christianity today is at bottom heavily laced with traditional African religion or, as others would have it, a form of deep 'inculturation'.<sup>5</sup> C. M. N. White, who studied the Lovale in the north-west of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) around the 1960s, while conceding to the critical impact of new global forces, emphasised 'change' rather than 'collapse'. He studied the ancestral religion of the Lovale people, typified by phenomena called *mahamba* (plural) and *lihamba* (singular).<sup>6</sup> *Lihamba* was a manifestation of a spirit in the form of a sickness or some other unusual social behaviour. It was believed that such spirit had to be acknowledged through a drumming ritual and libations of beer to the ancestors in order to restore health or normalcy to the patient. A similar phenomenon called *malombo* was found in the mid Zambezi where the beginning of

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Colson, *Tonga Religious Life in the Twentieth Century* (Lusaka, 2006), p. 11-12. Colson, while suggesting the loss of credibility of the knowledge system of the elders for the young as a main cause in shifting allegiances from traditional religion to Christianity, also agrees with Horton's notion of new social networks surpassing the earlier clan and kin based networks that had cemented traditional religion. See Robin Horton, 'African Conversion' in *Africa* Vol. 41 (1971), pp. 85-108.

<sup>5</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Cross and Flag in Africa: The 'White Fathers' during the Colonial Scramble (1892-1914)* (Maryknoll, 2006), p. 154.

<sup>6</sup> C. M. N. White, 'Stratification and Modern Changes in an Ancestral Cult', *Africa*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Oct., 1949) pp. 324-331.

the career of a healer or medium was often preceded by some unusual illness.<sup>7</sup> The inexplicable nature of the sickness led the family to consult a traditional healer called *n'ganga* or *nyabezi* who often attributed it to ancestor spirits or some other spirits seeking a host. The *n'ganga* usually prescribed a drumming and offerings ritual which was believed to result in wellness and the beginning of a career as a medium or a healer.<sup>8</sup> Some founders of African Initiated Churches (AICs) also claimed a similar process before coming out as great preachers in the public domain.<sup>9</sup> Many African Christians in the 'spirit churches' have attributed their conversion to some kind of healing received.

C. M. N. White identified change from the 'old *mahamba*' which were inspired by ancestral spirits to the 'new *mahamba*' which were caused by exposure to modern products such as western clothes, money, cars, aeroplanes, Christianity, and

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<sup>7</sup> M. F. C. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to their Religion* (Gwelo, 1976), p. 190.

<sup>8</sup> An example was the spirit medium William Mahodzekwa who spoke of leaving Ndola (presumably in Zambia) returning to Zimbabwe when he was arrested by a certain Nyamangara, a policeman at Sipolilo (Chipuriro) and taken to a camp where he was told that he was 'now a soldier who would go to fight Hitler's war.' (NAZ: AOH/95 Transcribed Interview with William Mahodzekwa, by Dawson Munjeri at Munyenyezi in Chundu Mukwechi on 25 June 1983, p. 2). He had been engaged in various jobs and was in search of a job at the time of his arrest. He recalled being driven with others to Sinoia (Chinhoyi) where on account of his short stature, was released. Back at Sipolilo, he was given twenty pounds and told to go home. Later he worked in the farms of Chimbambaira before he fell ill. 'After I had come back I spent three weeks four months and during the fourth week I did not know what was happening, they carried me home and for three years I did not eat sadza.' (NAZ: AOH/95, Interview with William Mahodzekwa, p. 3). It was during this time of sickness, and then back in the Zambezi valley that he was confirmed as the host of the ancestral spirit of Mubaiwa. Prior to this, William Mahodzekwa moved to and from his rural home in the Zambezi valley and the farms in Gatooma (Kadoma). In the 1960s and 70s he became an important medium with both agents of the colonial state and the African guerrillas seeking his counsel in the nationalist war in Rhodesia. In the interview Mahodzekwa spoke on two levels: in a séance and normally.

<sup>9</sup> Johane Masowe was born as Shonhiwa in 1915, in Musaringa village in the Gandanzara area of Makoni Tribal Trust Land. He came into contact with Christian ideas through the Methodist missionaries who operated in this area. In his youth Shonhiwa went to work in Salisbury and Norton where he was exposed to more new ideas and experiences. At some point he fell ill to the point of death and went back to his rural home where he 'died' and awoke to a new identity. He then spent three days in the Marimba Mountains where he underwent a religious experience in which he was given a staff, white garments, a new name 'Johane' and a bible, thus his preaching career began. He taught his followers not to build churches but to worship in open spaces called *masowe* in Shona. (Clive Kileff and Margaret Kileff, 'The Masowe Vapostori of Seki: Utopianism and tradition in an African Church' in Bennetta Jules-Rosette (ed.), *The New Religions of Africa* (Norwood, 1979), p. 153.)

experiences associated with immigration, travel, modern warfare, living and dying in the city, etc.<sup>10</sup> This exposure was generally widespread by the 1960s and the mid Zambezi was no exception, save that its circumstances permitted a different trajectory of religious change in which ancestral religion dominated the religious landscape for the greater part of the colonial era. There was even a revival of traditional religion as it was roped in to support the nationalist guerrillas in the final days of colonial rule, which was in retreat across the African continent.<sup>11</sup> This revival was marked by the process of mutual legitimation between mediums and guerrillas. When contact between traditional religion and Christianity increased, exchanges included crosspollinations of religious ideas, adaptations, borrowings, accommodations, encodings and re-coding amidst continuities and ruptures. While this encounter ushered in a new religious landscape, physical remoteness and marginalisation owing to colonial mapmaking mitigated the force of these processes in the mid Zambezi.

### **The middle Zambezi, the border, ethnicity and identity**

The choice of the middle Zambezi for this study is based largely on the author's personal affinity to the region as a native thereof with relatives and clan ties across the colonial frontier.<sup>12</sup> Also, this region was once the centre of the Mwene Mutapa state and earlier sixteenth century Portuguese mercantile activity which, by the early twentieth century, had become a backyard of what had become Salisbury, the capital

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<sup>10</sup> White, 'Stratification', p. 329.

<sup>11</sup> David Lan, *Guns & Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1985), p. viii-xix.

<sup>12</sup> The author of this study, though born in Beira, Mozambique, is a native of this region by parentage and clan affiliation and has numerous relatives on both sides of the border. Although classified as a Nyungwe, he is conversant with all the dialects spoken throughout the region as well as with English and Portuguese and was thus able to travel across the region and carry out interviews and transcribe them without the need of translators.

of Rhodesia, and Tete in Portuguese East Africa. Colonial mapmaking reinforced this marginalisation by drawing a boundary through the mid Zambezi. Paradoxically, the first significant Christian encounters with local religion in the whole of Southern Africa took place here, yet literature on this theme has remained fragmented.<sup>13</sup> David Beach once considered it a ‘poorly-documented part of the country’.<sup>14</sup> When that literature began to increase in the 1970s and 1980s, as was the case with southern African historiography in general, it focussed on economic and political history which was thought to explain the social changes that had taken place as a result of the colonial encounter.<sup>15</sup> Religion remained peripheral to the historical reconstructions. It is in light of this, that the discovery of the salience of an indigenous ancestral religious system during the course of this research became an additional horizon of interest on the mid Zambezi, the apparent hub of the royal *mhondoro* system of ancestral beliefs.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from general marginalisation, the mid Zambezi has also suffered from negative perceptions which have influenced researchers and trickled through to the general population for whom the mention of ‘Dande’ in the Zambezi valley evokes

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<sup>13</sup> Studies in the region with an interest in religion have been carried out by Tim Matthews (1981) and Elizabeth Colson (1960, 1962 and 2006) in the adjacent area in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Kingsley G. Garbett (1967), Michael Gelfand (1959, 1973) and Michael F.C. Bourdillon (1976) have focussed on Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and Allen Issacman (1972, 1976) on Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique).

<sup>14</sup> Beach, *Mapondera*, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Diana Jeater, *Marriage, Pervasion, And Power: The construction of Moral Discourse in Southern Rhodesia 1894-1930* (Oxford, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Interviewees from the Chitsungo and St Albert’s mission (See details in the Bibliography and Sources section) areas and Tete (e.g. Gabriel Avelino) in the mid Zambezi spoke of their senior spirits as *mhondoro* or *mphondolo*. Those who migrated from the Midlands and Masvingo areas of Zimbabwe to settle in the mid Zambezi like Eric Jemera Mhazi (Chitsungo) and Martin Poshai (St Albert’s) said they did not call their senior spirits *mhondoro* and only came to know of this designation in the mid Zambezi. But an informant from Mutare in the eastern highlands, Godfrey Sanyika claimed they still had a strong tradition of *mhondoro* in his area. This suggests that the *mhondoro* system formed a belt across the north, north-eastern and eastern regions of Zimbabwe which crossed into Mozambique. M. F. C. Bourdillon who did research in the Mt Darwin area confirms this in his *The Shona Peoples* (1976) p. 293.

notions of remoteness and backwardness. These perceptions were generated by some agro-economists, historians and individual archaeologists who characterised it as hot, dry, tsetse fly-ridden, malarial, rugged and prone to droughts - in short, not quite ideal for human habitation.<sup>17</sup> David Beach argued that settlement patterns in what is now Zimbabwe were influenced by climactic factors.<sup>18</sup> Pre-colonial states emerged on the higher altitude plateau of Zimbabwe in a 'Great Crescent' formation where most cities and towns are located today because of favourable natural conditions, while the valley areas were avoided because of their hostile climactic conditions. For Beach, the temperate, well-watered and fertile plateau explained the population disparities between the plateau and the low-lying areas. In explaining the settlement patterns of the Shona peoples, Michael Bourdillon appears to be sympathetic to this position.<sup>19</sup> However, Pikirai and Pwiti have shed more light on the archaeology of the middle Zambezi, dispelling some of these perceptions.<sup>20</sup> Their recent research has indicated longstanding, significant populations even in the low velds including the mid Zambezi which is classified under Regions IV and V of Zimbabwe's five agro regions that usually experience up to 650 mm of annual rainfall.<sup>21</sup> Moving south, away from the Zambezi, towards Salisbury (Harare), one crosses a thin belt of region III before arriving in region II which has between 750 – 1000 mm of annual rainfall. The greater part of the mid Zambezi which is closer to the river is, in fact,

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<sup>17</sup> V. Vincent and R.G. Thomas, *An Agricultural Survey of Southern Rhodesia: agro-ecological survey (Part I)*, (Harare, 1961).

<sup>18</sup> David Beach, *The Shona and their Neighbours* (Blackwell, 1994); see also John Illife, *Famine in Zimbabwe, 1890-1960*, (Gweru, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 19-23.

<sup>20</sup> Innocent Pikirayi, 'The Archaeological Identity of the Mutapa State: Towards an Historical Archaeology of Northern Zimbabwe' in *Studies in African Archaeology* 6 (Uppsala, 1993), Innocent Pikirayi, *The Zimbabwe Culture: Origins and Decline in Southern Zambesian States in Southern Africa* (Oxford, 2001), G. Pwiti, 'Trade and Economies in Southern Africa: The Archaeological Evidence', *Zambezia* 18 (ii) (1991), p. 119-29, G. Pwiti, 'Continuity and Change: An Archaeological Study of Yearly Farming Communities in Northern Zimbabwe' in *Studies in African Archaeology* 13 (Uppsala, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Munyaradzi Manyanga, *Resilient Landscapes: Socio-environmental dynamics in the Shashe-Limpopo Basin, Southern Zimbabwe c. AD 800 to the Present* (Uppsala, 2007), p. 31.

prone to dry spells and drought. This would have made rainmaking rituals in the repertoire of religious ceremonies particularly important. While migrations from the south toward the mid Zambezi were not new, as we shall see below, in recent times new migrants were attracted to the region from as far as Masvingo on the plateau because of plentiful grazing lands and the eradication of the disease-bearing tsetse fly.<sup>22</sup>

The highland Zezuru tended to look down upon the mid Zambezi people, the so called Valley Korekore, who were by no means an ethnically pure group.<sup>23</sup> They had mixed with the Doma, Zezuru, Tavara and Nyungwe. The pockets of Nyungwe speakers among them filtered some cultural traits associated with Tete in Mozambique such as Portuguese names and manners. There were claims as early as 1923 that 'the type of native woman who is most advanced all round [in Southern Rhodesia] is to be found in the *Dande*, the Zambezi Valley north of the Mvuradona Mountains in the Darwin district'.<sup>24</sup> It was believed by some writers that the long established contact 'with the Portuguese no doubt accounts for some of the progress in the *Dande*'.<sup>25</sup>

The specific area of the present study is that part on the south bank of the Zambezi River which roughly forms a triangle linking Zumbo and Tete along the Zambezi River inside Mozambique, and Salisbury (Harare) on the Zimbabwean plateau. On

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<sup>22</sup> Interviews carried out at St Raphael's Mission in Chief Chitsungo's area on 10 October 2014, and St Albert's Mission on 14 October 2014, as well as in Chief Chiweshe's area showed the presence of a significant number of people who had moved in from Masvingo. This caused petty local conflicts as the newcomers thought themselves superior to the locals.

<sup>23</sup> Garbett, G. Kingsley, 'Prestige, Status, and Power in a Modern Valley Korekore Chiefdom, Rhodesia' in *Africa* Vol. 37, No. 3 (July, 1967), p. 303.

<sup>24</sup> Agnes Sloan, 'The Black Woman', in N.H. Wilson (ed.), *The Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual, (NADA)*, 1923, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

the Zimbabwe side it is now called Mashonaland Central Province; in Mozambique it is the southern region of Tete Province comprising the three districts of Mágoe, Cahora Bassa and Changara.<sup>26</sup> Curiously this is precisely the area that D. P. Abraham, the pioneering historian of the Mwene Mutapa Dynasty which he called ‘Monomotapa’, did his field work.<sup>27</sup> The early Catholic missions in the region were mainly located along the Zambezi River at Tete, Boroma and Zumbo. Later, a long border separated the two countries, stretching from the Kanyemba area near Zumbo through Mukumbura to the Cuchamano/Machipanda border post in the Mudzi district of Zimbabwe.<sup>28</sup> On the Zimbabwean side of the border we find the later, post-1930 Christian missions of Chitsungu (Catholic), St. Albert’s (Catholic), Karanda (Evangelical), Marymount (Catholic), and Mount Darwin (Catholic).<sup>29</sup> To the south of this zone were the earlier pre-1930 missions of Chishawasha, Kutama and Mutoko which were important launch pads for missions towards the valley to the north. According to an 1897 map of Rhodesia, the mid Zambezi was situated in what was called Mazoe district, bordered to the west by Lomogundi (Lomagundi) and to the south east by Mangwendi (Mangwende) district, with the district of Salisbury hemmed in between them all to the south.<sup>30</sup> Mazoe District covered the main area of the present study, with Mount Darwin roughly at its centre. Its southern end is important in this study because of Salisbury, the capital of Southern Rhodesia. Mangwendi (Mangwende) District stretched in a north-easterly to a south-westerly direction with its southern part surrounding the eastern and southern reaches of the

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<sup>26</sup> Manuel Ferrão, [Map] *Divisão Administrativa Provincia de Tete, Republica de Mocambique*, (Cenacarta 2006)

<sup>27</sup> D. P. Abraham, ‘The Monomotapa Dynasty’ NADA, (1959) no 36, p. 59. The author had access to the original article extracted from NADA (which as a journal was disbanded around 1980).

<sup>28</sup> See the maps section.

<sup>29</sup> Catholic Directory of Zimbabwe 2008 – 2010, (Harare, 2008), p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> NAZ: FM 1645, A Map of Rhodesia Divided into Provinces and Districts under the Administration of the British South Africa Company, 1897.

Salisbury district covering M'rewas (Murewa) and M'toko (Mutoko). The major rivers, Mazoe, Luenya or Ruenya and the Mudzi flowed through the middle.<sup>31</sup> All these rivers fed into the Zambezi in what is now Mozambique. A Mrs Marjorie L. Harris whose husband was employed by the Southern Rhodesia Labour Bureau, once lived at Chikoa on the bank of the Zambezi River as well as at Darwin and Rusambo in Southern Rhodesia from January 1926 to November 1945.<sup>32</sup> She claimed 'there were no mission stations, let alone [European] women. They had long since disappeared. The only mission I knew was at Verema [Boroma] just outside Tete. I don't know if there were any nuns still there. It was a big German mission in 1914, but not in my time.'<sup>33</sup>

Tete was an important Portuguese post. At the turn of the twentieth century, R. C. F. Maugham described the landscape around the town of Tete, on the south bank of the Zambezi River:

One sees a river 1,000 yards wide, flowing past a thickly wooded island of great beauty, and beyond the farther tree-clad river banks, the soft effects of the purple-shaded mountain chains, marking for scores upon scores of miles the long wearisome road which leads to North-Eastern Rhodesia. What one fortunately does not see in this harmoniously blended colour scheme, is the detail which would rob it of so much of its attractiveness – the cracked, bare, red earth, the smallness of the badly nourished, stunted trees, the absence of shade, the hungriness of the weather-beaten, igneous rock, - the absence, in a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> NAZ: ORAL/261, Mrs Marjorie L. Harris, Interviewer: Narrated by Mrs Harris, Transcriber: Mrs E House, Date of Recording: c. 1983; Place of Interview: Mrs Harris' home – 16 de Braose Way, Steyning, BN4 3FD, Sussex, England, p. 25. Mrs Harris' husband, Lance Harris, worked for the Southern Rhodesian Labour Bureau. His job was to ensure safe passage of migrant labourers from Nyasaland and Northern Tete province across the Zambezi River via the five ferry crossing points into Rhodesia. Her interview reveals the conditions then prevailing and gives an insight into how people lived from the limited perspective of an isolated housewife who did not really interact much with the Africans. She lived in the mid Zambezi from 1926 to 1945 when her husband died of what she described as a 'thrombosis'.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 21.



word, of that exuberance of tropical vegetation which has lent such grace and charm to the lower courses of the Zambezi.<sup>34</sup>

According to legend, it was the Portuguese who named the town ‘Tete’, a name derived from the local word for ‘reeds’, *mitete*.<sup>35</sup> Muslim traders frequented the settlement in pre-Portuguese times supporting a claim that it was the oldest continuously inhabited town in southern Africa.<sup>36</sup> The first Christian missionary post in the middle Zambezi region was established there in 1562.<sup>37</sup> Tete (and the downstream town of Sena) has been described as one of the Portuguese staging posts between the coast and the interior.<sup>38</sup> Antonio Fernandes, a Portuguese convict sent to East Africa to serve his sentence, appears to have visited Tete.<sup>39</sup> Between 1512 and 1516 he undertook inland journeys from the coastal settlement of Sofala, becoming the first European to venture inland of the region. He traversed much of present-day Zimbabwe as far west as what is now Matabeleland.<sup>40</sup> The antiquity of the town which the Portuguese called Tete and the locals called *Nyungwe* appears to be well established.<sup>41</sup> But Nyungwe designates not only a place but a language, as well as an ethnicity. Included in the Nyungwe linguistic and ethnic grouping is a group called

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<sup>34</sup> R. C. F. Maugham, *Zambezi: A General Description of the Valley of the Zambezi River, from its Delta to the River Aroangwa with its History, Agriculture, Flora, Fauna, and Ethnography* (London, 1910), p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> There are several versions of the legend with the same storyline. This version was told by a retired teacher, Patricia Jordao in an interview on 11 June 2009 in Tete: ‘When the Portuguese first arrived in their ships at Nyungwe [Tete], they were impressed by the significant population and hive of activity on the Zambezi River. They asked the locals what the name of the place was. The locals did not understand the question. To press the question, a Portuguese man held some reeds [which grow abundantly in the river banks] and gestured the question, ‘Where is here?’ The locals understood him to mean ‘What are these?’ To which they replied in the local language: ‘*mitete*,’ meaning reeds. The Portuguese men nodded their heads saying ‘tete’, ‘tete.’ That sealed the name Tete for the settlement’.

<sup>36</sup> Bill Freund, *The African City: A History* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 38ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Anuário Católico de Moçambique, 1974, (4ª ano de publicação), Edição a propriedade da Conferência Episcopal de Moçambique*, p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> M.D.D. Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement on the Zambezi* (London, 1973), p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>41</sup> NAZ: Fb: Mozambique – Rhodesia Map, Anglo – Portuguese delimitation 1892 (sheet 6). Tete and Nyungwe refer to the same locality.

the *Chikunda* who have received a good deal of attention in Allen and Barbara Isaacman's book *Slavery and Beyond*.<sup>42</sup>

## **The Shona and Nyungwe/Chikunda**

The complexity of the mid Zambezi groups will be discussed in greater detail in chapter one. It suffices here to note that the terms Nyungwe and Chikunda to this day are spoken of interchangeably as a language and a people. When asked about the difference between Nyungwe and Chikunda, eighty year old Mr Ngirazi retorted rhetorically, *Ah! Kodi m'Chikunda mbani, m'Nyungwe mbani? Mbabodzibodzi!* 'Ah! But what is a Chikunda, what is a Nyungwe? They are one and the same!'<sup>43</sup> All the interviewees for this study collapsed the distinction between the two, though some observed that the best Nyungwe was spoken at mission stations like Boroma and Marara.<sup>44</sup> This caveat is important because it points to variations within the Nyungwe language itself and the possible influence of Catholic missionaries in both recording and spreading that language for catechetical purposes.

The Isaacmans recognised the 'vast Chikunda diaspora [that] extends into contemporary Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi' from Mozambique.<sup>45</sup> Apart from being scattered in the towns in pursuit of labour opportunities, the traditional settlement patterns of these Chikunda dominated the north-east of Zimbabwe in areas co-extensive with what is defined here as the 'Nyungwe-speaking region'. This phrase is a simplification, because in reality this region had enclaves of Nyungwe-

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<sup>42</sup> Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond: The Making of Men and Chikunda Ethnic Identities in the Unstable World of South-Central Africa, 1750-1920* (London: Heinemann, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Mr Ngirazi at Juru, Goromonzi, on 7 May 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews with Gabriel Avelino at Beira on 21 June 2011; Bairo Dube at Makokoba, Bulawayo, on 8 February 2011; Mr Ngirazi at Juru, Goromonzi, on 7 May 2011, *et al.*

<sup>45</sup> Isaacman and Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond*, p. 25.

speaking people replete with their chiefs, in an area that was also Shona speaking. Of the nineteen chieftaincies delineated by the Southern Rhodesia delineation officers in the 1960s, seven Nyungwe chiefs were identified in the old Darwin district alone.<sup>46</sup> Others adopted new identities and changed their praise names.<sup>47</sup> Chief Nyachuru of Mazoe district for instance, was originally of the *malunga* or *marunga* totem, a *vaZungu* totem, but adopted a new one, *simboti*, whereas Chief Kaitano retained his totemic credentials.<sup>48</sup> While the Isaacmans identified these settlers as Chikunda, the Joshua Project identified them as Nyungwe. The Joshua Project, an Evangelical Christian organisation has estimated the Nyungwe-speaking population in Mozambique to be 518,000, Zimbabwe 28,000 and Malawi 16,000.<sup>49</sup> According to this estimate therefore, the second largest concentration of Nyungwe speakers outside Mozambique is in Zimbabwe – and precisely in the mid Zambezi where this study is centred.

Interviews carried out in Mashonaland Central Province, near the border regions in Zimbabwe showed that many people in the region were bi-lingual, speaking an accented Shona and *chiNyungwe*, and claimed Mozambican origins.<sup>50</sup> Although

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<sup>46</sup> The original Nyungwe chieftaincies were: Nyakusengwa or Mukosa, Kaitano, Dotito, Chipara, Pachanza, Chitange and Katevera.

<sup>47</sup> Praise names called *zvidawo* in Shona are poetic listings of names and events in a sequence that a family clan or group use to memorise their origins and identity. They are usually infused with past actions of valour and courage. They mix folk history and hagiography. Some are long and some could be as short as a single phrase or word.

<sup>48</sup> NAZ:S2929/2/3, Revised and amended report on the Nyachuru Community; Chiweshe TTL; Mazoe District, 1967 May, by R.H.D. Alves, Acting District Officer, original report 8<sup>th</sup> March 1965 by Latham. *Marunga* means ‘dove’ in *chiNyungwe*, a totem used for Europeans or people with such descent.

<sup>49</sup> <http://joshuaproject.net/peoples.php?peo3=14105>

<sup>50</sup> As the author speaks *chiShona*, *chiNyungwe*, *chiChewa*, Portuguese, *isiNdebele*, *isiZulu* as well as English fluently, it was possible to identify *chiNyungwe* speakers by their Shona accent and cross check their mother tongue by shifting the conversation into that language and marking the response. When Mr Eric Jemera Mhazi was asked during the interview ‘Are the Karanga the only recent migrants into the valley?’ his reply was ‘No. No. There are many Chikunda people who were here from way back. The people of Kanyemba consider themselves to be the owners of that part of the country in the valley. They are found in Mushumbi as well. Many originate in Mozambique but there

Nyungwe has numerous terms borrowed from Portuguese (as does Shona), it remains a Bantu language.<sup>51</sup> While general literature has popularised Shona as the language of the greater part of modern day Zimbabwe and Nyungwe has been ascribed to the Tete Province in Mozambique, the reality in the mid Zambezi is the interpenetration of these language groups. Bourdillon claimed that Rhodesia's greater economic growth, the boundary and attention to education resulted 'in growing cultural differences across the frontier' with many increasingly recognising the boundary as 'more significant than the traditional boundaries of ancient Shona states'.<sup>52</sup>

The mid Zambezi is home to the Korekore, Zezuru, Tavara, Tonga, Barwe and the more recent Pimbi and Nsenga groups. These have been collapsed into Shona subgroups or dialects, or into the Nyungwe group, thus in reality there can be no such thing as an ethnic Shona or ethnic Nyungwe. An ethnic tag is an extreme simplification of the reality. Hence it is more accurate to speak of a Nyungwe-speaking region rather than a Nyungwe ethnic group. And that region, while predominantly in the Tete province of Mozambique, spreads across the border into Zimbabwe and interpenetrates with the Shona speaking area there. Some Nyungwe informants claimed to differ with their Shona neighbours in some religious practices. For instance some Nyungwe said they did not perform the *Kurova guva* ceremony

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are few people here from Zambia. The people of Chikafa now speak Shona but they have their own language, I think we are oppressing them by suppressing their language, they speak Nyungwe. There are more Nyungwe speakers in the direction of St. Albert's Mission.' Interview with Eric Jemera Mhazi at Chitsungu mission on 9 October 2014. This was confirmed in the interview with Chief Chiweshe on 15 October 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Jan Knappert, 'Contribution from the Study of Loanwords to the Cultural History of Africa' in David Dalby (ed.) *Language and History in Africa* (London, 1970), p. 88. He identified sixty Portuguese words in Shona, which are also found in Nyungwe.

<sup>52</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 30.

for their deceased.<sup>53</sup> Generalising about the mid-Zambezi religious landscape, therefore, is as fraught with pitfalls as homogenising its different groups.

Recent scholarship has shown that ethnicity or group identity is fluid, changeable and variable. It is subject to historical evolution and is in a constant state of renegotiation depending on the historical nature, numbers and circumstances of the group.<sup>54</sup> Although these are fluid concepts, they nonetheless point to hard realities and cannot simply be reduced to mere colonial or intellectual constructs.<sup>55</sup> Alexander Keese edited a collection of seven essays on ethnicity in Africa with articles contributed by leading Africanist scholars who specialised in former French and Portuguese colonies.<sup>56</sup> The essays followed a conference held in Porto, Portugal on 23 and 24 February 2007. In this publication the key battle lines on the subject were drawn reigniting the debate and shedding light on the long-term perspective of African ethno-cultural solidarities. Framed by the key interest of the book, all the contributors stressed the prominence of the subject of ethnicity and group identities whenever the international public turned its focus on African states, with Keese suggesting that it was studies in Southern Africa that had sharpened the ethnicity debate worldwide.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Mrs Netsai Antonio at St Albert's mission on 14 October 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Alexander Keese (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long term-perspective: The African Experience* (Bern, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Felicitas Becker: 'Vernacular Ethnic Stereotypes: Their Persistence and Change in Southeast Tanzania, ca 1890-2003' in Alexander Keese (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long term-perspective: The African Experience* (Bern, 2010), p. 94, attributes the construction of ethnicity in south east Tanzania where narratives of the construction of 'tribes' are absent, to colonial ascriptions of authority to 'tribal' political intermediaries who provided an incentive for the creation of tribal narratives and for mission education which provided the scribes and intellectuals to entrench such narratives.

<sup>56</sup> Keese, *Ethnicity*. Scholars at the Porto Conference included Felicitas Becker, José Capela, Philip J. Havik, Eduardo Medeiros, Malyn Newitt and Paul Nugent.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Malyn Newitt, a leading historian of Mozambique, contributing to the Porto conference argued that although there were what he called ‘permanent poles’ of group identification such as languages, titles, and religious cults that existed for a long time, ‘Zambezia in particular was always a kaleidoscope of shifting political formations giving rise to a constantly changing pattern of identification - both self-identification and identification by others’.<sup>58</sup> As groups moved to new settlements, they both preserved old ways and acquired new cultural peculiarities. To illustrate this, the colonial Native Commissioner, W. Edward, while on patrol in the then Fungwi (Pfungwe) area of M’rewas (Murewa) district in 1899, observed that the ‘Manners and customs of this tribe differ in many ways from the Mazezuru (Zezuru) or Budhla (Budya). One of the most marked differences being the custom of intermarriages which is allowed amongst the ‘Bafungwes?’ . . . . which is strictly prohibited amongst other tribes in this country’.<sup>59</sup> Medeiros and Capela, while agreeing that ethnic boundaries were fluid went on to compare ethnicity with racialism. They said the concept of ethnicity was in a way similar to racial concepts, presupposed distinctions of species among individuals and had its basis in the concept of culture, which they defined as an inventory of remnants, habits, techniques and material objects which make it possible to classify different groups of populations.<sup>60</sup>

In the case of the Zambezi basin which they called ‘Zambesia’, Medeiros and Capela pointed to a ‘complex ethnic history’ well before the late nineteenth century imperial

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<sup>58</sup> Malyn Newitt: ‘Kinship, Religion, Language and political control: Ethnic Identity among the Peoples of the Zambezi Valley’ in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Long-Term Perspective: The African Experience* (Oxford, 2010), p. 70.

<sup>59</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for Quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup> 1899, M’rewas District, p. 579.

<sup>60</sup> Eduardo Medeiros/José Capela: ‘Processes of Identity-Building in the Zambesi Valley: Ethnic Solidarity and the Zambesia Ethos’ in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Long-Term Perspective: The African Experience* (Oxford, 2010), p. 37.

and capitalist occupation of the region.<sup>61</sup> Before that, the naming and ‘fixing’ of ethnic groups, they claimed was the work of the ‘high and late colonial’ periods. From this perspective, the ‘ethnic’ designation Nyungwe would have been the work of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. But they went further to identify a distinct ‘overarching type of identity’ which they called the ‘Zambesian Ethos’ which was at variance with other processes of ethnic differentiation.<sup>62</sup> The ‘Zambesian Ethos’ was rooted in creolisations, biological and cultural intermixtures based on Bantu culture, European and Asian influences, and the Portuguese religious and cultural impact.’<sup>63</sup> Sections of the Nyungwe were, to a considerable degree, a result of this process.

The ‘Ethos’ comprised various groups that emerged from Christian missionary activity or the *luanes*, large residences of lords and ladies, *donas* of the *prazos*, their guards and servants and most significant of all, the much written about Chikunda mentioned above. It was a kind of identity to which individuals adhered because of their circumstances while continuing to identify with the ‘new’ ethnic groups of Nyungwe, Sena and Chwabo. These people lived in a cultural border situation described as ‘a permanent process of trans-ethnic acculturation’.<sup>64</sup> And because of their enterprise, social advantage and influence arising from their links to the Asian and European long time settlers, they were able to project themselves far afield. Thus, the Native Commissioner, Edward, in 1899 could speak of ‘the coloured traders from Tete and other places on the Zambesi’ who came to buy gold panned in

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> Eduardo Medeiros and José Capela: ‘Processes of Identity-Building in the Zambesi Valley: Ethnic Solidarity and the Zambesia Ethos’ in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Long-Term Perspective: The African Experience* (Oxford, 2010), p. 42-43.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 42. Quoting Ulf Hannertz, ‘The World of Creolisation’, *Africa* 57(4), 1987, pp. 546-559 and in A.D. King (Ed) *Culture Globalisation and the World System* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 107-128.

the Mazoe River from the Bafungwe but were now prevented from crossing into British territory.<sup>65</sup> The concept of ‘Zambesian ethos’ suggests that amongst the groups comprising the Nyungwe speaking people, would have been many who, to varying degrees, had converted to Catholic Christianity in historic times. The concept of African traditional religion in the mid Zambezi, therefore, is elastic to a degree as Christian elements are present, though its dominant import is the ancestral religion associated with the *mhondoro*.

## Defining Religion

The terms ‘religion’, ‘African’, ‘God’ or ‘indigenous religion’ are problematic. Many scholars refer to African belief systems as ‘African Traditional Religions’ (ATRs), often described as ‘cults’ by the pioneering scholars of the 1960s. But these terms require further qualifications because they were, amongst other factors, coined in a Judeo-Christian idiom.<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Colson, even after half a century of work among the Tonga of modern day Zambia (since 1946) was still preoccupied with problems of definition, noting that in *ciTonga* there was no word equivalent to the English ‘religion’.<sup>67</sup> And, as Alan Kirkaldy discovered with the *vaVhenda* in a study of Christian encounter in the area of the Kruger National Park bordering the north-east of South Africa and south-east of Zimbabwe, missionaries of the Berlin Missionary Society were initially talking at cross purposes with the Venda people. While they preached the God of the Bible, the Venda were thinking of the God of their tradition, *Raluvhimba / Mwali*, an instance of people grasping a new concept by

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<sup>65</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for Quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup> 1899, M’rewas District, p. 580.

<sup>66</sup> David Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe* (London, 1999), p.1-2, in footnote 1, acknowledges the complexity of defining non-Christian African religions since Christianity could be argued to be equally ‘African’, ‘indigenous’ and ‘local’. He opts for the compromise term traditional while I consider the best designation that used by the people themselves, namely ‘*chiVanhu*’ (Shona) or ‘*chiWanthu*’ (Nyungwe) or ‘*Isintu*’ (Nguni) even though the import of these terms mean more than just ‘religion’.

<sup>67</sup> Colson, *Tonga Religious Life*, p. 3.



associating it with what was already familiar to them.<sup>68</sup> As Ulrich Luig pointed out in his discussion of conversion in Zambia, ‘people conceive new ideas by drawing an analogy between the unfamiliar and the familiar, they adapt those elements of the unfamiliar first which are most akin to what is familiar to them’.<sup>69</sup> In the middle Zambezi context, more suitable terms of talking about God would be ‘supreme being’, ‘creator’, ‘high god’ or better still, the names by which such a being is known in the local usages, like *Musikavanhu*, *Mwari*, *Dziva*, *Chitedza*, or *Mulungu*.<sup>70</sup> As for religion, the terms used locally such as *chiVanhu* (Shona) or *chiWanthu* (Nyungwe) or *Isintu* (Nguni languages) – make greater sense even though their meaning goes beyond what may strictly be described as ‘religion’.

For the present study, whether we speak of African Traditional Religion in the singular or plural is settled in favour of simply African Religions.<sup>71</sup> Aside from the many similarities in beliefs and practices in African religions, the improbable idea of a single African religion is yet to be proved.<sup>72</sup> It has been suggested however, that African religions share three basic characteristics, namely; they are ‘integrative’, ‘flexible’ and ‘ancestors’ occupy a central place.<sup>73</sup> The integration of all aspects of everyday life in African religion is in sharp contrast with what has been described as the ‘church-state’ dichotomy found in western societies. Wim M. J. van Binsbergen observed in the case of Zambia in the 1980s that the concept of politics as a distinct

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<sup>68</sup> Alan Kirkaldy, *Capturing the Soul: The Vhavenda and the Missionaries, 1870-1900* (Pretoria, 2005), p. 168.

<sup>69</sup> Ulrich Luig, *Conversion as a Social Process: A History of Missionary Christianity among the Valley Tonga, Zambia* (Hamburg, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 320-321. He lists these and other names such as ‘Nyadenga or Dedza (Lord of the Sky), Musikavanhu (Maker of the People), Chikara (One Inspiring Awe), Dzivaguru (The Great Pool), Chirazamauva (The One Who Provides for Good and Bad), Mutangakugara (One Who Existed at the Beginning), and Mwari (a personal name)’.

<sup>71</sup> Jacob K. Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

sector of society was a recent innovation in African societies.<sup>74</sup> The concepts of religion, politics or economics as separate entities, he argued, were meaningful only to a highly differentiated, complex society in which institutional spheres had developed autonomy.<sup>75</sup> Hence there was a religious dimension to rites of passage, such as birthing, naming, initiation at puberty, marriage, diet, dress, grooming and death, as well as the right dispositions to revered ancestors. This characteristic is what John Peel described in his *Aladura* as the ‘this-worldly’ slant of African religions as opposed to the predominantly ‘other-worldly concerns’ of Christianity.<sup>76</sup> The centrality of ancestors did not exclude divine beings or gods or a supreme being. The borders between the realms of the living and the dead ancestors are perceived to be porous, allowing for interactions of mutual benefit.<sup>77</sup> The third aspect, ‘flexibility’, is particularly pertinent to the present study as it is the basis of religious adaptations and historical change.

## **General literature review, sources, methodology and chapters**

According to John Peel, to tell a story of the past the historian ‘has to depend on what the past has left for him to work from’.<sup>78</sup> The problems associated with colonial sources, such as Eurocentrism, prejudice, racism and so on are well documented and have often occupied a section in many publications on Africa.<sup>79</sup> Glenn J. Ames noted

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<sup>74</sup> W. M. J. van Binsbergen, *Religious Change in Zambia* (London, 1981).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>76</sup> J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba*, (Oxford, 1968).

<sup>77</sup> Olupona, *African Religions*, p.4. The human world was conceived as being in the middle of a three tier world – between the sky, abode of the gods and spirits, the earth and the underworld – abode of the ancestors buried there. In other cases, it is a two tier cosmology of the living and the dead. See also Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The BaKongo of Lower Zaire* (Chicago, 1986), p. 6.

<sup>78</sup> J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington, 2000), p. 22.

<sup>79</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450 – 1950* (Oxford, 1994). Chapter 7, p. 298; Shorter, *Cross and Flag in Africa*, p. 154, and others.

that earlier historiography on Africa from ca. 1880 to 1940, was Eurocentric, largely compiled by English, Dutch, French and Portuguese civil servants seeking to glorify past colonial adventures and to legitimize European imperialism, thereby rendering such literature ‘less than objective’.<sup>80</sup> In the decolonizing period of ca. 1945 to 1975, the general scholarship on Africa remained tainted by this legacy.<sup>81</sup>

The Congolese philosopher, V. Y. Mudimbe construed this special case treatment of Africa as designed to create a ‘paradigm of difference’ from which others could advantageously position themselves; thus a perception of Africa had to be ‘invented’ accordingly.<sup>82</sup> Mudimbe identified what he called a ‘colonising structure’ which completely embraced the ‘physical, human and spiritual’ aspects of the colonised.<sup>83</sup> This structure consisted of ‘the domination of physical space, the reformation of native minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective.’<sup>84</sup> It is at this level that the colonial factor impacted on religious change because ‘at the cultural and religious levels, through schools, churches, the press, and audio-visual media the colonising enterprise diffused new attitudes’ which contradicted and sought to break ‘the culturally unified and religiously integrated schema of most African traditions’. So, from the moment of the establishment of colonial rule ‘the forms and formulations of the colonial culture and its aims were

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<sup>80</sup> Glen J. Ames (ed.), *European Expansion and Indigenous Responses* (Boston, 2010), p. vi.

<sup>81</sup> Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Johannesburg, 1994), p. xiii. Writing on South African labour histories for instance, Patrick Harries observed that ‘The Africans at the center of these works were shadowy and anonymous figures; almost always acted upon rather than acting, they were the innocent victims of employers and colonial officials. In this way, the literary heritage passed on to a new generation of writers and readers reinforcing an old picture . . . This image was to maintain a tenacious grip on the history of labour in South Africa’.

<sup>82</sup> V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the order of Knowledge* (London, 1988).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

somehow the means of trivialising the whole traditional mode of life and its spiritual framework.’<sup>85</sup> While not entirely convinced by all of Mudimbe’s views for reasons for which there is not much space here to articulate, his notions of the ‘invention of Africa’ through reconstruction seem to make sense and I argue here that the earlier sentiments of the imminent demise of African Traditional religions were articulated within the context of this reconstruction of the idea of Africa and its people. By hindsight, though largely successful in other respects, there were countersigns that this project remained incomplete, at least by the 1970s. But it has cast a long shadow on portrayals of the continent.

Heike Schmidt has observed that ‘Most world history textbooks and syllabi reinforce the idea of Africa as being an isolated, backward continent without agency or creativity, victimized by the Atlantic slave trade and touched by modernity only through colonialism.’<sup>86</sup> Diana Jeater attributed the sentiments of superiority of the British in the early nineteenth century not so much to the notion of being of a different kind from other people as of being citizens of a country that was a leading industrial nation that had stamped out the slave trade in all its domains in 1833, championing the values of ‘justice’, ‘morality’ and ‘civilisation’.<sup>87</sup> But by the late nineteenth century this had changed and an element of racial prejudice had crept in which coloured subsequent writings.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Heike Schmidt, ‘The Future of Africa's Past: Observations on the Discipline,’ *History in Africa*, Vol. 34 (2007), pp. 455.

<sup>87</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power*, p. 38.

<sup>88</sup> George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German colonial state in Quigdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa*, (Chicago, London, 2007) p. 514. Steinmetz examines the effects of precolonial perceptions on colonial policy, not the genesis or adequacy of these perceptions. His conclusion is that ‘colonial policies were profoundly shaped by precolonial ethnographic

The prejudice grew from claims to superiority over the colonised based on pseudo-science and certain interpretations of Charles Darwin's theories.<sup>89</sup> It filtered into material produced by social commentators, curious observers and missionaries. Writing in 1893, barely three years after the British South Africa Company occupied what became Rhodesia, the Jesuit Fr Hartmann wrote of the Shona:

Has the Mashona a fine physique? By no means. Occasionally one may meet with a robust woman or girl, but men and boys are in this respect simply a disgrace. Exceptions are so rare, that they only serve to bring out more clearly what a wretched framework their soul is cased in. Their shoulders are often drawn up in such a way as to give the whole figure a deformed and ugly aspect. By a sort of paradox, when a Mashona wants to express the idea that he is not strong, he says [*h*]andinamapfupa, "I have no bones;" whilst in fact he is nothing but bones and skin – and the skin is not much to boast of either.<sup>90</sup>

Though considered by fellow missionaries and settlers an expert on the Africans amongst whom he had worked for several years since pre-colonial times, Hartmann's perceptions were coloured by the racist notions of his time. He attributed the 'wretched' Shona physique to poor diet as they ate

'only twice a day, morning and evening, with very little variety about their meals. Porridge made from mealies, kaffir corn, millet, and what they call *m[h]unga* cooked in the most primitive fashion, is their daily bread. The want of salt in their country and the nourishing popular kaffir beer though pleasant did not help 'their miserable condition of body.' 'Their faces are not altogether unpleasing; there is no fierce expression in them. On the contrary, many Europeans seem to have thought, from their calm and quiet expression, that the Mashonas are a very innocent people'<sup>91</sup>

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discourse' (p. 514). European ethnographic discourse or representations of non-Europeans tended to organise as a field – a conflictual symbolic space constructed on European claims to superiority. These claims often justified colonisation and informed colonial native policy. Just as colonialisms varied enormously, so did the 'mind of the coloniser' since Europeans themselves were divided by social class as well as ideological positions, which shaped their view of the colonies. (Steinmetz, See p. xix).

<sup>89</sup> A. Ross, *John Phillip, 1775-1851* (London, 1986), p.222.

<sup>90</sup> NAZ: 'The Mashonas', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 August 1893.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

But, Hartmann cautioned, they were a deceptive lot, never to be trusted. These comments must also be understood in the context of conflict as the rebellions of 1893 and 1896 were to prove.

Colonial sources were rarely interested in indigenous religion. Christian missionary sources tended to be dismissive of African religion while exaggerating the impact of Christianity. For instance, in 'History with a Mission: Abraham Kawadza and Narratives of Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe', Todd H. Leedy reviewed narratives given by missionaries of the Methodist mission in the Manicaland region of Zimbabwe showing how the story of one successful African convert, Abraham Kawadza, was used to exemplify positive missionary impact by exaggerating the impoverishment of African conditions. The use of the plough was scripted as moving Africans from hunger to prosperity, hunting to a successful sedentary life, the poverty of heathenism to the prosperity of abiding by Christian teachings.<sup>92</sup> Contrast this with a letter written to the Chief Native Commissioner at Salisbury by a M'rewas (Murewa) NC dated February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1898, which was before the conversion of Kawadza; 'The crops are looking splendid; I do not think the natives have had so good a season as the present one since we came to the country.'<sup>93</sup> And commenting on the economic condition of natives in the Mazoe district in Southern Rhodesia in a 31<sup>st</sup> December 1914 letter, NC Mr Drew noted that 'The natives may be said to be generally prosperous. They are generally getting over the inroads our laws have made in their own system. Some of their customs had of course to go or be modified as they could not run side by side with our laws.'<sup>94</sup> For Leedy, 'missionaries

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<sup>92</sup> Todd H. Leedy, 'History with a Mission: Abraham Kawadza and Narratives of Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe' in *History in Africa*, Vol. 33 (2006), pp. 255-270, p. 258.

<sup>93</sup> NAZ: NSI, 1/1/1, Letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, from a M'rewas NC, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1898, p.84.

<sup>94</sup> NAZ: NSH 3/1/1, Mazoe District: Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1914, p.8.

frequently attempted to script for themselves the central role as protagonists driving a story of progress and civilization' which made good fundraising back home.<sup>95</sup> Colonial sources, therefore, require some degree of exegesis.

While Africa seems to have received the brunt of prejudice and stereotyping, other parts of the colonised world were not exempt. In a study of the German colonies in China, Samoa and South West Africa (Namibia), George Steinmetz noted that: 'The dialectics of demonization underscore the blindness of most European perceptions of non-Europeans during the precolonial and colonial eras, their imperviousness to evidence that contradicted existing stereotypes.'<sup>96</sup> African religion was cast in a bad light to justify the imperative of evangelisation. Even the skin colour of its peoples was imbued with negative significance. Adrian Hastings read value in the use of 'black' for Africans and 'white' for Europeans. In evangelical parlance Africa was dark – in its ways, its history, its people, its being an unknown quantity. And 'Darkness and the devil went together.'<sup>97</sup> Prejudice was not only confined to writing, but translated into colonial policy, impacting directly on lived experiences. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, it dawned that Africa's history merited a more serious approach than previously, and it emerged as a separate academic discipline.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Leedy, 'History with a Mission,' p. 255.

<sup>96</sup> George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting* p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, p. 300.

<sup>98</sup> John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2007, p. 3. According to John Parker, African history as an academic discipline was launched in the 1950s. Glenn J. Ames, (Ed.) *European Expansion and Indigenous Responses* (Boston, 2010), p. vii. Glen Ames noted that there was an explosion of colonial studies emerging in the 1950s.

After the Second World War, secondary literature increased and appears to have taken a new and more balanced tone. Research in central Africa from the 1950s to the 1970s by Wim M.J. van Binsbergen in Zambia; Elizabeth Colston in the Zambezi valley amongst what she called the Gwembe Tonga from the 1950s; Kingsley G. Garbett's work in the mid Zambezi valley in the northeast of Zimbabwe from the 1950s; Matthew Schoffeleers' research in Malawi from the 1950s and Richard P. Werbner's research in Southern Rhodesia and across the boundaries with Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique, have provided more balanced texts on African traditional religion in the region.<sup>99</sup> Some of this scholarship was linked with the University of Rhodesia established in 1957 during the time of the Federation.<sup>100</sup> The various governments' native departments became important sponsors of research, focusing on ethnographies, clan histories and censuses for tax collection purposes, which later turned out to be the primary sources for historical studies. In the case of Southern Rhodesia, the Native Affairs department was considered so important that it was the prime ministers who directly oversaw it. As Sir Hugh Beadle, who held various high level portfolios in the colonial government between 1940 and 1961 observed in an interview, 'It [the Native Department] was regarded as the most important portfolio in the country and therefore the Prime Ministers ought to take it. They always did.'<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Richard P. Werbner, (ed.), *Regional Cults* (London, 1977). Schoffeleers, (Ed.), *Guardians of the Land*. van Binsbergen, *Religious Change*.

<sup>100</sup> The Federation of the British colonies of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) lasted for ten years from 1953 to 31 December 1963.

<sup>101</sup> NAZ: Oral/BE 2, Accession No. 118. Interviewer: D. Hartridge with The Rt. Hon. Sir Hugh Beadle (Born 1905- died, 14 December 1980). Transcriber: Mrs J. M. Macdonald. Interview held in April 1973. Place of interview: interviewee's office, High Court, Bulawayo. First Session 23 June 1972, 11.00am and Second session on 23 June 1972, 2.30p. Transcription p. 12. In 1939 he was returned as a United Party Member of Parliament. In 1940 he was made Parliamentary Secretary to the then Prime Minister where he took charge of the Native Affairs department on behalf of the Prime Minister. Between 1946 and 1950, he held portfolios of Minister of Justice, then Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Education and Minister of Health. In 1950 he was appointed High Court Judge becoming Chief Justice in 1961.



In Mozambique there also emerged a new crop of historians.<sup>102</sup> It was anthropologists who tended to pay attention to religion with historians lagging behind. But, when historians caught up, their research on religion tended to focus predominantly on Christianity which was experiencing phenomenal growth after the Second World War, emerging as one of the major themes in twentieth century African history.<sup>103</sup> But this was not just about missionary Christianity; there was a focus on the growing phenomenon of African forms of Christianity summed up in the term African Initiated Churches (AICs). It was in this context of accelerated Christian expansion that a conference on religious research, focusing on the AICS, was held at University College, Nairobi in 1967-1968.<sup>104</sup> Twenty-one leading scholars presented papers on the theme of 'African Initiatives in Religion' (a collection of which were later edited into a book by David Barrett).<sup>105</sup> The contributors were mainly clerical scholars who were alarmed at the rising tide of the AICs and anxious about the future of traditional mission churches: no AIC representatives attended. The dominance of Christianity in its various forms overshadowed scholarship on traditional African religion which was generally thought to be fading away.

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<sup>102</sup> 'The main contributions from the 1940s onwards came from E. Axelson, A. Lobato, M. Newitt, A. Isaacman, A. Alpers, D. Hedges, A. Rita-Ferreira, J. Penvenne, R. Plissier, J. Capela, L. Vail, and L. White. Authors of further important theses, articles, and contributions include N. R. Bennett, A. and I. Nogueira da Costa, J. K. Rennie, A. Rocha, Luis Covane, J.P. Borges Coelho, A. Chilundu, B. Dzimba, B. Isaacman, J. Moreira, E. Medeiros, K. Middlemas, S. Mudenge, M. Lobato, M. Leonor Correia de Matos, C. Montez, T. Henriksen etc.' (Gerhard Liesegang, David Beach (1943-1999): A Comment on His Career and Work, His Contribution to the History of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and on the "Local" Production of Knowledge, *History in Africa*, Vol. 28 (2001), pp. 385).

<sup>103</sup> David Barrett, *Schism and renewal in Africa: an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements* (Nairobi, Oxford, 1968)

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

It was Terence O. Ranger who shifted the perspective and sharpened the interest in African religion in the 1970s. Ranger introduced themes such as the traditional religious basis of colonial resistance, colonial protest in religious movements and the ‘persistence and resilience of African religious institutions’ despite the imposition of colonial rule and Christianity.<sup>106</sup> His views, however, on the role of religious leaders in the 1896-7 rebellion, and the credibility of his interpretation of their roles in traditional Shona (and Ndebele) politics were challenged by David Beach, Julian Cobbing and Richard Werbner. After sparking this debate with his *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* of 1967, he had to acknowledge his oversights a decade later in his revised 1979 paperback edition.<sup>107</sup> That notwithstanding, his co-authored publication, *The Historical Study of African Religion*, with Kimambo remained the culmination of efforts to place traditional African religion on a firm historical footing in its own right.<sup>108</sup> On another front van Binsbergen condensed his many essays written over a decade into his *Religious Change in Zambia* (1981). This scholarship achieved the important goal of injecting a historical dimension to what was hitherto, a hardly understood phenomenon perceived as a ‘timeless’ flux of disparate African religious cults. Following Ranger, and under his influence, a new generation of scholars emerged addressing themes of religious encounter beyond the singular focus on Christianity.<sup>109</sup>

Christianity was no longer considered the sole player in the changing religious landscape of Southern and Central Africa. Colonial policies and the adaptive forces

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<sup>106</sup> T.O. Ranger and I. N. Kimambo (Eds.), *The Historical Study of African Religion: With Special Reference to East and Central Africa* (London, 1972), p. 15.

<sup>107</sup> Ranger, T. O., *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7* (London, 1979), p. ix-xvi.

<sup>108</sup> Ranger and Kimambo (Eds.), *The Historical Study of African Religion*.

<sup>109</sup> Examples include David Maxwell’s *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*.

in ancestral religion were recognised as key factors.<sup>110</sup> In *Marriage, Pervasion and Power*, Diana Jeater has shown how the British pioneer column upon crossing the Limpopo was driven not only by economic reasons but by a moral mission to ‘civilise’ and ostensibly to protect the Africans from un-Christian European rivals over whom Britain claimed moral superiority based on a track record of her past achievements and the nobility of her global mission.<sup>111</sup> Her well-articulated account recognises the forces of local in the encounter with the colonial ideological machinery as well as the changing constructions of gender and sexuality.

Because of the apparent success of the colonial project in Africa, symbolised by the Europeanisation of the landscape in terms of law, language, culture and consciousness, one barometer being the increasing conversions to Christianity, Robin Horton attributed the appeal of Christianity and Islam to the faster pace of the spread of new interpersonal networks over the localised clan and kinship based solidarities rooted in common ancestors, the annual agricultural cycle and the immediate political order.<sup>112</sup> He argued that Christianity and Islam were acceptable because they reinforced changes already underway. Ranger was more cautious and announced a rather varied response to the missionary message throughout central and southern Africa. Colson decided that among the Tonga and possibly elsewhere, African religion lost out to Christianity because of the diminished power of elders, the traditional custodians of knowledge, when their children and grandchildren overtook them in knowledge of how the new world worked to meet survival needs. Such knowledge undermined the credibility and the traditions of the elders. In other words, ‘Loss of authority with respect to secular knowledge has been accompanied

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<sup>110</sup> The work of the Commaroffs, Paul Landau, Diana Jeater, and David Maxwell testify to this.

<sup>111</sup> Jeater, *Marriage Pervasion and Power*.

<sup>112</sup> Horton, ‘African Conversion’, p. 85-105.

by loss of authority in other fields.’<sup>113</sup> However this view overlooked the cultural embeddedness of African religion, the varied responses and the power of continuities in spite of the new knowledge. Paradoxically she admitted the resurgence of witchcraft related practices in the twentieth century among the Tonga where the old spirits and ancestors were now back as ‘demons’, a term borrowed from Christian parlance. *Leza*, the *chiTonga* Supreme Being was now identified with the Christian God.

Shula Marks’ idea that the colonial encounter in southern Africa was characterized by ‘continuities and disjuncture’ appears to have been true of the religious changes in much of Central Africa and the mid Zambezi in particular.<sup>114</sup> The erosion of traditional religion, according to anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff, was the result of a deeper psychic shift. They saw the Christian religion as the soul of the western world view, imposed on Africa in the colonial era through evangelization – as a kind of ‘colonisation of consciousness.’<sup>115</sup> This theory implied a strategic alliance of the colonial powers and missionary Christianity, but it overlooked their often widely conflicting interests, heterogeneity and autonomy. The reality on the ground was that Africans were identifying new opportunities, forging new alliances and creating new mechanisms to meet their interests and to preserve their religious traditions. The present study shows the strength of those ‘continuities’. The argument of Gayatri Spivak that the historical and long term effects of colonial rule

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<sup>113</sup> Colson, *Tonga Religious Life in the Twentieth Century*, p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence: Class, Nationalism and the State in Twentieth-century Natal* (London, 1986), pp. 4-7.

<sup>115</sup> Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol II (Chicago, 1997), p. 34.

were irreversible, while in many respects true, has the danger of implying a static, timeless set of features as the defining characteristics of African religions.<sup>116</sup>

The study closest to the present one is that of David Maxwell on the Hwesa of North Eastern Rhodesia.<sup>117</sup> In *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*, Maxwell addresses questions similar to those asked in the present study. He focuses on encounters between mission Christianities with each other and with African traditional culture and religion on the one hand, and the contact of colonial state institutions with Hwesa political and religious institutions on the other. Apart from being in a different geographical area, the key similarities with the present study remain; traditional African religion receives greater attention, Christianity is treated homogeneously even though Catholicism receives greater focus because it was prominent in the area of this study, particularly on the Mozambique side of the border; and the trans-frontier conditions of the mid Zambezi are viewed as a key factor in mitigating religious change particularly in defining identities. Maxwell focused on Christianity and Chieftainship, whereas the present study focuses more on Christianity and Traditional Religion putting them at par. The present study argues that Christianity, though growing fast in some areas, remained a minority religion in the mid Zambezi thus allowing for the continued dominance of traditional ancestral religion. Moreover, apart from the Christian missions being far apart and the colonial marginalisation of the area, traditional religion was so culturally embedded as to require a deeper cultural realignment to die out. By 1970 that stage had not yet been reached. This point comes out more forcefully in the oral sources of local informants who tended to be sympathetic to ancestral religion because they

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<sup>116</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, 1999).

<sup>117</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*.

practiced it or aspects of it alongside their Christianity, which they encountered particularly at the old mission schools.

## **Oral Sources**

On the assumption that oral sources, extrapolated backwards, supplement other evidence, a total of 103 interviews were conducted in the mid Zambezi valley and elsewhere as shown in the map on Figure: 2 above. Only those interviews that proved directly useful and relevant to this study have been listed in the sources and bibliographical section of this study. The interviews were conducted in two main phases. The first phase was during the field work trip of 2011-12 mainly in Mozambique's Tete Province and in the cities of Beira and Maputo where there are large diasporas of people originally from Tete. The interviews were carried out in the local *chiNyungwe* and Portuguese, languages in which the author is conversant. In Tete province, the field work trip to Chipembere some 80 kilometres west of Tete acquainted the author with the settlements of Mpadwe, Mafilipa, Matambo, Missawa, Nvuze, Mazoe, Chitondo, Kayaya, Demera, Birira and Chipembere. Informants told the author that from Chipembere to Chioko near the border with Zimbabwe, the dirt road continued from Chipembere to Kangudzi, Nyabzigogodze, Chivhinge, Kando, Nkomasha, Nyakatope, Mtangwe and then Chioko. From Chioko it was about twenty-five kilometres to Dzenga, from where one can cross the Ruia River into Zimbabwe. As of 2011, there were no Christian missions along this route but there were African Initiated Churches. One informant said that in 2006 an attempt was made to establish a Catholic outstation, but it was soon abandoned.<sup>118</sup> The nearest Christian mission nominally serving the area was Marara, founded on 20

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<sup>118</sup> Interview with *Secretario de Bairro* at Chipembere in Tete on 3 July 2012.

August 1947.<sup>119</sup> The 135 km trip from Tete to Songo along the tarred road covered the settlements of Mafilipa, Matambo, Kapinga, Chakalanga, Nyabulebule, Mufa, Njuga Nyakapende, Mushamba, Chimunda, Marara, Catacha, Chilodzi, Kabvulantsiye, Crusamento de Songo, Estima, Malowera and then Songo, the small town servicing the Cahora Bassa hydro-power station. From Songo to Nyambando was an additional 70 km stretch through elephant territory. All the interviewees here spoke *chiNyungwe* and many understood Portuguese. Casual conversations in dusty streets confirmed that there were fixed ‘places’ that were used for indigenous religious rituals. Prolonged conversations revealed an underlying belief bordering on conviction on the efficacy of taboos, the ‘intelligence’ of animals and a real fear of spirit forces.

It must be acknowledged that the relative vastness of the area under study imposed limitations in the collection of data through these interviews. Local communities tended to have their own particular renditions of their past and even variations in religious practices. To interview each and every community would have been a task demanding more time and material resources than was possible within the scope of this study. For the interviews carried out, apart from a few enthusiastic informers who were keen to exhibit their knowledge of their practices and their past, many interviewees needed more time to open up. Some informers were interviewed more than once.

On the Zimbabwe side of the border, during the course of this first phase of interviews, visits were restricted to the Mashonaland central province in farms and

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<sup>119</sup> Pinheiro, Faisco Maria, *Anuário Católico de Moambique 1961, (Primeiro Ano De Publicação)*, Loureno Marques.

mines, at Mutoko, Murewa, Goromonzi and Harare, the capital. Some interviews were conducted in Bulawayo where the author followed the Nyungwe speaking diaspora. Here, the languages used apart from Nyungwe included English, Shona and Ndebele.<sup>120</sup> All the interviews were digitally recorded and some were later transcribed.

The second phase of the interviews was from July 2014 to February 2015 to fill in gaps left by the first field trips. During this phase the focus was on the Zimbabwe side of the border closer to the Zambezi River. The author found a base at St Raphael's Chitsungo Catholic mission which serviced the whole area to the Zambezi River settlements. Later he moved to St Albert's Mission which was near the long established Evangelical Karanda Mission in the heart of Mashonaland Central Province. These missions were near the border with Mozambique and, because of resource limitations, the author could not travel far beyond the mission precincts. To solve this problem, institutional contacts were used to invite interviewees to the mission. The group interviews allowed for mutual corrections of fact amongst the interviewees themselves who demonstrated a remarkable knowledge of the valley peoples, customs, chieftaincies and religious beliefs and practices. They knew the historic relationships between the chiefs and their neighbours right into Mozambique. All the interviews were conducted by the author. The only interviews by others were those from the Oral History Collection at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ). Six such interviews proved useful to bridge some gaps and add to the sources. The interviews of spirit mediums (called *mhondoro*) conducted in the late 1970s and 1980s by Dawson Munjeri proved to be particularly useful. .

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<sup>120</sup> The author is fluent in these languages.



As with colonial sources, oral sources presented their own set of problems. These ranged from mixing myth and fact, lack of consistency, confusion of historic personalities, anachronisms and exaggerations, bending the story to justify clan or lineage interests, to the minor errors of translation and spellings when it came to the oral history collections. The collation of versions of a story and the variation in sources with ‘some say’, meant there was no single story.<sup>121</sup> For instance, in a transcribed interview conducted by Dawson Munjeri in 1982, names were changed in the case of the Chundu people who used two totems, Shava Mufakose (eland) and Nyongo (hyena). In the transcription, Nyongo appears in three different spellings; ‘Nyongo’, ‘Nyango’, and ‘Nyangu’ all appearing on the same page.<sup>122</sup> For one already familiar with the local language, it was easy to rectify such typographical errors which could be confusing for a researcher who is not familiar with the language. It is in instances such as these that the author’s familiarity with the local languages proved useful. This was possible in the case of Zimbabwe but not of Mozambique where the author was unable to find an oral history collection of interviews covering Tete province in the *Arquivo Historico de Mocambique* in Maputo.

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<sup>121</sup> (AOH/77, Interview on 25 June 1982 with Chief Noah Chundu in Mukwichi Communal Land-Hurungwe, by Dawson Munjeri, p. 9-14). In the same interview Chief Noah Chundu spoke of Chimombe’s ancestors arriving in the Zambezi valley as four men and three sisters. The men were Morora, Katenda, Kairora and Ndoture. The sisters were Tiza, Katepera and Chiumbire. Upon arrival they found ‘the Mbarra, Doma and the Bushmen’ [?]. The sisters are said to have married locally, but because the local Mbarra, Doma and Bushman were looked down upon, subsequently Chief Chundu chose to say of their male ancestors ‘all died without wives but it was the sisters who got married.’ But married to whom? Chief Chundu then said they married ‘brothers from the same family’ without explaining and then jumps to say they married hunters from Chiweshe whose totem was Shava eland whose praise name was Mufakose of the Hwata lineage. The specifics sounded very improbable. Asked what happened to the four brothers, the answer was ‘They all passed away.’ But Chief Chundu goes on to say there is ‘some history about Chimombe’ himself who had ‘sons-in-law’. The story lines are similar but the detail tends to vary widely.

<sup>122</sup> NAZ: AOH/77, Interview on 25 June 1982 with Chief Noah Chundu in Mukwichi Communal Land-Hurungwe, by Dawson Munjeri, p. 34.

## Conclusion

Religious change did not mean the demise of traditional religion which continued to adapt to the changing economic, social and political environment as the following five chapters will seek to demonstrate. Chapter one will focus on the background political and religious authority of nineteenth century mid Zambezi in order to establish a perspective for change. In the case of the mid Zambezi, the Mwene Mutapa state was a critical factor in the evolution of the *mhondoro* royal religious system. Chapter two will analyse the impact of missionary education in changing the religious landscape, particularly after the initial resistance by local chiefs and headmen had broken down. The introduction of literacy challenged the older system of education and eroded its assumptions which hitherto had supported the rule of chiefs, elders and traditional religion. These structures were further undermined by ‘educated’ elites who had no stake in the traditional political and religious structures. Chapter three will show how layered identities impacted on religious change with the colonial border separating Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa being a key shaper and symbol in the creation of new identities, with migration sharpening the sense of ‘us and them’. Chapter four will continue with the change in religious landscape occasioned by labour, migration and monetisation from the 1940s to the 1960s. It will show how migrants adapted their religious beliefs in new circumstances and innovated ideas and practices showing that traditional religions were not rigid but flexible and open to change. Finally, chapter five will underline the resilience of traditional religion from the mid twentieth century, characterised by plurality and expression in new associations and organisations. Continuities were evident in the schema of the sacralisation of time which was still based on the agricultural cycle, burial and marriage protocols.

## Chapter 1

### **The roots of nineteenth century mid Zambezi political and religious authority**

Recent scholarship has established that pre-colonial African societies lived in loosely bounded polities that varied in size and organisational complexity.<sup>1</sup> Coextensive with these polities were other territorial domains described by scholars as ‘spirit provinces’ whose boundaries generally coincided with the limits of individual chieftaincies or groups of chieftaincies.<sup>2</sup> The idea of ‘spirit province’ attempted to explain the geographical diffusion of related cultic practices as well as the territorial superintendence of the spirit mediums of founding ancestors called *mhondoro* (Shona) or *mphondolo* (Nyungwe). The overlap of the ‘chiefdoms’ and the ‘spirit provinces’, their distinctiveness and symbiosis, constitute the basis of the political and religious authority of the mid Zambezi in the nineteenth century. The Mwene Mutapa state that was in existence by the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a land mark in the evolution of both political and religious authority in the case of the mid Zambezi.<sup>3</sup>

Since the traditional religion of the mid Zambezi is rooted in ancestral clan founders, this chapter examines the roots of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Vansina, *How Societies Are Born: Governance in West Central Africa Before 1600*. (Charlottesville, Virginia, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Schoffeleers, J. Matthew, (Editor), *Guardians of the Land, Essays on Central African Territorial Cults* (Gweru, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> The Mwene Mutapa state has received much attention in early Portuguese documents and subsequent secondary literature, notably: Abraham, ‘The Monomotapa Dynasty’; D. N. Beach, ‘The Mutapa Dynasty: A Comparison of Documentary and Traditional Evidence’ in *History in Africa*, Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 1-17; W. G. L. Randles, *The Empire of Monomotapa* (Gweru, 1981); S. I. G. Mudenge, *A Political History of Munhumutapa c. 1400-1902* (Harare, 1988).

political and religious structures as it is these structures that made the first encounters with colonial rule and missionary Christianity. Large scale precolonial states of southern and central Africa were the exception rather than the rule.<sup>4</sup> The *mhondoro* religious system prevalent in the mid Zambezi was linked to local royalty. Since the various groups that populated the mid-Zambezi speak Bantu languages, a review of how the Bantu established themselves in southern Africa provides a background to understanding the genesis of political and religious authority in the region. It also provides the basis for explanations of the shared linguistic and cultural affinities that characterise the mid Zambezi population. Informants in the mid Zambezi valley still speak of their origins in a manner reminiscent of how professional historians have mapped their southward migrations to their present areas.<sup>5</sup> But the interviews also showed the complex mix of groups that at various times came into the region, casting the region as particularly heterogeneous. Secondary sources have pieced together primary material to give a broad outline of how Bantu speakers ended up in southern Africa: the following section summarises some of these findings.

## **Population movements, state building and the Mwene Mutapa**

The current understanding of African pre-history is that the vast majority of people who live in southern Africa today were formed in the same crucible in the northern

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<sup>4</sup> John Iliffe has noted that population densities in certain areas such as Luba Lunda, Maravi, Mapungubwe, Khami and Great Zimbabwe led to the emergence of complex social organisations that were not the norm in Central and Southern Africa: John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Group interview with Chief Chitsungu and his headmen at Chitsungu Catholic Mission on 11 October 2014. Headman Mandombe, Expense Masiyambiri Gwaze, spokesman of the Headmen, (born 1943, totem *mutupo*, Moyo Ndizvo), traced the origins of his people to modern day Tanzania. While *Sabhuku* Hwingwiri, Tichadini Hwingwiri, (born 1941, totem *mutupo*, Musoni, Nzou), claimed ‘We were originally Jews, we are *vaRemba*, you may have heard of Jews who are dark skinned. It is us. We came from the Middle East. We migrated to Yemen, then to Kenya and then we build Sena, not the Sena in Mozambique, but another one up north.’

latitudes of the continent and they are related, linguistically, culturally and biologically.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, their ancestors clustered somewhere in the then fertile but now barren Sahara Desert between about 5000 BC and 2500 BC according to Kopytoff.<sup>7</sup> The Bantu group appears to have been the most successful in breaking out to colonise the central and southern parts of Africa.

According to John Iliffe, the Bantu first arrived in the Great Lakes region of equatorial Africa at the beginning of the first millennium BC from the west of the continent.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps owing to their new way of life and a richer diet, their population increased rapidly, eclipsing that of the host Nilo-Saharan-speakers such that by the turn of the first millennium AD the entire Great Lakes region was colonized by agriculturalists who were predominantly Bantu-speakers. Here they presumably acquired iron-working skills and the related vocabulary and became associated with ironworking, cultivation of sorghum and millet, the domestication of goats and cattle as well as a type of pottery classified as Urewe.<sup>9</sup> It is these features that have enabled archaeologists to trace their subsequent migration patterns and settlements southwards.

From the Great Lakes region, two migratory patterns seem to have emerged: one was easterly into Tanzania and northern Mozambique, which turned southwards following the Indian Ocean coast; and the other was a southerly expansion towards the upper Zambezi Valley which happened from around the second century BC.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Igor Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, (Bloomington, 1989), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

From the upper Zambezi valley, there appears to have been another south-easterly movement into modern day Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe and a westward expansion towards modern day Angola. By the second century AD, the Bantu speakers who had struck eastwards towards modern day Tanzania seem to have moved quite rapidly down the coast to reach modern day Maputo and, following the Indian Ocean littoral, penetrated as far south as the Kei River in what is now South Africa where they met with the longer established Khoisan peoples. These Bantu-speakers were the ancestors of the modern Nguni (Zulu, Ndebele, Swazi, Xhosa, etc.) and Sotho-Tswana peoples of South Africa. The click sounds in their modern languages are thought to have been adopted from the Khoisan peoples they found in the region.<sup>11</sup> Such clicks are conspicuously absent amongst the Bantu languages of central Africa and the region of the Zambezi valley.

Around 200 AD there was evidence of Bantu speaking people in the Victoria Falls area of modern-day Zambia as well as across the Zambezi River in modern-day Zimbabwe.<sup>12</sup> Here again they encountered the Khoisan, especially to the west in Botswana, Namibia and the western regions of South Africa. By about 500 AD, Bantu settlers in southern Africa began to exhibit tendencies of returning to former sites that had been previously abandoned, presumably because of repeated cultivation and temporary loss of soil fertility. Such tendencies resulted in the formation of more permanent settlements and the emergence of more complex political arrangements.<sup>13</sup> A settled lifestyle required resources of water, pasture and land for cultivation to sustain a growing population. These factors led to social

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<sup>11</sup> Ngwabi Bhebhe, (ed.) *Oral Tradition in Southern Africa* (Windhoek, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 36 and see also discussion by J. Desmond Clarke, 'African Prehistory: Opportunities for Collaboration between Archaeologists, Ethnographers and Linguists,' in D. Dalby (ed.), *Language and History in Africa* (London, 1970), pp. 1-19.

<sup>13</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 36.

organizational challenges which led to more elaborate political formations, as well as conflicts and departures from kin. The formations of the Shona related polities of Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and, later, the Mwene Mutapa to the south of the Zambezi must be understood in this context. It is perhaps worth noting that these and other 'Shona' polities, like the Kongo and Lunda to the north of the Zambezi, were singular social organisational achievements in a sub-continent that was otherwise dominated by small scale socio-political units.<sup>14</sup>

According to Stan Mudenge, the Shona-speaking peoples arrived around 1000 AD in present day Zimbabwe from the Shaba region of the modern-day Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>15</sup> They populated the area around and between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers, bounded to the east by the Indian Ocean and to the west by the Kalahari Desert.<sup>16</sup> For lack of sources, names of leaders of these early migrations are not given. But there is a rather unorthodox source used by Aeneas Chigwedere which, while eschewing specific dates, actually names the ancestors to the peoples now called the Shona found in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and adjacent countries.<sup>17</sup>

Chigwedere consulted Shona ancestors through spirit mediums to construct the patterns of Bantu migration and settlement in Southern Africa. While Chigwedere's account is fraught with difficulties related to periodization due to his methodology

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<sup>14</sup> David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (eds.), *History of Central Africa, Volume One* (London, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> This is the position of Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, quoting R. Summers, 'The Rhodesian Iron Age' in J. D. Fage and R. A. Oliver (eds), *Papers in African Prehistory* (London, 1970), p. 164; T. N. Huffman, 'Prehistory-Iron Age, Ruins Period', *Rhodesiana*, 29, (1973), p. 10 and 22. Chigwedere also takes this position and further claims that this group eventually comprised 85% of the Shona population of Zimbabwe.

<sup>16</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> A. S. Chigwedere, *Birth of Bantu Africa* (Bulawayo, 1982). He wrote, 'It is largely through African religion that we will be able to unearth our history, just as it is largely through Shona religion that I have been able to unearth Shona history. African religion is not independent of African history.' See p. ii.

and sources, the merit of his work lies in providing the only clues in written literature to the possible links between named ancestral spirits, their mediums, totems and the religious networks that spanned the region. There are some parallels between his spirit medium-based hypotheses and what has been established by other scholarship based on archaeological findings. He identified three groups he called 'Great Bantu Families'; the Dziva-Hungwe, the Tonga and the Soko-Mbire, who left the Great East-African Lakes to settle in south and central Africa in successive waves respectively. While Illife and Birmingham date the arrival of the Bantu into the Zambezi region of central Africa around the second century AD, Chigwedere locates their arrival half a millennium later. He then distinguishes the Bantu from the earlier non-Khoisan and non-Bantu people calling them 'Negroes', meaning dark skinned, rather than Bantu.

He claimed that the Dziva-Hungwe group was the first Bantu group to occupy modern Zimbabwe sometime between 700 and 800 AD. This group identified itself with water and aquatic animals and plants and so chose totems related to water creatures, such as *hove* (fish), *ngwena* (crocodile) and *dziva* or *siziba* (pool). The Dziva-Hungwe group was descended from a man called Dzivaguru and his son Karuva, ancestors of the Dziva-Hungwe clans concentrated in the Mount Darwin and Zambezi Valley areas. The Korekore and Tavana claim descent from these two great ancestors. It is also these two groups who were most closely associated with the Nyungwe-speakers of the mid Zambezi.<sup>18</sup> If this claim is true, then the Dzivaguru and Karuva cluster of beliefs is more ancient than the *mhondoro* system which

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<sup>18</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 24, 33 claimed that the Tavana were autochthonous to the Zambezi Valley but were subjected to Mutapa rule.



Mudenge claimed reached its peak at the height of the Mwene Mutapa state which flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

In Chigwedere's scheme, the second Bantu family was the Tonga who occupied the area covering modern Zambia and Malawi and north-western Mozambique, in the modern Tete province. Alan K. Smith suggested that the Tonga were probably the earliest inhabitants, who at one time may have inhabited most of central and southern Mozambique.<sup>19</sup> Chigwedere insists they were in the region by 900 AD and are the ancestors of the Chewa and Nyanja-speaking people in that region. They were distinguished by their matrilineal kinship system.<sup>20</sup>

The third group, which subsequently comprised about 85 per cent of the Shona-speakers in modern day Zimbabwe, was the Soko-Mbire group founded by Murenga, which arrived around 1000 AD. Members of this clan identified themselves with land animals and were called 'masters of the land'.<sup>21</sup> They were distinguished by their choice of land animals for their totems, such as *soko* (monkey), *gudo* (baboon), *nzou* (elephant), *mhofu* (eland) and so on. Chigwedere claimed that this last group to arrive in the region subdued the earlier Dziva-Hunge and Tonga settlers. It was to the Soko-Mbire group that the great Shona ancestors Mbire, Murenga, Chaminuka, Mutota and Nehanda belonged. They are revered as national ancestral spirits and the religious networks of the *mhondoro* system were structured around them. Mbire, Murenga and his son Chaminuka are said to have never crossed the Zambezi.<sup>22</sup> And their remains are said to lie in Tanganyika (now Tanzania). The term *tanga nyika*

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<sup>19</sup> Alan K. Smith, 'The Indian Ocean Zone', in Birmingham and Martin, *History of Central Africa, Volume I*, (London, New York, 1983), p. 208.

<sup>20</sup> Chigwedere, *Birth of Bantu Africa*, p. 32-33.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Chigwedere, *Birth of Bantu Africa*, p. 33.

itself is a meaningful Shona term meaning ‘where the country begins’. Interviews carried out by the present author in the mid Zambezi supported the Tanganyika origins.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, the ancestral *mhondoro* belief networks must have been developed by Bantu speaking migrants of the later Iron Age, c. 1000 AD. This could be one explanation of why the ancestral religion of the mid Zambezi shared common features with other Bantu belief systems across a wide area of southern and central Africa. But more than that, it supports Igor Kopytoff’s frontier theory of the emergence of traditional African societies. According to Kopytoff, the striking cultural similarities amongst African societies that are widespread across the southern half of the continent arise from the common origin of these societies in the recent past from some area around the northern half of the continent,<sup>24</sup> an ancestral ‘hearth’ of African culture after the desiccation of the Saharan Sahel c. 2500 BC. Kopytoff’s theory sheds light on the questions that Jan Vansina also raised on the striking common view of the universe and the common political ideology throughout Central Africa that was evident in 1850 when greater knowledge of the region was growing.<sup>25</sup> Alongside cultural affinities were the religious affinities and networks which Matthew J. Schoffeleers observed were connected over a wide area of the sub-continent.<sup>26</sup> Specific forms such as the *mhondoro*, *malombo* and the *mahamba* mentioned in the introduction were local variations of a widely shared Bantu religious culture rooted in ancestral spirits called, *mizimu* or *vadzimu*.

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<sup>23</sup> Group interviews carried out at St Raphael’s Mission at Chitsungu on 11 October 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Kopytoff, *African Frontier*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Vansina, ‘Deep-down Time: Political Tradition in Central Africa’, in *History in Africa*, Vol. 16 (1989), pp. 341-362.

<sup>26</sup> Schoffeleers, (ed.), *Guardians of the Land* p. 24.

Great Zimbabwe which flourished on the Rhodesian plateau from around the late thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries was the work of these Bantu migrants. It shared the same culture of cattle-keeping that also developed around the Leopard's Kopje area near present-day Bulawayo.<sup>27</sup> The Leopard's Kopje people practiced agriculture and soon developed the technology of stone terracing as a farming method. This culture spread southwards towards the Limpopo River where it became the foundation of the settlement of Mapungubgwe in the Limpopo valley in present-day South Africa. Great Zimbabwe emerged to be by far the richest and most elaborate state system. Its growth was enhanced by trade in gold and contacts with the Indian Ocean trade networks of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but agriculture remained its mainstay.<sup>28</sup> It appears that at some point there was a reorientation of the gold trade towards the Zambezi valley, a major source of salt. This reorientation has been cited as one of the reasons for the decline of Great Zimbabwe. This factor, combined with the proximity of the mid Zambezi to other east African trade routes, led to the evolution of a new, rival state, possibly initiated by Great Zimbabwe merchants. That new state was the Mwene Mutapa.

David Beach has suggested that the Mwene Mutapa state began as a branch of Great Zimbabwe which it then eclipsed to become the new regional powerhouse.<sup>29</sup> If, as Birmingham observed, state formations resulted from the twinning of 'power, religion and wealth', then the *mhondoro* religious networks developed in the context of the Mutapa state system whose rulers were venerated. And if such an elaborate religious system depended on the state, then it would appear that it was a novelty in

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<sup>27</sup> David Birmingham 'Society and Economy Before A.D. 1400' in D. Birmingham and P. M. Martin, (eds.) *History of Central Africa*, Vol. I (London, New York, 1983), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> David N. Beach, *Zimbabwe before 1900* (Gweru, 1984), p. 27.

the family of Bantu ancestral religious systems in sub-Saharan Africa because there were few such states.<sup>30</sup> Mudenge observed that in the Mutapa state, 'spirit possession and ancestor veneration were raised to incredible heights in the form of royal *mhondoro* cults'.<sup>31</sup> The Mwene Mutapa and its *mhondoro* religion caught the attention of the Portuguese when they arrived in the region during the sixteenth century. They have left us an invaluable record of both local religion and other groups found in the Zambezi basin region.<sup>32</sup>

Peoples of Arab and Asian origin had reached Tete before the Portuguese, perhaps not long after the Mbire-Soko began to dominate the Zambezi valley and the Zimbabwean plateau.<sup>33</sup> This could be one reason why the Portuguese found a fairly well established mercantile trading system between the inland polities and the coastal settlements between Africans and immigrant Asians. The coastal settlement of Sofala for instance is said to have been ruled by a certain Sheik Issuf at the close of the fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> However, Asian influence was generally limited to coastal regions. Traders established kinship ties with the local African rulers and clans through marriage. But there is as yet no evidence of these Arab and Asian traders planting any permanent political or religious institutions in the Zambezi valley. Their interest seems to have been limited to trade.

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<sup>30</sup> Birmingham, 'Society and Economy', p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, the records of Andrada, J. C. Paiva de. *Relatorio de uma Viagem ás Terras do Changamira* (Lisboa: Nacional 1886).

<sup>33</sup> Eric Axelson, *Portuguese in South-East Africa, 1488-1600* (Johannesburg, 1973), p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31, Also written as Shaik Yusuf.

## The Mwene Mutapa state in the middle Zambezi valley

Stan Mudenge gives a rather polished picture of the Mutapa state which David Beach has questioned. Mudenge was writing at a time of euphoria following the attainment of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 and was probably anxious to portray the new Zimbabwe as a successor state to pre-colonial African great states. According to Mudenge, the first *Mwene Mutapa* and founder of the Mutapa Empire was Mutota who was also known as Nyatsimba or Nemasengere.<sup>35</sup> He presided over a society that was hierarchically organised according to the *imba*, the structures of a nuclear family, *musha*, the village of the extended family, *dunhu*, a ward consisting of a number of villages and the *nyika*, a chiefdom, kingdom or country.<sup>36</sup> Mutota is thought to have been a descendent of the rulers of Great Zimbabwe. Mwene Mutapa, rendered 'Monomotapa' by the Portuguese, was the title given to the supreme ruler of the conquering kingdom by the conquered northern Shona of the Zambezi valley. *Mwene*, which means 'owner', is derived from northern Shona. *Mwene Mutapa* is arguably the correct rendering, whereas *Munhu Mutapa*, popularized by Mudenge is not sustainable.<sup>37</sup> According to Mudenge, at its height the Mutapa kingdom was a sophisticated political and economic entity. The imperial court at the capital was called a 'zimbabwe', literally meaning 'big house of stone'.<sup>38</sup> It was replete with its chief ministers, generals of the army, stewards, treasurers, bodyguards, musicians, dancers, jesters, pages, cooks, priests/mediums, medicine men and women and royal

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<sup>35</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 9-20.

<sup>37</sup> Portuguese documents speak of the 'Monomotapa' and the 'Mocaranga' kingdoms. Since the Mwene Mutapa existed in an area where the local languages, Korekore, Tawara, Nyungwe and Cewa all recognise the meaning of *mwene*, it is more probable that the correct version is *Mwene Mutapa* and not *munhumutapa* which has a forced ring to it. Mudenge, being Karanga himself, may have been uncomfortable with *mwene* which sounded foreign to standard Shona.

<sup>38</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p.77.

wives.<sup>39</sup> The Mutapa dynasty ‘consolidated its power by taking advantage of the decentralized nature of northern Tavara/Tonga groups.’<sup>40</sup>

The ruling dynasty, of the Nzou-Samanyanga (elephant) totem, appears to have expanded its rule through what Gerald Mazarire has described as ‘the *nyai* processes’ or clientelism. *Mu-nyai* is the Shona term for emissary.<sup>41</sup> Through a wide range of clienteleships with the local Tavara and Tonga the Nzou-Samanyanga dynasty spread its influence over a large area of the Zambezi valley up to Tete and beyond, with the Korekore dialect becoming a distinctive part of the state. Theoretically, much of central Mozambique to the sea fell under the influence of the Mwene Mutapa. This clienteleship was difficult to sustain such that by the mid-1500s, the Mutapa had ‘more powerful rebels than he could possibly have managed.’<sup>42</sup> Even in the heartlands of the Mutapa, its capital shifted from place to place within the mid Zambezi. According to João Dos Santos’ 1609 description, a separate kingdom emerged at Chicova ‘which borders the kingdom of Monomotapa’, where the Zambezi River bends from its easterly direction to a south-easterly flow. The ‘Kingdom of Chikova was greatly renowned for its mines of fine silver which follow the course of the Zambezi’.<sup>43</sup> With the rise of Barwe to the south of Tete and Nyamunda in the Manyika region, it could hardly be said that the Mutapa state was the stable powerful monolithic empire that it is sometimes portrayed as; rather it was a constantly shifting political formation in both its influence and its borders. The

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<sup>39</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 84-110.

<sup>40</sup> G. C. Mazarire, ‘Reflections on Pre-Colonial Zimbabwe, c. 850-1880s’ in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe* (eds.), (Harare, Johannesburg, 2009), p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Maugham, *Zambezia*, p. 29.

persistent challenges to it testify to this state of affairs. The Changamire challenge appears to have been a most significant one.

The revolt of Changamire in 1693 against Mutapa authority shifted the centre of power, marking the end of the pre-1700 highland phase of the state.<sup>44</sup> The Mutapa rulers were driven further north and east into the arid Zambezi valley and towards Tete, while the new Changamire Torwa state extended westwards and southwards of present day Zimbabwe. The king, *mambo*, of the Changamire state ruled the country called Abutua by the Portuguese in former times, a name which appears in Antonio Fernandes' explorations of the interior captured in a 1515 or 1516 document.<sup>45</sup> There it appears to have eclipsed the Rozvi state which had moved west from Great Zimbabwe and established a capital near Khami where the present day Khami Ruins in Bulawayo are located.<sup>46</sup> According to Mudenge, around the close of the seventeenth century, the Mutapa state had become one of at least seven distinct Shona kingdoms between the Zambezi River in the north and the Limpopo River in the south.<sup>47</sup>

Mudenge identified the *mhondoro* as one of the three pillars of the Mutapa state, the other two being the army and foreign diplomacy.<sup>48</sup> This identification of the *mhondoro* religious system with the state is central to the argument of this chapter, namely that, the *mhondoro* acquired its distinctive characteristics within the context of the Mutapa state of which it was a constitutive part. Moreover the integrative nature of African traditional religions favours the collapse of boundaries between

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<sup>44</sup> Beach, Mapondera, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p.26.

<sup>47</sup> Mudenge, *Muhnumutapa*, p. xxv.

<sup>48</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 119.

politics and religion. If Birmingham's and Mudenge's assessment of the centrality of religion at the Mutapas' court is correct, then it is here that we can locate the genesis of the typically Zambezian *mhondoro* system, its preoccupation with guiding temporal power, its territoriality and the claim to royal ancestral power. The more widely venerated spirits in the mid Zambezi are those of personalities who lived prior to the founding of the Mutapa state, descendants of Murenga Sororezou and the actual founders of the state itself. It was believed that when the Mutapa died, his spirit lived on and continued to rule his domains from the vantage point of the spirit realm, influencing people and events and demanding the same honour and veneration enjoyed when alive. And indeed, like a god, could cause misfortune if his dictates were not adhered to by his descendants. To guarantee compliance, the spirit of the ancestral founder ruler would possess someone from time to time to remind the living of their obligations. The ancestral spirit was territorial in this sense, effective only within the territories which they once ruled as humans.<sup>49</sup> The territoriality of the ancestral spirits made land not merely an economic asset but 'intimately linked with the tribe, its chief, and the spirits of their ancestors'.<sup>50</sup> When not possessing a human, the spirit would wander in the forest or find abode in a lion – called *mphondolo*, *mhondoro*. The *mhondoro* spirits of the middle Zambezi such as Nehanda, Nyanhewe, Mutota, Chinengebere, Chiwawa, Matope and Nehoreka are linked to the Mwene Mutapa dynasty.<sup>51</sup>

Arguably, the medium of Nehanda called Charwe popularly known as Mbuya Nehanda has received the most attention in recent Zimbabwean nationalist

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<sup>49</sup> G. K. Garbett, 'Disparate Regional Cults and unitary ritual fields in Zimbabwe', in R. P. Werbner (ed.), *Regional Cults* (London, Academic Press, 1977), p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*. 263.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Zondiwa Kadzungura at St Albert's Catholic Mission, Centenary, on 14 October 2014.



historiography, with statues of her adorning many public spaces. The original Nehanda was a princess called Nyamhita, the daughter of Mutota who founded the Mwene Mutapa state around the fourteenth century AD.<sup>52</sup> Her full name was Nehanda Nyamhita Nyakasikana. Local myth and legend has it that Mutota also had a son, Matope Nebedza Nyanchwe, who succeeded his father as the second Mwene Mutapa. In order to increase Matope's power, his father challenged him to do the unthinkable, namely, have incestuous ritual relations, *kupinga pasi* (Shona), with his half-sister, Nyamhita. Following that act it was said Matope's power increased. As ritual wife to her half-brother, Nyamhita became an equally powerful ruler in her own right over the region of Handa, earning her the title *neHanda* meaning 'of Handa' or 'ruler of Handa'. Handa was a place in the Dande region of the mid Zambezi valley below the escarpment. While versions of this story are common in Shona folklore, aspects of it also appear in early Portuguese documents. A. P. de Miranda, as quoted and translated by Mudenge wrote of Nehanda,

The principal wife of the Emperor is a princess, indeed she is his own sister or close kinswoman. She is called *Neanda* [Nehanda] and enjoys all the privileges and rights of the Emperor, her husband. She treats the other *Mucarambas* [*Mukarangas*, i.e. junior wives] as her subjects or slaves. The respect shown to her is so great that she may rightly be accorded the title of Empress.<sup>53</sup>

Upon her death, it was believed that her spirit continued to live, hosted by various spirit mediums called *masvikiro* (plural, *svikiro* singular) in the local language. By the 1890s her medium was a woman called Charwe who lived in the Mazoe area to the north of Salisbury (Harare). Because Charwe hosted an important royal spirit – a *mhondoro* – she was highly regarded and influential. Her real name, Charwe, receded into the background, becoming better known by the name of the spirit she hosted, Nehanda. The honorific title *mbuya*, meaning grandmother, was only

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<sup>52</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa* p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 105.

prefixed to her name during the nationalist liberation struggles of the 1960s and 70s, hence *aMbuya Nehanda*.<sup>54</sup> Here we find the links between political and religious authority playing out in the mid Zambezi.

The *mhondoro* had a symbiotic relationship with the Mutapa state whose founders were objects of veneration. The state, though a political and economic system, had a religious dimension which over time became clearly identifiable through the class of mediums who spoke on behalf of the long dead rulers. The mediums were advisors to the king and indeed sanctioned succession to the throne. They formed a distinct layer within the kingdom. The ruling Mwene Mutapa was the supreme religious authority in his kingdom as it was only he who could communicate with the spirits of his ancestors through the spirit mediums in his territories.<sup>55</sup> Mediums were influential at the imperial courts; they were respected advisors to counterbalance the power of the rulers. The fragmentation of the Mutapa state in the eighteenth century (largely at the hands of the Portuguese) increased the political independence of the *mhondoro* networks from state patronage. It seems that from then on the relationship between remnants of the Mutapa state and the *mhondoro* was never fully restored. This gave the *mhondoro* mediums increased autonomy such that when the Mutapa dynasty could no longer sustain a state in the early twentieth century, the ancestral *mhondoro* religious networks continued to function. Eventually they were to survive the demise of the state itself to continue through to colonial and post-colonial times.

The *mhondoro* religious system appears to be particular to the mid Zambezi and its adjacent regions. It is conspicuously absent in the Great Zimbabwe (Masvingo) area

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<sup>54</sup> In Nyungwe as in Shona, *mbuya* means grandmother, it could also mean ‘lord’ or ‘master’ or ‘owner’. In Rhodesia, the title was popularised in the 1960s during the struggle against colonial rule to honour Nehanda.

<sup>55</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 119.

even though the common ancestral beliefs in *mizimu*, *vadzimu* exist.<sup>56</sup> Jemera, a Catechist at Chitsungo mission from Masvingo described his experience;

Back where we come from in the Midlands there was no *mhondoro* tradition. I only learnt about *mhondoros* here in the Zambezi valley and Mashonaland Central region. We did however have *midzimu* [ancestral] rituals. In those days in the 1970s *Varungu* [Europeans] apparently knew a lot about *mhondoro*, so they used to send me to do the groundwork before they established their interests in a particular area. They used to give me the black and white cloth with which to *fupira* [gift to ritually introduce myself to] the *mhondoro*. I would approach the *mutape* – assistant of the *mhondoro* who would then inform the *mhondoro* that there was a request pending. On the appointed day I would go to the *zumba* [the medium's ritual hut] of the *mhondoro*. The drums would be playing while the *mhondoro* lay on a *bonde* [grass or reed mat]. I would join others and the *mutape* [assistant to the medium] would present on my behalf the black and white *machira* [cloth] and the snuff. The *zumba* is a community house of encounter with the *mhondoro* and it was constructed by the community. When the *mhondoro* approved, I would then have secured permission for my bosses to operate in the area.<sup>57</sup>

The rule of the Mwene Mutapas in the mid Zambezi bequeathed to the region the current place names of Boroma, Changara, Marara, Miruru, Matundu, Matema, Chioko and Chipembere in Tete province in the Nyungwe-speaking region in Mozambique.<sup>58</sup> The name Boroma at the site of the modern Boroma Catholic mission on the Zambezi River established by the Jesuits in 1885 seems to have been derived from Boroma Dangwarangwa (Dom João), who became Mutapa around 1712, replacing Mutapa Chirimbe who had died in 1711.<sup>59</sup> Changara, a settlement situated about ninety kilometres south of Tete town, was also named after one of the 'Shona' Mutapa rulers whose reign ended in 1806. The settlement of Chioko in Tete near the frontier with Zimbabwe was named after the last Mutapa, Chioko Dambamupute. These names show the extent of the penetration of the Shona ruling

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<sup>56</sup> Interviews with Eric Jemera Mhazi at St Raphael's Mission, Chitsungo on 12 of October 2014 and Martin Poshai, at St Albert's Mission, Centenary, on 14 October 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Eric Jemera Mhazi, at St Raphael's Mission, Chitsungo, on 12 of October 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Fr Manuel Dos Anjos Martins, Tete Mozambique, 09 July 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 295.

dynasty in the region. In any case present day Mozambique has at least six population groups that speak dialects classified as Shona, namely *ChiZezuru*, *ChiTawara*, *ChiBarue*, *ChiManyika*, *ChiTewe* and *ChiNdau*.<sup>60</sup> The *mhondoro* system of ancestral religion is found amongst these groups. Asked about the political and religious divisions of his region, Zondiwa Kadzungura said:

We have [as our *mhondoro* spirits] Nehanda, Nyanhewe, Mutota, Chinengebere, and Chiwawa. From Guruve to Dotito and Marymount, these are our *mhondoro*, we are on the border of Mambo Chiweshe and Nembire. Chiweshe's area goes to Mzarabani going towards the Dande. Chief Mzarabani is a brother of Chiweshe, they are all Korekore. Long ago, *kudara*, it was all Darwin District when it was Rhodesia and Nyasaland. But now the divisions are too many (*nyika yava nehudimbu dimbu hwakanyanyisa*).<sup>61</sup>

Apart from bequeathing to the region a religious system and place names, older chieftaincies in the region claimed descent from the Mutapa rulers. For instance, in 1964, Chief Nyakusengwa or Mukosa of Chimhanda Tribal Trust Lands (TTL), called Mutambachirimo Fransisko, was appointed chief in 1945 and installed by the *mhondoro* of Koswa (a descendant of the Mwene Mutapa Kazukurumupasi who died in 1666) who originated in Portuguese East Africa (P.E.A) now Mozambique.<sup>62</sup> Latham wrote; 'The country which forms the present chiefdom has been altered by the international boundary and there are people living in P.E.A. who traditionally fell under Chief Nyakusengwa.'<sup>63</sup> Citing Bocarro, Latham noted that this region of Mount Darwin was a well-defined unit forming a province of Mwene Mutapa called Chirunya or (Chiruvia as Bocarro calls it). The Nyakusengwa / Mukosa people were said to have been founded by Koswa, daughter of Kazukurumupasi who was given a region, *dunhu*, to rule over by a later Mutapa ruler called Mukombwe Usirisiri. She

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, Interview with Fr Manuel Dos Anjos Martins.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Zondiwa Kadzungura at St Albert's Mission, Centenary, on 14 October 2014.

<sup>62</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2 Report on the Nyakusengwa (Mukosa) Chieftainship, Chimanda Tribal Trust Land, Mt Darwin, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1964, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

travelled there with her two brothers Nemhuru and Dombo; on arrival they found that the area had already been settled by one Nyandoro whom her brothers killed against her advice. Nemhuru then died of a coughing disease as punishment and ‘To this day in times of drought, the *mhondoro* of Nyandoro is approached at Musapa-Nyandoro, the place where he was killed. A black dog (sic- cow) called *mombe ya Nyandoro* is sacrificed to quieten his wronged spirit.’<sup>64</sup> Very little was remembered of Koswa in 1964 but she was thought to have been very comely with interesting affairs at court. She was considered the principal *mhondoro* of the Nyakusengwa people.

While some chiefly boundaries were altered after 1890, they by and large remained in the older pre-colonial locations save for those moved to make way for European settlements. When Chief Chiweshe was asked about his people’s past, he replied, ‘I am Korekore. We, the Korekkore people, were here long before colonialism and we used to move up and down the Zambezi valley at will here in Zimbabwe as well as in Mozambique. Long ago our *mambo* [king] was Mwene Mutapa and the seat of his rule was located about fifteen to twenty kilometres from here.’<sup>65</sup> Other mid Zambezi valley interviews pointed to the relatedness of the chiefs and how Mwene Mutapa Mukombwe was considered a great distributor of lands, suggesting an overarching political authority over the smaller polities.<sup>66</sup> Mukombwe had succeeded a weak Mutapa in the seventeenth century with the help of the Portuguese and restored

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Chief Chiweshe, Matthew Chitemamuswe at St Albert’s Mission, Centenary, on 15 October 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 25. Also corroborated by interviews with Chief Chiweshe, Zondiwa Kadzungura and Expense Masiyambiri Gwaze as listed in Sources and Bibliography section.

stability.<sup>67</sup> He distributed lands to loyal subjects but after him centralised authority appears to have diminished again and the mid Zambezi chiefs filled in the political power vacuum. With central authority gone, it was easier for the Nguni *impis* from the south to raid the region and demand tribute from the decentralised chiefs. The Portuguese who had arrived in the region in the sixteenth century were too weak and thin on the ground to exercise effective power. The *prazo* rulers of the Zambezi valley had gone native and were oblivious to the unfolding global imperial forces that were fast closing in on the region. These forces began to impinge upon the mid Zambezi in earnest in the last half of the nineteenth century. The last claimant to the Mutapa throne, Chioko Dambamupute, was finally subdued at the beginning of the twentieth century in the conflict with the Portuguese.<sup>68</sup>

## **The Portuguese and the British**

In 1752, Mozambique was detached from the control of the viceroy of Portuguese India to become a separate colony, but effective occupation of the land was only completed in the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup> Even then, for the mid Zambezi, effective power lay in the old alliances of chiefs, headmen, *prazo* rulers, and self-made powerful men. In the late nineteenth century Portugal was broke. Its attempts to build economic infrastructure in Mozambique in the 1870s were a desperate attempt to revive its fortunes in the region.<sup>70</sup> The Zambezi *prazos* which were heavily involved in slave trading had become a liability to metropolitan Portugal and attempts had been made to abolish them. These included the 1854 decree aimed at abolishing the *prazos* across Mozambique and the provincial

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<sup>67</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 361.

<sup>69</sup> C. R. Boxer, 'A Portuguese El Dorado: Monopotapa and Mozambique' in *The Geographical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 5, September 1960, p. 286.

<sup>70</sup> M. D. D. Newitt, *A History of Mozambique*, (London, 1995), p. 380-385.

*portaria* of 12 December 1867 to regulate the 1854 decree. The decree of 27 October 1880 stopped the execution of the 1854 decree altogether. All these attempts to undermine the *prazo* institution which had hitherto served Portugal well were subverted by the *prazeiros*, leading to the wasteful Zambezi wars.<sup>71</sup>

The 18 November 1890 decree of Antonio Ennes was a compromise which effectively gave the *prazos* a further lease of life as the new reforms continued to recognize *prazos* in the new colonial order. But the reforms marginally increased government control through leasing many of the *prazos* to companies. The failure to stamp them out altogether was due to the internal resilience of the *prazos* themselves and the weakness of the Portuguese metropolitan government. The bankruptcy of Portugal became more manifest in the late 1890s when it faced a financial crisis fuelled by Portuguese imperialists siding with industrial manufacturers and pro-settler elements in the quest for overseas spheres of influence. Portugal was assuming heavier colonial responsibilities for which it had neither the capacity nor the means to effectively administer. The various concessions to chartered companies were a bid to make Mozambique self-sufficient and contribute to the metropolitan economy. Newitt has argued that before 1890 there was a longstanding, liberal, assimilationist doctrine which made Portugal's colonies as far as possible limbs of the mother country. Metropolitan laws were to be enforced, civil rights extended, liberal economic policies pursued, the labour regime freed and so on.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See Eduardo Madeiros and Jose Capela, 'Process of Identity-Building in the Zambezi Valley' in Alexander Keese, (Ed), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective, the African Experience* (Oxford, 2010), p. 52.

<sup>72</sup> Newitt, *Mozambique*, p. 381.

After 1890, especially during the tenure of governors Antonio Ennes (1894-5) and Mouzinho de Albuquerque (1896-7) in Mozambique, greater independence for the colonies was proposed.<sup>73</sup> They stopped the assimilation policies and instead pushed for colonies to make legislation that was suited to local needs, replete with a separate colonial budget. The population was simply divided into two categories: *indigena*, indigenous and *não-indigena*, non-indigenous. The non-indigenous were the advantaged groups of Portuguese, Afro-Portuguese, *assimilados* and other Europeanised *azungu*, while the indigenous *colonos* were transformed into a labour pool for the growing demands of a capitalist economy. Chiefs and headmen, designated *regulos*, acquired new state-sponsored positions as collectors of taxes, agents of labour recruitment and maintainers of colonial law and order. The Portuguese even sought to link their holdings right across southern central Africa from Mozambique through to Angola on the Atlantic coast. Other imperial forces refused to be upstaged and Southern Africa became a competition zone of the imperial powers.

In April 1884, Germany had declared a protectorate over South West Africa (Namibia). Britain feared that the Germans would extend their boundary eastwards. To counter that threat, Britain quickly gave protectorate status to Bechuanaland, thus blocking any possible German expansion eastwards. The South African Republic in the Transvaal had also become a serious contender to occupy the region north of the Limpopo River. The Ndebele state's sphere of influence between the Zambezi and the Limpopo Rivers, ruled by King Lobengula (who had succeeded his father Mzilikazi), was considered too strong to be easily overrun. So a series of clever

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<sup>73</sup> Newitt, *Mozambique*, p. 383-385.



treaties were signed with Lobengula in 1888 which gave the British sole access to its territories leading to the eventual takeover of his territory through the agency of the British South Africa Company (BSAC).

The BSAC was founded by Royal Charter on 29 October 1889 with wide ranging powers.<sup>74</sup> Article 24 of the Charter mandated the Company to ‘establish or authorize banking companies’, ‘to aid and promote immigration’ and ‘to grant lands for terms of years or in perpetuity.’<sup>75</sup> Subject to Royal approval, the company was also authorised ‘to acquire by any concession, agreement . . . powers of any kind or nature whatever, including powers necessary for the purposes of government.’<sup>76</sup> The Company was to regulate the use of alcohol, remove slavery, protect local customs and maintain justice. It was to govern the colony and control the ‘native’ population.

Armed with such powers, Rhodes’ men, skirting the Ndebele capital, Bulawayo, to the west, trekked towards the Zambezi in what was dubbed the Pioneer Column to found Rhodesia.<sup>77</sup> The ‘pioneer column’ comprised men and women of a whole range of trades: missionaries, medical personnel, military and police officers, company officials and so on. One detachment of the Pioneer Column included the Irish Dominican nun, Mother Patrick, who described the journey from Mafeking to

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<sup>74</sup> NAZ: MS 851/4/5 – Terms of the British South Africa Company Charter, extracted from the London Gazette of December 1889.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Art. 24, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Art. 3, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> The name ‘Rhodesia’ emerged gradually. It was derived from Cecil John Rhodes, premier of the Cape Colony in South Africa. Rhodes had proposed the name ‘Zambesia’ for his new territory while his colleague Dr Leander Starr Jameson, suggested ‘Charterland’. It was the name ‘Rhodesia’ that stuck, popularised by the BSAC’s newspaper, the *Rhodesia Herald*, and which was adopted by the company in May 1895. Subsequently, it was recognised by the British crown in the Southern Rhodesia Order-in-Council of 1898.

Salisbury (Harare) in her diary.<sup>78</sup> Her diary gives an insight into the composition and operations of the pioneer column detachments as well as the African communities they met along the way. Transport was by ox-wagon. Fr Prestage was chaplain and leader of the missionary group which included Fr Daignault and Sisters Francis, Ignatius, Amica and unnamed others who were all in the ‘journey to our future.’<sup>79</sup> Fr Prestage had previously laboured unsuccessfully in King Lobengula’s country in the 1880s and was familiar with the ‘Centibele’ (siNdebele) language spoken there.<sup>80</sup> He had founded Empandeni Mission in 1887 but it had to be shut down due to local resistance and the well-founded suspicions the king harboured.

When Mother Patrick’s detachment reached Salisbury, they were welcomed by the colonial administrator, Dr Leander Star Jameson and Fr Hartmann. The nuns wasted no time; they began hospital work on 1 August 1891. A Mr Lambert had just died and the money raised from the sale of his belongings was donated to the sisters for their upkeep. A Christmas bazaar held that year raised £170.<sup>81</sup> A school at Salisbury opened on 18 October 1892.<sup>82</sup> This was the beginning of a missionary enterprise that was to see seven schools opened before 1900. Only five stations, Tati, Gubulawayo (Bulawayo), Pandamatenga, Victoria (Masvingo) and Umtali (Mutare) were without schools in their compounds. Four of the schools were opened by the Dominican sisters; the other three by the Jesuits. The first Catholic mission in the Mashonaland region of the new colony was opened by the Jesuits at Chishawasha and named after the sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary to the Far East, Francis Xavier.

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<sup>78</sup> NAZ: CO 7/1/1 – Mother Patrick O.S.D., *Journal of Mother Patrick (Mary Patrick Cosgrave) 1890 to 1994*. Transcribed in the Government Archives – Salisbury, from the original – 1938.

<sup>79</sup> NAZ: CO 7/1/1, Mother Patrick, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 81-89.

Chishawasha mission was founded in 1892 when the then new superior of the Zambezi Mission, Fr Kerr, sent his predecessor, Fr Dagnault, to Europe to look for missionaries. Fr Dagnault applied to the then German Provincial superior, Fr Rathgeber, for men for the task. A report carried in the *Zambezi Mission Record* stated that; ‘At this critical juncture, Fr Dagnault’s appeal for immediate help met with a generous response from the Province of Germany’.<sup>83</sup> It was in response to this appeal that Fr Richartz was dispatched with a group of seven Jesuits who left Europe on 2 April 1892 for South Africa. From South Africa they left Mafeking, joined by Kerr, Fr Barthelemy and five Dominican sisters on 27 April 1892 on a three month journey towards the Zambezi that saw them reach Salisbury on 29 July 1892.

Fr Richartz’s group wasted no time and headed for Chishawasha the following day to reach their destination on 30 July 1892. In this group were Fr Richartz (who died at Salisbury on 21 May 1928), Fr Heinrich Boos, and five Jesuit Brothers (Augustus Book, Joseph Löffler, Heinrich Meyer, Wilhelm Biermann and Joseph Lindner). They were all German-speaking.<sup>84</sup>

After only three years of colonial rule, it had become clear to Rhodes’s settlers that the belief in another South African style mineral wealth across the Limpopo which had given impetus to the occupation of Mashonaland was exaggerated. The goal of containing German expansion had been achieved. Settler attention shifted from mining to the African population itself, its cattle and agriculture. The Hut Tax was

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<sup>83</sup> *Zambezi Mission Record*, (ZMR) Volume IX, p. 140.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Fr Georg Hipler in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 23 March 2011.

introduced in Rhodesia in May 1893.<sup>85</sup> In the Zambezi valley it was called *mtsonkho*, which was often rendered *mussoco* in Portuguese documents and some English sources.<sup>86</sup> It consisted of an annual payment in money, grain, livestock or labour. The tax was meant to reduce the cost of running the colony, increase the capital base of the administration and contribute to the construction of towns and public service systems.

Taxation was not new in the mid Zambezi, as households and tributary rulers were long familiar with the concept of paying tribute to their overlords and the Portuguese *prazos* had long been known to exact tribute from its population. In Portuguese East Africa the tax was only successfully imposed after the Portuguese-Gaza war of 1895-7 had ended. This was at the same time of unrest in the British ruled Rhodesia. Following the defeat of Gaza and Barwe the royal families of these two kingdoms were killed and others were exiled. A grandson of Makombe, the Barwe ruler, fled persecution by the Portuguese and settled as far west as the territory designated Matabeleland in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>87</sup> The BSAC not only imposed the Hut Tax, it went on to confiscate cattle and began the process of land alienation. It imposed forced labour and often disregarded the way of life of the African communities. This was felt throughout the Rhodesian plateau down to parts of the Zambezi valley where some highveld communities were being relocated to pave the way for settler mines, farms and settlements. The Zambezi Valley was considered unsuitable for European settlements because of mosquitoes and sleeping sickness. It was these

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<sup>85</sup> J. S. Galbraith, *Crown and Charter* (Berkeley, 1974), p. 325.

<sup>86</sup> Manuel dos Anjos Martins, *Elementos da Lingua Nyungwe* (Roma, 1991), p. 264. *Mtsonkho* is the way the Nyungwe of the region render the term. Malyn Newitt's publications render it *mussoco*.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Sr Flora Fuyana (great-great-grand daughter of Makombe) in Bulawayo on 7 June 2011.

deprivations that had provided the immediate reasons for the uprisings in Mashonaland. Rebellion flared up again in Southern Rhodesia.

It began on 20 March 1896 in Matabeleland and spread to the Shona territories in the north and east. For the Ndebele, this was their second war with the British and for the Shona it was their first and came to be called the First *Chimurenga*.<sup>88</sup> According to Ranger, the national spirits of Mukwati, Chaminuka, Kaguvi and Nehanda, through their mediums, emerged from their relative obscurity to engage in the war effort which dragged on sporadically for close to two years. Amongst the Zezuru, Korekore and Tavara of the Zambezi valley, it was the *mhondoro* mediums of Nehanda from the Mazoe area and *mhondoro* Kaguvi who were active.<sup>89</sup> Mukwati was the most powerful religious leader representing the ancient High God, *Mwari*, associated with the shrine at the Matopos hills in the south-west of the country.

At the start of the 1896-7 war against BSAC rule, the medium of Nehanda was a woman, as already noted above, who lived in the Mazoe area called Charwe.<sup>90</sup> This followed a long tradition of Nehanda mediums being women.<sup>91</sup> She was eventually arrested by the BSAC police along with several others and on 2 March 1898 at Salisbury (Harare), she was convicted of the murder of Mr Henry Hawkins Pollard, a Native Commissioner.<sup>92</sup> She and her colleagues were sentenced to death by hanging on 27 April 1898. The sentence was sanctioned by the then British High

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<sup>88</sup> According to Shona myth as recorded by Chigwedere, the term *Chimurenga* is derived from Murenga, one of the great ancestors of the Shona peoples of the Mbire division who founded a kingdom to the east of Lake Tanganyika well before the Shona arrived in Zimbabwe to found the Shona states. See Aeneas Chigwedere's works, especially *Roots of Bantu*, p. 175.

<sup>89</sup> Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*.

<sup>90</sup> NAZ, 'Nehanda and Kaguvi'

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Commissioner to South Africa, Alfred Milner.<sup>93</sup> While Charwe awaited her fate, the Jesuit Fr Richartz, founder of Chishawasha mission, went to try and convert her to Catholicism along with her fellow convicts Gutsa, Hwata and Zindoga. The others, including a certain Gumboreshumba, the medium of Kaguvi, agreed to be baptised in the hope of saving their lives.<sup>94</sup> Gumboreshumba received the new name 'Dismas' (the good thief of the Bible). Charwe refused baptism. They were all executed and their bodies were buried in a secret location.<sup>95</sup>

It was estimated that 10 per cent of the settler population, about 450 settlers died in that war. By 1898 the BSAC was in control of both Mashonaland and Matabeleland and began to consolidate its rule. Subsequent efforts by the successors of King Lobengula, such as his son Nyamande Khumalo, to seek the restoration of the Ndebele Kingdom were rejected even after a petition to King George V. His cause was taken up by Lobengula's grandsons Albert and Rhodes Khumalo, but they were silenced in the 1930s, with Rhodes Lobengula being induced to leave for the Cape, South Africa in 1934, and Albert ending up a messenger *cum* interpreter in the Native Department offices in Bulawayo.<sup>96</sup>

The uprising spilled across the Anglo-Portuguese frontier into P.E.A. in the mid Zambezi where it was a general struggle against Europeans. The career of Mapondera illustrates this resistance in the mid Zambezi. As the BSAC company fought the Ndebele and Shona in Rhodesia, the Portuguese administration was 'pacifying' the Gaza to the south, as well as the Barwe of Makombe just south of

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ian Phimister, *Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle* (London, New York, 1988), p.151.

Tete. Kadungure Mapondera left his native village at Nyota in the Mazoe area to join Makombe in his fight against the Portuguese.<sup>97</sup> He built a network of support against *varungu* (Europeans) and even met with Chioko Dambamupute, a descendent of the Mutapas and a claimant to their throne. He had now been reduced to a paramount chief to the south-west of Tete in a *guta* (town) ‘sprawling over a whole square mile of mushroom-shaped huts.’<sup>98</sup> Chioko supplied Mapondera with a ‘thousand men who were drawn mainly from Zezuru, Tavara and Korekore’ whom he led back into Rhodesia. Mapondera’s battlefield reached as far as the Dande on the Zambezi.<sup>99</sup> On 30 August 1903, Mapondera was surprised in a dawn raid by eighty-seven Rhodesian soldiers amongst whom were African recruits, having been betrayed by the loyalist chief Chimanda. He was captured, tried and sentenced to seven years in prison, but died seven weeks into his prison sentence in 1904.<sup>100</sup>

## **Colonial rule and the state of local religion**

The establishment of a colonial overarching authority over the African polities did not immediately change the cultural landscape; in fact, in some corners of the mid Zambezi, it would be another fifty years before colonial rule was to be effectively experienced. Diligent Native Commissioners, however, made sure the presence of the new order was felt, trekking into remote corners to announce the new authorities and to consolidate the labour recruitment and tax collecting system. Their records have furnished us with insight into the state of African communities and their

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<sup>97</sup> Solomon Mutsvairo, *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe* (Washington, 1978). This is a historical novel documenting the military career of Kadungure Mapondera (d. 1907) which spanned Mozambique and Rhodesia. The best documented historical study of Mapondera however remains David Beach’s, *Mapondera: Heroism and history in northern Zimbabwe 1840 – 1904* (Gweru, 1989).

<sup>98</sup> Mutsvairo, *Mapondera*, p. 117.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>100</sup> Beach, *Mapondera*, p. 55.

religion in the early days of colonial rule. Reporting on crime in 1898, the NC for Northern Mangwende District wrote;

The absence of any serious crime is due in a great measure to their own stringent laws, and also in many cases to their belief in the supernatural. I have done my utmost to put down some of their most outrageous beliefs with regard to poisoning and witchcraft but of course as witchcraft is as it were the native religion it is impossible to altogether stamp it out until the native has another belief or religion to put in its place.<sup>101</sup>

Though the Supreme Being called *mulungu* in Nyungwe or *mwari* in Shona was, acknowledged, he was often considered remote whereas the spirits of the dead called *mizimu* (*mzimu*, singular) in Nyungwe and *midzimu* or *vadzimu* (*mudzimu*, singular) in Shona were ever present and active.<sup>102</sup> *Mizimu* referred to family spirits of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents who were still remembered. Their duty was to give protection and prosperity to posterity. These spirits were believed to occupy a spiritual realm that was coterminous with the world of the living, thus the spirits of dead kings, chiefs, clan founders and parents acquired corresponding positions of responsibility after death.<sup>103</sup> The spirit world was also believed to host other kinds of spirits thought to be dangerous such as *ngozi*, avenging spirits and wandering spirits of foreigners or neglected deceased family members. These were called *shave* (singular) or *mashave* (plural) in Shona. The *mhondoro* were spirits of deceased royals but belonged to the same category of ancestral spirits called *mizimu* or *vadzimu*. Although the *mhondoro* (lion) ‘cult’ was the largest and most extensive, there were also the kindred *Nyarugwe* (leopard) and *Ntsato* (python) ancestral religious clusters alongside it, especially in the Zambezi valley.<sup>104</sup> According to Schoffeleers, the *ntsato* or python was a manifestation of the High God, Chiuta. It

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<sup>101</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for the Half year ending September 30<sup>th</sup> 1898, Northern Mangwende’s District, by W. Edward, NC, p.269.

<sup>102</sup> Martins, *Elementos da Língua Nyungwe*, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Herbert Aschwandan, *Symbols of Death* (Gweru, 1987), p. 33.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Manuel dos Anjos Martins in Tete, Mozambique, on 9 July 2012.



was a python ‘cult’ shrine that was reconstituted as the martyr Mbona shrine of the Shire valley in Nyasaland in the seventeenth century.<sup>105</sup>

### ***Vadzimu, mizimu and mhondoro***

On account of the mundane concerns of the *vadzimu*, communication often revolved around mundane affairs such as good health, protection from the malice of witches and evil spirits, good harvests, security for possessions and living well in ‘this world’.<sup>106</sup> Sometimes family spirits *vadzimu* / *mizimu* possessed their hosts at large ceremonies such as at a *bona* (Nyungwe) or *bira* (Shona) or *kurova guva*. While all properly initiated adults became ancestral spirits (*vadzimu* or *mizimu*) following the proper rituals, the spirits of kings, chiefs and rulers were believed to have a larger role in society as they continued to guide their ruling descendants and protect their territories like lions. Hence the spirits of deceased royal ancestors were called lions: *mhondoro* or *mphondolo*. Becoming a *mhondoro* was prepared for by eating special herbs called *mbanda* prior to death.<sup>107</sup> They were invoked when threats of a national nature arose, such as droughts, epidemics, plagues, increase in witchcraft cases or threats of war. Spirit mediums spoke the words of the ancestors, not their own and so advised the chief who was often related to the ancestral spirits by virtue of his hereditary office. The *mhondoro* were believed to communicate with their descendants through mediums called *masvikiro* (*svikiro*, singular) in Shona. It was a religion of rulers or kings called *mambo* in the local languages (Shona and Nyungwe). The process of being possessed was described as ‘*kugwa mambo*’

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<sup>105</sup> Schoffeleers, J. Matthew, *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi c. A.D. 1600* (Wisconsin, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> The notion of ‘this worldly’ versus ‘other worldly’ religion, was employed by J. D.Y. Peel in his *Aladura* (Oxford, 1968).

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Gabriel Avelino at Beira, Mozambique, on 28 June 2011.

literally meaning ‘falling king’ or ‘*kugwa mambo mphondolo*’, ‘falling king grand ancestor’.<sup>108</sup> Mediums often spoke in a séance at a religious ceremony, called *kuombeza* (Nyungwe) or *kushopera* (Shona). There were also Portuguese *mhondoro* spirits who were venerated by whole communities. This was the case with Kanyemba of Portuguese descent, who had founded a large clan south of the Zambezi near Zumbo. When possessed, the mediums of their ‘spirits’ spoke in Portuguese and demanded European things like Portuguese wine.<sup>109</sup> Irrespective of their age, mediums were addressed by the honorific *sekuru* (grandfather), if they were men, or *mbuya* (grandmother), if they were women. While these titles rightfully belonged to the possessing ancestral spirit during the séance, often the medium retained the title outside of the ceremony. Under possession some mediums would howl like a lion and speak in the voice of the deceased ancestor.<sup>110</sup> When not possessing a *svikiro*, the royal spirits manifested themselves in the form of lions wandering in the forest. The *mhondoro* medium, *svikiro*, was:

not permitted to eat European vegetables. When he is ill he must be treated only by a n’anga; he dare not sleep in a hospital. Some of the Korekore Mhondoro are not permitted to share a hut with their wives. Such a medium may visit his wife in her hut, but she may not sleep in his hut or prepare his food.<sup>111</sup>

## The Ritual Landscape

The counsel of ancestors through *masvikiro* was the basis of human decency, *hunhu*, *unthu* or *ubuntu*. For that reason in communities where entertainment and the scope

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Gabriel Avelino Beira, Mozambique, on 21 June 2011.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with João Jordão in Tete, Mozambique, on 12 June 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Tabona Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe – Health and Healing* (Ashgate, 2007) and Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Healers and the Shona Patient* (Gweru, 1978).

<sup>111</sup> Michael Gelfand, ‘The Mhondoro Cult of the Shona,’ in M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, *African Systems of Thought*, (International African Institute, 1966) p. 345.

of social activities were limited, all members normally attended traditional ceremonies and rituals. The rituals of *bira* (any ancestral religious ceremony), *bona* or *kurova guva* (for the deceased) and rain-making ceremonies were the most common public demonstrations of belief. But this subject has already been studied to varying degrees of depth and detail by other scholars.<sup>112</sup> They are mentioned here to link with recent field interviews which confirm their continuity in more recent times.

Beyond communal rituals, society was involved on a day to day basis with the living as well as the dead and the world of spirits. This relationship was manifested in everyday life: birth, maturation, initiation, marriage, hunting, harvesting, farming, sickness, death, post death ceremonies and facing the vicissitudes of nature. Every homestead ideally had a hut that served as a kitchen and a 'lounge', with a section to the right as you entered reserved for men with a raised platform and to the left for women who normally sat on the floor. Opposite the door, directly in front as you enter, was what the Shona called the *huva*.<sup>113</sup> This was usually a raised platform built into the wall of the round hut to make shelves for displaying clay pots called *hari*, pans and spoons. If, for instance, a man went on a successful hunt, upon his return his wife or mother would thank him by clapping her hands and calling out his totem and clan praise names.<sup>114</sup> Men and women clap differently: women cross and cup their hands when clapping and the men cup and keep their hands parallel as they clap, producing two distinct sounds. After thanking the son or husband, the woman would then turn to the *huva* and say the praise names and totems of the son or

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<sup>112</sup> Gelfand, *Shona Ritual*. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*. Aschwanden, *Symbols of Death*.

<sup>113</sup> This was a typical architectural style amongst the Shona of the Zimbabwean plateau and Zambezi Valley. The *huva* was the point of focus in addressing family ancestral spirits.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Peter Goredema, Manchester UK, on 17 February 2012.

husband's lineage. At this point she would now be addressing the spirits of the ancestors.<sup>115</sup>

The architecture of the kitchen was considered standard for every household. It was kitchen, boardroom, dining room and lounge and family 'chapel' depending on the usage at the time. The kitchen hut was invariably round or square and the vast majority had the same setup with the kitchen door facing west.<sup>116</sup> There was a lot of informality in the practice of *chiVanh* in the home, but as it expanded to involve other members of the community the ceremonies were conducted in the open, usually at the homestead of the elder of the village or the headman or chief or at a shrine. As the concerns reached the wider population religious ceremonies became more formal and involved more people with a whole range of intermediaries and officials playing their roles. Shrines served the needs of entire regions. Such big functions were necessitated by droughts, pestilence, disease or war.<sup>117</sup>

## **Totems and the world of nature**

The environment was a major concern. If the rains failed and there was a drought, this was perceived to be a result of some disorder in the moral order such as murder, incest, the desecration of sacred places, failure to follow protocols at burial rituals or breaching taboos and totemic prohibitions. There were no prisons for social misfits, but there was punishment in the form of labour, a fine, social exclusion, public humiliation or summary execution. The concern for ecological preservation was linked to creatures that interacted daily with humans, hence through the totemic

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Peter Goredema, Manchester UK, on 17 February 2012.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Peter Goredema, Manchester UK, on 17 February 2012.

system people were linked to the land, the mountains, trees, caves, pools, rivers and animals.

The totems were clan names that identified individuals with a certain group. They were usually names of animals and sometimes of places and individuals sharing the same totem were relatives. No one was allowed to harm, kill or eat their totem animal. Breaching this totemic prohibition could lead to literally losing one's teeth or worse, depending on the family or clan traditions. Mistreating, harming, killing or eating the meat of one's totem animal was considered as bad as eating one's own kin. It was taboo. Taboos were not static or a closed canon of sacred pronouncements; they were invented and reinvented to meet the prevailing moral demands. David Lan, for instance, has shown how during the liberation war of the 1960s and 70s, in the mid Zambezi, taboos were used to legitimise the guerrillas.<sup>118</sup> Ecological balance was maintained through taboos. The word for totem in all the languages spoken in the middle Zambezi is *mutupo*.<sup>119</sup>

The totem imparted identity, supported kinship and preserved ecological balance. Marriage between people of the same totem was forbidden because they were relatives. This mechanism ensured that the gene pool was diversified and inbreeding was excluded. Incest was a serious violation of the natural, social and spiritual order because it violated a whole range of relationships with nature, family and ancestors. If ancestors were angry they could cause sickness, epidemics and drought which affected every member of the community as well as animals and livestock. It was

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<sup>118</sup> Lan, *Guns & Rain*, pp.160-3.

<sup>119</sup> *Mutupo* (totem) and *Kutupa* (to increase) are the same in the Shona dialects, Nyungwe and Chewa.

therefore a communal responsibility to observe totemic restrictions. The system encouraged distant marriages.<sup>120</sup>

### **Zambezi Valley ancestral religion: *Chivanhu, Chiwanthu***

Building up on studies of traditional African religions by anthropologists Clyde Mitchell and Victor Turner, J. Matthew Schoffeleers introduced the idea of ‘territorial cults’ drawn from his study of the Mbona religious system. Clyde Mitchell had studied the Chidzere Shrine of the Zambezi valley and Victor Turner had invented the terms ‘earth cults’ and ‘rain and fertility cults’.<sup>121</sup> Schoffeleers decided to move beyond them by calling them more specifically ‘territorial cults’ because they were ‘centrally concerned with the political life of a specific land area and since their constituency is a group identified by their common occupation of and rights in that land area.’<sup>122</sup> For Schoffeleers therefore, the ancestral religions centred on Mwari, Chaminuka, Karuva and Dzivaguru of the mid Zambezi, were territorial, just like the ‘Earth cult’ of the Tallensi in Ghana or the ‘Rain Queen’ of the Lovedu in South Africa.<sup>123</sup>

Kingsley Garbett classified the religious networks into ‘the cult of territorial spirits’ which he considered distinct from the ‘contrasting cult of local spirits’ which, while existing side by side, exhibited ‘sharp cultural and organizational differences’.<sup>124</sup> For Garbett there were differences of opinion amongst the chief spirit mediums of the mid Zambezi regarding the positions of the important spirits. For instance, Nehanda and Chaminuka were held by the local Korekore ‘to have never been mortal’ while

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<sup>120</sup> Interview with Fr Fidelis Mukonori at Chishawasha Mission on 30 July 2011.

<sup>121</sup> Anthropologist Clyde Mitchell studied the Chidzere Shrine in the Zambezi Valley.

<sup>122</sup> Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*, p. 9.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Garbett, ‘Disparate Regional Cults’, p. 55-57.

the Zezuru considered them historical persons. Historians Aeneas Chigwedere and Stan Mudenge considered them historical persons.<sup>125</sup> Garbett also identified Chimombe, Musuma, Dzivaguru, and counted them amongst ‘cults of local spirits’.<sup>126</sup>

However, the constructions of these divisions of African religion as ‘cults’, be they ‘earth’, ‘fertility’ or ‘territorial’, reduces them to fragmented, disparate entities. This is not the same as disaggregation to achieve analytical precision, since these so-called cults all belonged to the same order. Thus, this fragmentation undermines, by intent or by oversight, the basic ideological and idiomatic unity of traditional ancestral religion (*Chivanhu*). As a result the collapse or decline of one shrine or cluster of related shrines, as happens from time to time, can be construed as marking the end of traditional religion, which according to this study is hardly the case. The present study has identified, rather, a common system of beliefs, practices and ritual undertakings which constitute a religious idiom that is manifested in the variety of forms that have been construed as ‘cults’. The local people refer to this commonality as *Chivanhu* (Shona) or *Chiwanthu* (Nyungwe).<sup>127</sup>

From Chitsungo in Guruve district to St Albert’s in Darwin district, there was a convergence in informants that a common religion, for which there is no direct English translation, existed which they loosely called *Chivanhu*.<sup>128</sup> Chief Chitsungo observed ‘*Chivanhu chagara chiripo, chavakusvibiswa nekunyepa*’ (We have always

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<sup>125</sup> Chigwedere, *Birth of Bantu Africa*, p. 32 and Mudenge, *Munhumutapa*, p. 155. Mudenge notes that the Korekore sometimes use the name *Murenga* for God, whereas the Nyungwe-Maravi use *Murungu* or *Mulungu* for God.

<sup>126</sup> Garbett, ‘Disparate Regional Cults’, p. 59.

<sup>127</sup> The interviews conducted in the mid Zambezi valley underlined this aspect.

<sup>128</sup> This group of interviews are noted in the Sources and Bibliography section of this study as group interviews. Where individuals are quoted, they are cited individually in the standard form adopted in this thesis.

had *Chiwanhu* but it is now being tarnished by lying). He was referring to the twenty-three *mhondoro* mediums that had emerged in his jurisdiction in the year 2013 alone. He claimed that money was the root of the problem, '*mhondoro dzenhema dzavekutengesa masango anoyera*' (False mediums were now selling sacred forests).<sup>129</sup> Chief Chiweshe affirmed that:

Mutota, son of the first Mwenemutapa, is our *mhondoro* as well as his three children Nehanda, Chiwawa and Chinengebere. These are the most consulted about *mamiriro ekunze*, the state of affairs. They led the *dzinza*, clan, in all that they did, be it war, drought, hunger, sickness and *kugarisana kwakanaka* – living well with one another. We always believed in Nyadenga (of the heavens) Musikavanhu (creator of people).<sup>130</sup>

It is perhaps in recognition of the relatedness of the African religious idiom that J.M. Schoffeleers, in spite of maintaining the territoriality of the 'cults', affirmed that the *Mhondoro*, *Dzivaguru*, *Karuva*, *Chikan'gombe*, *Chisumphi*, *Mbona*, *Kapembwa* and *Nyau* societies found across the middle Zambezi region were related transnational religious networks. He observed that communities could be involved in several networks at the same time. In times of crisis there was a much closer cooperation amongst these networks, which 'formed a theoretically infinite chain linking communities to communities over large stretches of the African continent'.<sup>131</sup> As to how these subdivisions formed part of a whole, Schoffeleers proposed that they were linked by 'three mechanisms of inclusion, complementarities and affinity'.<sup>132</sup> In this way he concluded that 'we have here an instance of cult affinity covering an area from the northern tip of Malawi, through Mozambique well into Rhodesian territory.'<sup>133</sup> He conceded that: 'We still know too little about this intercult linkage'

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<sup>129</sup> Interview with, Chief Chitsungu, Richman Madyirapanze at St Raphael's Mission Chitsungu on 11 October 2014.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with, Chief Chiweshe, Matthew Chitemamuswe at St Albert's Mission, Centenary, on 15 October 2014.

<sup>131</sup> Schoffeleers, *Guardians of the Land*, p.19.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 23.



and more research is necessary.<sup>134</sup> The observation of strands of belief systems that were somehow connected but distinct from each other in a network across political boundaries suggests a commonality of religious idiom in the region. At the core of the authority of this idiom were the ancestors who legitimated both the political and religious structures. The advent of colonial rule and missionary Christianity challenged this authority in an unprecedented manner as earlier contacts with the Portuguese and Catholicism were largely fleeting and enclaved in small posts along the Zambezi River at Sena, Tete and Zumbo. The nineteenth century wave of Christian expansion was more determined and incisive even though its penetration of the mid Zambezi remained modest when colonial rule had run its course.

### **Colonial rule and Christian missions**

The first permanent Catholic mission in the mid Zambezi, *Paroquia de São Tiago de Maior de Tete*, had been established at Tete in 1562 but its momentum had waned by the time the new impetus that coincided with imperial rule began in the nineteenth century. Colonial rule provided a secure context for missionary expansion, notwithstanding the now established fact that the two were independent of each other. Priests, brothers and nuns arrived to augment the mission at Boroma on 12 August 1890.<sup>135</sup> They were met at Tete by Fr Victor José Courtois who compiled the first comprehensive Nyungwe grammar (*Elementos de Grammatica Tetense*) in 1899.<sup>136</sup> Within a space of two years the nuns had charge of thirty women and children at Boroma and by 1896 the mission had seventy-two girls, seventeen women and ten children in their crèche who lived at the mission. In 1906 the number of girls had risen to 105 with 36 in boarding school. By the time of the temporary

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> *Cem Anos De Presença Das Irmãs De S. José de Cluny em Moçambique* (Maputo, 1990), p. 22.

<sup>136</sup> Martins, *Elementos Da Lingwa Nyungwe*, p. 9.

closure of the mission in 1912 following the Republican coup in Portugal in 1910, the mission had 233 students under the care of the Sisters.<sup>137</sup>

The German Jesuit Fr Czimmermann had helped establish Boroma Mission as early as 1885 and also laid the foundations for the revival of Miruru Mission at Zumbo near the confluence of the Luangwa River with the Zambezi. Zumbo had flourished during the time of the Dominican Fr Pedro de Trindade who had arrived there from Goa, India, in 1725. When he died in 1751, his successors, Frs. João and José, chose to accept the positions of captains in the Portuguese administration at the expense of missionary work. The result was that by 1786 the mission had declined to such an extent that the explorer-trader Lacerda de Almeida did not even mention it when he travelled that way in 1786. Neither did A.C.P. Gamito in 1831.<sup>138</sup> Bands of Nguni warriors, escaping Shaka's rule in the south finally ransacked it in 1835. The old Dominican mission was thus abandoned. Czimmermann's missionary party left for Zumbo on 15 January 1890 and arrived on 12 February. Later, more Cluny sisters from Portugal were dispatched, arriving at Boroma in June 1908. On 3 August four Cluny Sisters left for Zumbo from Boroma accompanied by a Brother Matheus and about 120 porters who were said to have been paid by the government.<sup>139</sup> They walked through dense forests for close to 500 kilometres on a 15 day journey often within a few kilometres from the Zambezi River going upstream. They passed Marara and Cabalancia and reached Chizue on the third day. On the eighth day they crossed the Zambezi and reached Mtela on the tenth day where they met with a hostile local African medium. This was the first documented contact with an African religious functionary. The fact of its mention in the records indicates its significance.

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<sup>137</sup> *Cem Anos*, p. 23.

<sup>138</sup> Hugo Hinfelaar, *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia* (Lusaka, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Cem Anos*, p. 50.

Three days later they met with another hostile reception when they passed through the territory of one just described as ‘*o rei da selva*’ – ‘king of the jungle’. Just a week after arrival, on 25 August, the sisters found themselves in charge of the education of 55 students and a few days later the number had jumped to 104 boarding and day scholars. By 18 November 1908 there were 57 boarders with 15 students ready for first communion and 30 for baptism. Boroma’s *Missão de São José de Boroma* was the largest mission in the Tete region before the departure of the male and female missionaries in 1910.<sup>140</sup> According to the baptism register of Boroma mission from the beginning of its records up to 1917, the baptised came from a network of centres over a wide area, as well as from outside the mid Zambezi region such as Manica and Sofala. The register listed, Boroma, Degue / Kasumbadedza, Kamanga, Katipu, Chimambe, Matsatsa, Mphanzo, Chiuta, Chagwambu, Chipiriri, Nhaondue, Mirindi, Cangamwana, Thuntha, Kanjanda, Nhaufa, Caphaia, Mpikizo, Tete, Sena, Chitsa, Cabora-Bassa, Chitima, Muanan’gombe, Nfidze, Manica, Sofala, Nkomadzi, Nhanterize, Mufa, Nhoadza, Macanga and Marara.<sup>141</sup>

When Lourenço Marques (Maputo) became the colonial capital in 1906, ecclesiastical governance moved there as well. However, up until 1910 the Jesuit *Zambézia Inferior* Mission continued to have its ecclesiastical capital at Quelimane and oversaw ten Missions, three of them in the Nyungwe-speaking region of the mid Zambezi at Tete, Boroma, Miruru (Zumbo).<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *Cem Anos*, p. 35.

<sup>141</sup> *Missão de S. José de Boroma, Batismos: Volume V, 21 June 1917-26 December 1917*.

<sup>142</sup> Jose Augusto Alves de Sousa and Francisco August da Cruz Correia, *500 Anos de Evangelização em Moçambique, 11 de Marco de 1498 – 11 de Marco de 1998*, (Braga, 1998).p. 59.

In southern Rhodesia, following the occupation of Mashonaland, there was a rapid increase in the number of Christian missionaries and European settlers of various nationalities in accord with the BSAC mandate ‘to aid and promote immigration’.<sup>143</sup> Catholic centres were established at Salisbury and Chishawasha, the only Catholic mission centres in the mid Zambezi on the Rhodesian side before 1900. Unlike in Portuguese East Africa, Catholics did not have a monopoly of mission space and were not privileged over their Protestant brethren even though they took greater advantage of the opportunities offered by Company rule than the other Christian missionaries to establish their institutions. Subsequently, half the 325,000 acres of land given to missionaries by the BSAC administration went to Catholics.<sup>144</sup>

Thus, alongside Catholic missions, some Protestant missions had made inroads across the Limpopo from the Cape prior to 1890. They only became established following BSAC rule. David Livingstone of the London Missionary Society (LMS) had explored the Zambezi extensively from 1853 to 1856.<sup>145</sup> The Jesuit Fr Anthony Weld had described the Protestants as ‘heretical teachers’ who were one of the three obstacles to successful missionary work.<sup>146</sup> He identified the other two obstacles as the ‘dangerous climate’ and the ‘bad morals of the Europeans’.<sup>147</sup> The mutual hostility between missionary groups demonstrates the heterogeneous nature of mission Christianity. Even within Catholicism the various missionary orders such as the Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans had divergent and sometimes antagonistic

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<sup>143</sup> NAZ: MS 851/4/5 Terms of the British South Africa Company Charter, Article 24, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> John Weller and Ian Linden, *Mainstream Christianity* (Gweru, 1984), p. 53.

<sup>145</sup> I. Schapera (ed.), *Livingstone's African Journal 1853-1856* (London, 1963).

<sup>146</sup> Jesuit Archives, Harare: Memorandum by Fr Weld, ‘The Zambezi mission’, 1887.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

policies and missionary methods.<sup>148</sup> In Mozambique, while the Jesuits emphasized a much more thorough education to develop the indigenous population and to facilitate conversion, the Franciscans sided with the Portuguese colonial administration's policy of giving minimal education to Africans in what were called 'rudimentary schools'. This cut public expenditure but also guaranteed the classification of social groups in a manner that supported the creation of a much needed compliant labour force.

The Anglicans in Southern Rhodesia made very little progress both before and during company rule. A letter from the Bishop of Cape Town to the Bishop of Derry on the appointment of Archdeacon Gaul to the Bishopric of Mashonaland described the mission field south of the Zambezi as promising but in need of a large increase of staff. Pamela Welch detailed the early establishment of the Anglican Church in Mashonaland.<sup>149</sup> Mashonaland and Matabeleland had only one priest and one deacon, plus a few, mostly 'native', catechists.<sup>150</sup> Bulawayo town, with a population of 2,000, had no resident clergyman.<sup>151</sup> As with the Catholics, Anglican missionary work only began to make progress after the 1896-7 uprising.<sup>152</sup> The first Anglican mission in Mashonaland, St Augustine's Penhalonga, was founded in 1897. In 1899 it had only nine pupils, but the number rose sharply to 150 in 1907 when they baptised their first adult.<sup>153</sup> Most of the early baptisms were of young boys and girls

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Gabriel Avelino, Beira Mozambique, 21 June 1921. Avelino thought that Franciscans were not interested in educating the Africans for their development but only in so far as it was to make them understand Catholicism and be good servants.

<sup>149</sup> Pamela Welch, *Church and Settler in Colonial Zimbabwe, A Study in the History of the Anglican Diocese of Mashonaland/Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1925* (Brill, 2008).

<sup>150</sup> *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3 May 1895, 'Religion in Rhodesia'.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

because the older generation remained reticent about giving up their traditional beliefs.

The Dutch Reformed Church became established during company rule. On 23 June 1890, the Rev. S.P. Helm with Micha Makgato set out to prospect for land to build a mission. The following year a team led by Andries Adriaan Louw and Koutjie Pienaar together with seven African evangelists arrived. Amongst the evangelists was Izak Khumalo, a grandson of Mzilikazi, the founding king of the Ndebele Kingdom. The other Dutch Reformed evangelists were Lukas Mokoale, Micha Makgato, David Molea, Petros Morudo and Jeremia Morudo. On 9 September 1891, the party reached Mugabe's Mountain and after befriending Chief Mugabe they established the first DRC mission. They called the mission Morgenster (Daystar) after Rev. Louw's hometown in Paarl. This mission was only 33 kilometres from Great Zimbabwe.<sup>154</sup> In 1892, Rev. Louw travelled to Fort Salisbury the new capital of the colony to meet Dr Jameson to negotiate a land grant. Later negotiations with the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) resulted in the DRC letting the former take over some of its earlier centres. The BMS had begun missionary work in the 1880s but only became established when the resistance of the local chiefs Chivi and Gutu was overcome; a mission was built in 1897 at Chivi and another in Zimuto in 1904.

The Salvation Army under the leadership of Captain Pascoe set out from South Africa on 5 May 1891 and reached Salisbury on 18 November 1891.<sup>155</sup> A large farm of some 3000 acres in the Mazoe Valley was donated to the Salvation Army and was subsequently named Pearson Farm. The 1896-7 revolts led to its abandonment, with

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<sup>154</sup> S.K. Jackson, 'The Dutch Reformed Church' in P.S. King (ed) *Missions in Southern Rhodesia*, (Bulawayo, 1959), p. 20.

the surviving missionaries retreating to Salisbury and some returning to South Africa. One Salvation Army member, Captain Cass, was killed in combat during the revolt. The Salvation Army returned in 1901 with Captain and Mrs James Bradley being sent to Salisbury from the Cape and by 1904 it had 15 Africans in training to be officers. Because of the noise of drums and marches at the Pearson Farm the other European settler farmers demanded that the mission be relocated. They felt uncomfortable living with a large group of Africans in their vicinity who frequently encroached onto their farms seeking converts amongst their farm labourers. The colonial administration decided to move the people wholesale away from their ancestral lands to Chiweshe and Guruve communal lands. Mazoe valley, being prime agricultural land, was sold to European settlers. Subsequently Captain Leonard Kirby moved the mission to Nyachuru Village. The new station at Nyachuru village was renamed the Howard Institute in 1924 after Salvation Army Chief of Staff T. H. Howard.<sup>156</sup>

### **Joseph Munyongani of Mutoko**

The religious encounter between traditional African religion and Christianity, as well as the religious change that took place, find greater expression in the stories of individual converts. But, these stories tend to play to a particular agenda. For instance, the Jesuit archivist who referred the author of this study to the story of Joseph of Mutoko was toying with the idea of having him canonised in future as the first locally born Catholic saint. However, the author's interpretation of aspects of the story concluded that it was highly likely that Joseph was, in fact, used to spy on

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<sup>156</sup> R. Cox, 'The Salvation Army' in P. S. King (ed.), *Mission in Southern Rhodesia*, (Inyathi Centenary Trust, 1959), pp. 34 -35.

his own people by the colonial administration before he was dispensed with.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, whoever the author of the story was did not provide sufficient data, often weakening facts with the piety motif. Nevertheless the story still yielded insights into the life of early converts to Catholicism, at least in southern Rhodesia.

The story of Joseph Munyongani of Mutoko (c.1875-1955) is based on two sources, namely the 1895 baptism register of Chishawasha mission which bears his name as the first local convert, and a hand written booklet that tells his story.<sup>158</sup> According to the baptism register, Joseph Masoko Munyongani was born sometime between 1875 and 1879 and died on 10 April 1954. He was baptised at the age of about sixteen or seventeen on 13 April 1895 as Josephum Masoko Miniongani [sic].<sup>159</sup> He appears to be the fifth to be baptised but was perhaps the first or second indigenous person to be baptised at the mission itself.<sup>160</sup> The other names recorded in the same register were of Europeans baptised by Fr Richartz on his way from South Africa to what was to become Rhodesia.<sup>161</sup>

While Joseph was an officially documented person, the hagiographical aspects tend to be arbitrary opinion. According to the baptism register, Joseph Munyongani of Mutoko was the first African convert to Catholicism on the Rhodesian side of the mid Zambezi.<sup>162</sup> Briefly the story states that Joseph was a teenager aged about seventeen when, apparently of his own volition, he visited the Jesuit missionaries at Chishawasha mission from his native Mutoko. No reasons are given for the visit, but

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<sup>157</sup> See Appendix I at the end of this study.

<sup>158</sup> The author appears to have been someone within missionary circles, sympathetic to Joseph.

<sup>159</sup> *Missio Zambensis - Domus* Chishawasha, No. 5, 1895.

<sup>160</sup> The first registered baptism was on 1 April 1893. It was the only baptism of that year. There were three registrations in 1894 and a further three in 1895, one of whom was Joseph Munyongani.

<sup>161</sup> Jesuit Archives Harare, Box 357/2 Joseph Munyongani's handwritten notebook.

<sup>162</sup> Chishawasha Mission Baptism register: *Missio Zambensis Domus*, Entry No.5 of 1895.



he appears to have been well received by the missionaries and given a shirt, food and blankets. He was then encouraged to return to his native Mutoko to fetch members of his family, including his mother. There was much movement back and forth between the mission and his native homeland and at some point he was placed in the service of Cecil John Rhodes, the founder of Rhodesia, who also sent him on various errands to his home village with messages for his chief and other elders. On one occasion his visit was followed by an attack by the colonial army on his people as retribution for their participation in the 1896 uprisings against the BSAC rule. He later found a job at a mine in Shamva. He was baptised and married in the church and lived at the mission, receiving an appointment as the first headman of the Christian village of the mission. After falling out with the missionaries he was forced to leave the mission and chose to settle not in his original home area, but at what later became a new mission station. Throughout, his piety remained undiminished and his rejection of his ancestral beliefs was resolute. If anything, his Christian piety increased as he approached his last days. When he died in 1955, he was buried at Chishawasha mission. A Jesuit priest, Fr Anthony Davies was by his side suggesting that he had received the last rites.<sup>163</sup>

Notwithstanding the issues relating to its veracity and accuracy, the story of Joseph illustrates a broader set of patterns of conversion in the early encounters between Christianity and traditional African religious and political authorities in a colonial context. At seventeen, Joseph was a youth, open to new ideas and with little to lose when he set out in search of the Jesuit missionaries at Chishawasha. And significantly, he then brought his mother and family to settle at the mission. The

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<sup>163</sup> This summary is based on the original longer version given as Appendix I.

theme of these structurally disadvantaged social categories; youth and women, as the first groups to populate the mission centres runs through most studies of early missionary encounter.<sup>164</sup> That encounter pitted Joseph against his traditional religion with its associated practices of *barika* (polygamy), the custom of *kuzvarira* (child betrothal), *bira* (spirit possession dances and ceremonies), *kushopera* (consulting mediums or traditional healers), and *kurova guva*, (the ceremony of ‘bringing back the dead’ as *mudzimu* to look after the surviving family members), which he now rejected. And in spite of his altercation with the missionaries and his ejection from the mission, he separated the message from the messenger and seems to have adhered to his new found religion till death. But this picture was not uniform as illustrated by Cyrillo Kaodza who also grew up at the mission and was Joseph’s contemporary and who, in spite of adoption by the same missionaries, distanced himself from his new religion.<sup>165</sup>

Cyrillo was the son of the Shona rebellion leader Kaguvi alias Gumboreshumba. Kaguvi had asked Fr Richartz to look after his children upon his execution. The priest kept his word and raised Kaguvi’s children at Chishawasha mission with Cyrillo as the heir to his late father’s estate. He was married at the mission according to Christian rites. Because of his education he secured a job as a Native Policemen. In due course Cyrillo was forcibly removed from the mission village, purportedly for being obstinate and disobedient, as happened with many others who persisted in customary practices. Fr Richartz wrote in a 1912 letter:

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<sup>164</sup>Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, p. 117; Sundkler Bengt, ‘African Church History in a new Key’, in Kirsten Holst-Peterson (ed), *Religion, Development and African Identity*, pp. 73-83, Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1987.

<sup>165</sup> Jesuit Archives Zimbabwe, Box 452 letters of Fr Richartz 28 January 1906 and 1912.

Now this boy, having been with us since the rebellion was well instructed and knew exactly the effects of Christian marriage. ... he was certainly well informed by the civil authorities and by his long stay with us and my personal assurance that he could not shake off the fact that he had become a Christian without being forced, and had married as such.... he believed he could take a second wife after being expelled from Chishawasha. Yet in the face of all this, he goes and attempts a second time to marry a second wife, and for this he was arrested [on a charge of bigamy. He pleaded guilty] but gave as his reason for his action that he had left the Church.<sup>166</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that traditional political and religious authority in the mid Zambezi was intertwined. Both derived from the founding ancestors of African clans and polities. This conclusion is consistent with the established characterisation of traditional African religions as ‘ancestral’ and ‘integrative’. The Mwene Mutapa state has been identified as a milestone in the development of the *mhondoro* system of beliefs which was a variation of the wider belief culture in ancestral spirits called *mizimu* or *vadzimu* in which the Supreme Being, identified as *mulungu* or *mwari*, was often eclipsed by the immediacy of deceased ancestral spirits. In this belief system there was also belief in a plethora of spirits, *mashave*, *malombo*, some familial and some foreign, some benevolent and some malicious, with some outright dangerous such as the *ngozi*. This was the dominant religious character of the Nyungwe speaking mid Zambezi, alongside pockets of Christian ideas centred especially in the *prazos* which had been in the region for at least three centuries

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, JAZ, Box 452 letters of Fr Richartz 28 January 1906 and 1912.

before the arrival of the nineteenth century missionary enterprise. The following chapter shows the asymmetrical changes as mediated by missionary education.

## Chapter 2

### **Post conflict missions, education and socio-religious change in the mid Zambezi, 1898-1939**

At the cutting edge of the ‘civilising’ mission claimed by colonial settlers and missionaries was the education provided by Christian churches. The early twentieth century saw not only the exponential growth of mission schools, but a change of attitude towards mission education by village elders who had initially rejected it. Chishawasha, Boroma, Tete and their outstation schools were among the first to offer mission education to native children, though for the greater part of the early twentieth century these schools remained marginal to most of the mid Zambezi. The spread of education brought about gradual changes on the socio-religious landscape as the benefits of the missionary model of education began to accrue. The small but growing numbers of mission-trained African males become socially visible and economically successful. From this social category emerged African nationalist leaders when colonial rule began to wane in the 1940s, precipitated by the Second World War. Mission-educated women were disproportionately fewer in numbers compared to their male counterparts. Yet when they graduated their influence tended to loom disproportionately larger than their numbers.<sup>1</sup> While equipping its recipients with skills relevant to the colonial economy, mission education subverted African religious beliefs in the attempt to bring about a ‘Christian civilisation’.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Harare, 1992), p. 8.

This chapter explores this subversion and the role of mission education in the transformation of the religious landscape of the mid Zambezi in the context of wider changes in southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. It will show that mission education was a layer over pre-existing forms of traditional education which essentially fulfilled the same social functions as western education. Like mission education, the traditional education system was underpinned by a set of religious assumptions. Mission education transmitted its own set of religious assumptions and ethos which undermined traditional religion. The educational impact, however, came via the longer route of Christianised, educated individuals, because it was only in the 1940s that lasting schools were built in the mid Zambezi. This variegated the transition in the mid Zambezi as some places were better schooled than others, but it also meant a longer lease of life for traditional religion in its earlier forms.

In this chapter, colonial and missionary education systems have been conflated to reflect the complementarities that characterised the relations between church and state in matters of education as well as the fact that, on the whole, it was the missions that actually provided education in the colonial context. The boundary splitting the mid Zambezi generated notions of difference and alienation, setting the path of separate patterns of development in the historically connected region that had become Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. Like African borders elsewhere, the border met colonial objectives while overlooking local inhabitants who nonetheless gradually internalised it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ricardo René Larémont, *Borders, Nationalism, and the African State* (London, 2005), p. 2.

## **Calls for Education**

In 1923 the Reverend C.C. Fuller called on the Southern Rhodesian government to do more about education because ‘the missions will not long be able to carry the burden of native education.’<sup>3</sup> He noted that in his twenty years in the missions he had never seen such a demand for education on the part of natives. He observed that though few of the chiefs and headmen were initially willing to have schools opened in their territories, the mood had changed. ‘Now the demand for schools on the part of the chiefs and headmen runs ahead of the ability of the mission to open schools and furnish teachers.’<sup>4</sup> Fuller was confirming a sea change of attitudes towards western education in the 1920s and the fact that the missionaries were at the forefront of providing that education. The growing appeal of education appears to have been widespread across Africa.<sup>5</sup> Victor Murray observed in 1929 that;

By far the greater part of native education in Africa is in the hands of Christian missions. Where government comes in it is to supplement their work rather than to replace it. This association of education with organised Christianity has several important consequences. To all intents and purposes the school is the Church. Right away in the bush or in the forest the two are one, and the village teacher is also the village evangelist. An appreciation of this fact is cardinal in all considerations of African education.<sup>6</sup>

Murray came to this conclusion on the basis of research carried out in several English-speaking colonies in Southern, Eastern, Central and West Africa. If indeed the school was the Church and the Church the school, it followed that the goals of school and Church were complementary. Schools and their curricula were intended for evangelisation that entailed the eradication of ‘superstition, witchcraft, magic and

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<sup>3</sup> C. C. Fuller, ‘Notes on (a) Education and (b) Land’ in N. H. Wilson (ed.), *The Southern Rhodesian Native Affairs Department Annual, 1923* (NADA), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (London, 1983), p. 127; A. A. Jaques, ‘Teaching of Hygiene in Native Primary Schools’, *Africa*, 3, No. 4 (1930), pp.501-505; A. W. Hoernlé, ‘An Outline of the Native Conception of Education in Africa’, *Africa*, 4, No. 2 (1931), pp.145-163; G. C. Latham, ‘Indirect Rule and Education in East Africa’, *Africa*, 7, No. 4 (1934), pp.423-430.

<sup>6</sup> A. Victor Murray, *The School in the Bush* (London, 1929), p. 65.

sorcery' which missionaries and colonial officials initially understood African religion as.<sup>7</sup> In this way, mission schools were not only sites of religious encounter but instruments of undermining traditional religion. Murray wrote through the lenses of the conviction that '[e]ducation depends upon social structures both for its nature and for its aim'.<sup>8</sup> At another level, the phenomenon of teacher-catechists demonstrated the double-edged nature of missionary education; incorporation into the colonial economy and conversion to Christianity, thereby reshaping the religious landscape. The results on the ground, however, while evident, were often unexpected.

This was because of a persisting degree of resistance by Africans who were not just passive recipients of European knowledge, but actively engaged with it on the basis of their own traditions and a parallel traditional education system which, though largely informal and domestic, remained more widespread than the mission school system thereby mitigating religious change. We have to rely on the work of early anthropologists to gain insight into the nature of traditional education. The existence of traditional African education systems was common knowledge to scholars by the 1930s, despite earlier remarks such as those carried in *The Rhodesia Herald* of 1895 that 'Their [African] children grow up wild, [and] there is no such a thing as education'.<sup>9</sup> Writing in 1932, Audrey Richards observed that in Central Africa '[a]uthority is maintained in the village community by a systematic education of the children in the principle of respect for age, and by the rule of the headman, himself usually the family head, and the man responsible for making prayers and sacrifices to

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<sup>7</sup> *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 August 1893.

<sup>8</sup> Murray, *The School in the Bush*, p. viii.

<sup>9</sup> *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3 May 1895, 'Native Education'.



the ancestral spirits of the village'.<sup>10</sup> This system of education was beholden to a culture that yielded effective power and social control to the male, often elderly, leaders of the community. These elders dispensed justice, advised the rulers, had more possessions, monopolised respect, were custodians of social memory and were considered wise. Young men and women in general automatically came under the control of elders, a social structure which mission education helped to break down through its individualist rendering of salvation and morality.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the transmission of survival skills and the emphasis on respect for elders, traditional education focused on kinship protocols, community living, the importance of ancestors and the moral dimension called *unthu* (Nyungwe) and *hunhu* (Shona) or *Ubuntu* (Nguni), a trait shared in the commonwealth of Bantu speakers who dominated the region as seen in chapter one. This was particularly true of the mid Zambezi where missionary educational facilities increased slowly compared to the centres of Tete and Salisbury, meaning that the traditional forms of knowledge transmission there lingered for longer.

A relevant starting point in discussing education would be to examine this indigenous education system in brief and general terms, as a sequel to the political and religious authority structures discussed in chapter one. The assumption here is that the repertoire of community religious beliefs and practices was sustained and transmitted to successive generations through a form of education of the young which equipped each generation 'in the ways of thinking and behaving which have maintained the society in the past' which it was believed would maintain it in the

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<sup>10</sup> A. I. Richards, 'Anthropological Problems in North-Eastern Rhodesia' in *Africa*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Apr., 1932), pp.126.

<sup>11</sup> Elisabeth Colson, has suggested that the power of elders was undermined by the younger, educated new elites who knew better than they the functioning of the colonial system.

future.<sup>12</sup> This approach helps locate the main points of disjuncture in the interaction with missionary education such as the erosion of the control of community elders; questioning of received wisdom; rise of elitism connected with missionary education; alternative lifestyles; and cultural confusion arising from the continued hold of traditional imaginings as well as the varied responses to missionary education. The chapter will also highlight the changes in the critical areas of ‘native’ concerns such as respect for age, marriage, social relationships and the practice of ancestral religion.

### **Indigenous Education: A gendered transmission of skills, kinship and morality**

From the 1920s, scholars and colonial officials such as District Administrators (DAs) and Native Commissioners (NCs) on the Rhodesian side of the border and *chefes dos postos* in Mozambique noticed that Africans had systems of education and ‘initiation’ practices that kept ‘native’ communities intact. These systems were based in the home, the village square called *dare* and at initiation schools.<sup>13</sup> The anthropologist, Agnes C.L. Donohugh wrote in the 1930s,

Attention might be called to the definite training provided in the native family circle, and carried on beyond that by the community. . . . If only the educational systems introduced into Africa could truly substitute equivalent values for the good elements in native training one would have more hope of the outcome.<sup>14</sup>

A. Winifred Hoernlé thought that indigenous education was thoroughly woven through with a religious outlook, claiming in 1931 that ‘[n]o one can understand the world in which an African man or woman lives, who does not understand the part the

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<sup>12</sup> Hoernlé, ‘An outline of the native conception of education in Africa’, p.146.

<sup>13</sup> *Dare* is a Shona word originally referring to a village meeting place, but which has evolved to also mean a court or legislative assembly; see also Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 147.

<sup>14</sup> Agnes C. L. Donohugh., ‘Essentials of African Culture’, *Africa* 8, No. 3 (1935), p. 337.

ancestors play in their lives, and the extent to which the whole ritual in connexion with these ancestors is vital to their well-being'.<sup>15</sup> She thought that the key difference between Western education and African education was that the former was structured on interdependence to meet needs. European education was characterised by differentiation and the division of labour on a large scale. This led to characteristic specialisations, especially after the industrial revolution, where dependence to meet material needs from overseas was more acutely felt. In African societies, in contrast, where the immediate environment provided all that the community needed for survival, education was structured more on self-sufficiency from the bounty of immediate resources.<sup>16</sup> Education was thus about meeting fundamental needs for survival in the immediate environment and community with a heavy dependence on the cycles of nature. There was a widespread belief that 'the African in his own native environment [was] hardly concerned with anything beyond his own little village community, and the real centre of his life is his own homestead. Here are produced all the food he will eat, the clothes he will wear, the utensils, the weapons, the house – indeed, everything he will need in his daily life.'<sup>17</sup> This generalisation, while broadly true, fits awkwardly in the case of the mid Zambezi with its old regional trade networks which had long opened up avenues for new knowledge about trade and commerce with distant others centred at Tete.

Traditional education in the mid Zambezi by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was to a large extent a transmission of practical skills and a socialisation into the value systems of the kin group and its moral sense in a gendered manner. Survival, prosperity, community relations, care for resources and proper social

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<sup>15</sup> Hoernlé, 'Native Conception of Education', p.150.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

dispositions appear to have been the practical ends of this kind of education. Its content was derived from the lived experiences of elders, captured in a social pool of common skills, technologies, symbols, signs, interpretations, rituals, routines, games and various linguistic usages. While not standardised in the western sense, this education was directional with clear moral, religious and practical objectives, passed on from grandparents and parents to children and grandchildren. Teaching was given by the senior members of the community, especially the *ambuya*, grandmother, through *ngano*, stories, songs, riddles, puzzles and games. The stories helped to develop children's imagination, vocabulary, language, values and social skills in a process that usually began at an early age. The main thrust was invariably the imparting of wisdom, social skills, manners, acceptable behaviour, roles and the appropriate ways of relating to people in the various degrees of affinity within the extended family, lineage, clan and the wider social order.<sup>18</sup> As the communities of the mid Zambezi lived in villages consisting mainly of related kin, a major thrust of traditional education had to do with social coexistence and its taboos.

Practical skills were often learnt by imitation and apprenticeship. Curiously, exceptional skills in hunting, dancing, masonry and the manufacture of certain merchandise were thought to be a result not just of apprenticeship or instruction, but of possession by a *shave* or *malombo* spirit of that particular trade.<sup>19</sup> In this case, the skill was transmitted gratuitously. In the same vein there was also a whole plethora of skills and capacities that were believed to have been acquired through charms, magical concoctions, and other means that had nothing to do with formal training.

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<sup>18</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 23. See also A. C. Hodza and G. Fortune, 'Shona Praise Poetry', in Aaron C. Hodza and George Fortune (eds.), *Shona Registers*, Vol.1 (Salisbury, 1975), p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Butao Nyangoma at Moatize, Tete on 5 June 2011.

For instance, in the case of farming skills leading to better harvests, it was believed in some instances that the successful farmer had procured magical portions or had in their possession goblins that worked at supernatural rates. Success therefore was not always hinged on education, nor did it always guarantee social esteem; it could provoke jealousy, envy and charges of using magic or witchcraft.<sup>20</sup> In this we see a cultural ambiance in which there was always a reference to the supernatural as cause and explanation.

Egalitarianism was not a characteristic feature of Nyungwe and Shona society as there were longstanding social inequalities created by lineage, gender, child pledging, clientage and economic status. The terms *vatorwa*, *varanda*, *anyabasa* and *ku-zvambarara* which David Beach noted were common parlance since pre-colonial times, attest to this.<sup>21</sup> However, the traditional education system in the mid Zambezi emphasised cooperation over competition to meet needs, and perpetuated a similar way of life across social groups. The home, diet and lifestyle of a ruler, chief or headman, was not much different from that of a commoner even though some chiefs built their homes on prominent landscapes such as hilltops and some had more possessions. Wealth and status did not necessarily translate to exceptional lifestyle differences. Describing an encounter with Chief Njanji Katerere of the Hwesa (who died not long afterwards, sparking a succession storm), David Maxwell was disappointed when he met the man: ‘I encountered the pathetic figure of a decrepit old man in a badly kept homestead. His words did nothing to reassure me. As I sat in the dust at his feet, clapping in respect, he thanked me for coming to see him and

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Butao Nyangoma at Moatize, Tete on 5 June 2011.

<sup>21</sup> David Beach, ‘Zimbabwe: Pre-Colonial history, demographic disaster and the University’, in *Zambezi* (1999) XXVI (i), p. 10.

complained that few others seemed to bother.’<sup>22</sup> Paradoxically, missionary education, while creating yet another social strata of an ‘educated’ class, contributed to bridging the inequalities by availing literacy and education to all regardless of position in the traditional social categories.

Marriage was often seen as the key object of growing up. Again in this case, missionary education introduced a new conceptualisation of the nature of such a fundamental goal in mid Zambezi traditional life. All imitation play, *mahumbwe*, (Shona) or *Mafuwa* (Nyungwe) was ordered towards this goal and was an important tool to train children for their parental roles in the future. The Shona and Nyungwe developed an elaborate set of rules and taboos around the marriage institution which was the foundation of kinship. Teaching on relations with kin was fundamental and each child grew up knowing this was the basis of identity. Children had to sing their totems, *mitupo*, praisenames, *zvidawo* and origins to establish the basis of the right rapport and to keep the avoidance rules and taboos.

In 1931, Hoernlé noted that Bantu kinship structure was founded on the principle of ‘the equivalence of siblings’.<sup>23</sup> In brief, it suggested that kinship was structured on a simple common sense logic in which the most similar people to be accorded equal or near equal treatment are those born of the same parents – the brothers and sisters. Their common parentage, not their exceptional individual qualities were what counted. If they are treated equally, as they must be, then the brothers of my father are also my fathers and the sisters of my mother are also my mothers. Their children become my brothers and sisters. The concepts of cousin, nephew, niece, step-brother,

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<sup>22</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, p. 153.

<sup>23</sup> Hoernlé, ‘Native Conception of Education’, p. 149.

etc. did not exist. In present day Shona parlance, apparently complete strangers could address each other as brother or sister or in-law following a brief self-introduction on the basis of simply hailing from the same village or sharing a common totem, called *mutupo*. This logic was extended to a whole range of social connections and relatives in the community as well as to those who had died. The ancestors assumed a vital role in social bonding because they were seen as the basis of kinship in the community. Hoernlé wrote:

We must remember that the spirits of the dead are welded in with the social system as ancestral spirits, who remain an intimate and integral part of the social group, constituting, as it were, the unbroken extension of the group into the unseen world, so that the society consists, as the Bakongo say, of 'all those who are above the ground and all those who are beneath the ground'. The longer the line of ancestors a group can count and the further it can reach back into the past for its beginnings, the stronger it is and the firmer its hold on the soil. . . The ancestors are the real owners of the land, of the cattle, and of all the wealth of the tribal territory.<sup>24</sup>

The relevance of the Bakongo understanding to the Shona and Nyungwe lies in the shared cultural outlook and practice that has already been noted in the last chapter. This synopsis appears to have been widespread in Bantu central Africa of which the mid Zambezi is a part.

If indigenous education was predominantly determined by the need for harmonious coexistence in a community of both the living and the dead, it had, of necessity, to give the right place to the ancestors in the conceptual scheme of those in training. Children and young people were introduced to the efficacy of the spiritual powers governing their existence early in life. They had to adopt the correct behaviour when passing through the graves of the ancestors who still owned the land and controlled its fertility. The initiation of older children into adult society not only prepared them for future roles as parents, but invariably included instruction in the relationship with

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

*vadzimu* (Shona), *mizimu* (Nyungwe) - ancestors. Donohugh wrote; 'In the religious realm we touch the vital part of the African's life. He is dominated by spiritual concepts; he interprets life in terms of spiritual forces. His controls are spiritual.'<sup>25</sup> Donohugh was one of those who had come to believe that indigenous religious ideas and practices should be harnessed to beneficial effect in the new colonial civilisation.<sup>26</sup>

Young people were taught to observe the social codes and taboos enunciated by spirit mediums and were equipped with the right words for the right occasions. And since a significant part of this teaching was passed on in practical situations and the children had to learn by imitation and role playing called *mahumbwe* (Shona) and *mafuwa* (Nyungwe), they were encouraged to attend public community ceremonies, especially those of the immediate clan. Special taboos reinforced compliance. The order in public 'native' ceremonies seemed consistently to demonstrate underlying principles that had been learned and internalised:

Anyone who has been at a Bantu ceremony will have noticed the orderly way in which each stratum of the society takes its place, without jostling or intermingling. The very tiny children will most likely be with their mothers or older sisters. The little boys will form a group by themselves, and so will the little girls. The youths form another group, the young unmarried men another, the young married men yet another, and so on, a visible illustration of the way in which these groups function in the social structure. Now, a great part of the education of a Bantu child is achieved through these various age-sets, each successive set having its rights and duties attached to it, which must be learnt at each stage.<sup>27</sup>

Morality was captured in the concept of *Unhu*. The highest social value was called *unthu* or *hunhu* which when loosely translated means 'humane-ness'. *Hunhu* was a moral quality which one possessed or lacked as reflected in one's social conduct.

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<sup>25</sup> Donohugh., 'Essentials of African Culture', p. 337.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Donohugh., 'Essentials of African Culture', p. 152.



Traditional education, while seeking to impart skills, was underlain by the quest to impart *hunhu* / *unthu*. Morally reprehensible conduct, self-distinction and individualistic success were viewed as contrary to *hunhu*. This is illustrated by the cases that were brought to the native commissioners for judgement such as *upombwe* (adultery), *kutukana* (insult), refusal to pay *chikwereti* (debts), etc. which were considered to be morally reprehensible.<sup>28</sup> Witchcraft cases were never reported because they attracted immediate sanction on the accuser by the colonial state which had banned accusations of witchcraft.<sup>29</sup> Being ostentatious was believed to attract witchcraft, *uroyi* (Shona) or *ufiti* (Chewa and Nyungwe). Evil was associated with witchcraft while good was associated with *vadzimu* and *mhondoro*. Mhondoro mediums were seen as embodiments of equity, fairness and virtue and often they were under social pressure to live up to these expectations. Bourdillon observed that spirit mediums' status and following depended on being seen to be just and to express public opinion. Being outsiders to disputes or chiefly lineages worked in their favour in this regard, but they had to be conversant with the complex rules of society and succession to be able to deliver a popular decision<sup>30</sup> The individual was governed by the mores of the community and by the office holders in the community.

The colonial experience introduced new forms of community, often with total strangers, particularly in the mines, farms and European settlements. Individuals or groups who were not of the clan, *vatorwa*, were incorporated into the communal

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<sup>28</sup> Records of cases brought to NCs show these frequently recurring cases for arbitration. NAZ: NSB1/1/1, Mazoe District: Report for the year ended December 1917, Compiled by Native Commissioner Mr Drew.p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> NAZ: Ordinance 14 of 1899. The Witchcraft Suppression Act, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1899. Art. 3.

<sup>30</sup> M. F. C. Bourdillon, 'Religion and Authority in a Korekore Community' in *Africa*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (1979), p. 177.

system but had to pledge loyalty to the local ruler. Often they cemented their incorporation through marriage. The priority of the communal over the individual found expression in the structures of communal existence. A typical village, for instance, was characterised by a seamless collection of huts with no clear boundaries of one yard from that of another. Often villages comprised extended kinship networks. As noted above, the concepts of cousin, aunt, uncle, step-parents or step-siblings did not exist and this perspective extended to other dimensions of social life. In particular, sexuality and marriage were not conceived as an individual matter but that of the community and carried a high moral currency.

Diana Jeater has shown this in her study of marriage and sexuality in early colonial Rhodesia, focusing on the central region of the Gwelo District of 1893.<sup>31</sup> Sexuality was not seen as a private matter by the local Shona.<sup>32</sup> Colonial officials did not understand this, in fact they misunderstood it. Jeater has demonstrated that British imperialism was woven through with a noble, albeit misguided mission, to transform what they considered an impoverished African moral landscape. Apart from the expurgation of slavery, sexuality was seen as key in the ‘civilising’ project. According to Jeater, British sexual morality had been influenced by late eighteenth and nineteenth century homeland experiences of industrialisation and the consequent moral degradation in the emerging industrial slums.<sup>33</sup> This generated problems relating to prostitution, urban poverty and new forms of sexual perversion. Left to itself this situation would lead to a dangerous moral degeneration of Britain amongst the community of nations and undermine its moral standing gained by its lead in the

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<sup>31</sup> Jeater, *Marriage, Pervasion, and Power*, pp. 1 – 34. She studied the people who spoke *chiShona* in the Midlands area of Gwelo (Gweru) and Que Que in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in the area of the old polities of Chiefs Wozheri, Gambiza and Chiwundura.

<sup>32</sup> Jeater, *Marriage Pervasion and Power*, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

eradication of slavery. Yet enforcing moral standards and controlling individual behaviour was difficult in an industrial society. The answer lay in developing the idea of individual conscience which would be a self-policing mechanism. Improper sexual acts would be considered wrong whether or not they were discovered by the state or by others. Morality thus became individualised. The dichotomy of work and home created the notion of a public and private morality respectively, with family sexual morality confined to the domain of the private home.

Armed with this moral understanding and oblivious to the implications for African society and its religion, the settler state sought to impose its moral code on the perceived 'perverse' African men who took advantage of the women and on the 'immoral' African women who lacked sexual boundaries. The policies were blind to the African moral codes which viewed sexuality not as an individual's affair, but as that of the community, the lineage and the ancestors. Sexuality was a communal resource, controlled by elders and regulated by the system of *lobola* - bride price. This was inculcated in the young through a traditional system of education given in the home and at the village centre, *dare* (Shona). In the 1930s young men and women who escaped the control of elders to chart their own course in the European towns found themselves in a moral dilemma as they had to oscillate between two different moral systems in order to fit in. Joseph Munyongani, discussed in chapter one, belonged to this category of youngsters who sought the alternative lifestyle which the colonial dispensation seemed to offer. But the ascendancy of the town over the rural in terms of economic power also meant the ascendancy of the young over their peasant elders and that of the individualist morality which was supported

by the Christian churches. Christian education with its universalistic claims formed the ideological underpinning of this understanding.

The communal dimension of sexuality and marriage, as also noted by Jeater, and the structures of social existence precluded the rise of 'loose' or unattached women.<sup>34</sup> Girls were either under the patronage of their fathers, uncles and guardians or with their husbands. They were considered to wield economic or political potential, until formal transference to a husband following the conclusion of negotiations to pay the bride price. Some young girls were pledged for marriage from birth by elders in what was called *kuzvarira*. The idea of prostitution, *chipfambi*, emerged with the changing socio-economic circumstances in the towns, mines and farms. It was not sustainable in a village setting where everybody knew everybody and what they did. The traditional education system reflected and reinforced this culture. Elisabeth Schmidt, in field researches at the first Jesuit mission in Mashonaland, Chishawasha mission, has shown how girls and women who broke free from patriarchy, went to school or were formally employed, were often branded prostitutes.<sup>35</sup>

Since girls were trained largely to become wives and mothers and their departure from their parental home required the payment of bride wealth – *lobola* or *rovora* (Shona) in cattle and other material items, there was resistance to sending them to school for fear of losing this revenue. Sometimes it was feared that they might not ever marry. Jacinta Protasio, whose father, though a catechist and teacher at Boroma Mission, resisted losing her daughter to the convent.<sup>36</sup> At Chishawasha Mission

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<sup>34</sup> Jeater, *Marriage Pervasion and Power*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with *Irma* Jacinta Marcelina Protasio at Tete on 08 June 2011.

parents demanded *rovora* for their girl children who wished to become nuns or those who frequented the mission for various other reasons such as domestic work for the missionaries. *Rovora* was demanded even for those who had been previously married, widowed or divorced. The marriage institution of *rovora* served various social purposes such as wealth creation, social bond-building and making divorce more difficult.

A memorandum of 2 February 1906 written to the Father Superior of Chishawasha Mission by the Native Commissioner of Goromonzi, J. A. Halliday, asked the Father Superior of the mission to '[k]indly allow these two women late wives of Kagubi, Chargwe and Nzira, to bring their Fathers and present husbands here and any witness as they may have to defend the claims of Mafuratira who states that they are his lawful wives & wishes to claim any *rabora* [*sic*] paid for them.'<sup>37</sup> For the indigenous Shona and Nyungwe society, *rovora* was not just to enrich the father of the bride; in fact, the father got very little of it. Rather, it was a clan patrimony; the ancestors had a share in it, as marriage was not just a bond between the man and women but a bond between families and their ancestors as well.<sup>38</sup> Parents therefore could not risk the consequences of offending the ancestors by denying them the material honour of their 'blood' not being properly sent off from their ancestral home. Parents accepted bride wealth for nuns to appease the possible wrath of the ancestors to whom they could at least explain that their daughter had been 'married' in a different way and that the *rovora* had been paid to prove it. Some missionaries found these demands hilarious or bizarre as they did not understand the thinking behind them.

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<sup>37</sup> Jesuit Archives Zimbabwe, Box 452/8, Memorandum, Native Commissioner's Office, Goromonzi, 2 February 1906.

<sup>38</sup> Athanasio Dzagagu, 'Shona Christians of Mission Churches', PhD Thesis, (SOAS, University of London, 2002)

Often the *rovora*, apart from being shared amongst the many clan stakeholders, was partly used in the marriage of sibling brothers. This was why boys were trained from the beginning to be protective of their sisters. Even after their parents had died, they could still claim it on their behalf. Because of this value attached to the girl child, sexual purity for girls and how they were to treat their husbands and in-laws was at the centre of the traditional education of prepubescent girls. The remark by Maugham in 1910 that ‘throughout the Zambezi Valley, ante nuptial chastity among the girls is as unnecessary as it is undesirable, and, therefore, a *virgo intacta* of over eight or nine years would be considered a rarity,’ clearly did not reflect the general state of affairs.<sup>39</sup> Later scholars observed that traditional education incorporated abstinences, in communities where ‘the sexual life of individuals is subject to direct social control throughout life’ as some area studies in South Africa and East Africa demonstrated.<sup>40</sup>

Boys were generally given a greater latitude of freedom than their sisters. Sending them to the formal missionary schools therefore was seen as opening up opportunities for them. Some clans in the Nyungwe speaking region had periodic initiation schools. Above the river, amongst the Cewa-speaking groups, the initiation for girls was called *chinamwali*. Boys had their equivalent rigorous initiation schools for inception into manhood; masculinity was understood as requiring hardiness, courage and endurance. The Portuguese prohibited the initiation schools in the 1920s, but they continued to be held in the bush, away from the prying eyes of

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<sup>39</sup> Maugham, *Zambezia*, p. 333.

<sup>40</sup> Hoernlé, ‘Native Conception of Education’, p. 160.

colonial officials.<sup>41</sup> It was reported that during these initiation schools, much of the social heritage was passed on to the initiates. Though the physiological training was considered ‘very crude and inaccurate from our scientific point of view,’ it was nonetheless ‘fundamentally right’ and deserved to be preserved and developed, not destroyed, according to Hoernlé.<sup>42</sup>

It was this traditional education system that met with the new knowledge culture introduced by the colonial and missionary experience in the mid Zambezi. This ‘native’ knowledge transmission system was the base from which Africans absorbed the new ideas from the missions and their schools. While there was keen interest, especially amongst the youths, in the missionary school system as the ‘younger natives continue[d] to show an all-round desire for education’ according to NC Mr Drew in 1917, the depth of such education was conditioned by the traditional education they received at home. In his *Growing Up in Shona Society*, Michael Gelfand described the ‘traditional training of the urban child’ and the ‘education of children’ in traditional Shona society.<sup>43</sup> Gelfand observed as late as the 1950s and 60s that school children at Chishawasha were conversant with the cultural and religious knowledge of their traditions. The fact that the mid Zambezi remained peripheral to schools and missions till after the Second World War advantaged traditional norms over Christian norms in the area. The environs of Tete and Salisbury remained favoured for missions and schools while the interior remained largely untouched. David Lan and David Maxwell have noted how the regions of the Zambezi escarpment ‘experienced relatively little missionisation or state penetration’

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.158.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, (Gweru 1979).

leaving 'mhondoro cults' influential there.<sup>44</sup> This feature was to account for the predominance of recruits of the liberation war of the 1960s and 70s and their reliance on *mhondoro* mediums for 'spiritual' guidance. The more educated guerrillas hailed from the towns and mission centres and often assumed leadership positions in the nationalist movement.

### **Missionary perceptions and African education**

In the first decades of colonial rule, where schools were built for native children, the educational policy was basically constructed under the same prevailing assumptions of race noted in the introductory chapter. Education was intended to address perceived 'native' deficiencies.<sup>45</sup> The early 'native' educationist James W. C. Dougall summarised these assumptions: 'the primitive mind is pre-logical, mystical, insensible to contradiction, indisposed to discursive thought or reasoning.'<sup>46</sup> Africans were perceived to be lazy and childlike. That is why, alongside the consolidation of colonial rule, opinion-makers in Southern Rhodesia proposed that schools should be built to give an education that instilled in the mind of the 'native' the meaning of civilization as industry, peace and justice, not violence, improvidence, drink and theft,<sup>47</sup> attributes which were thought to be typical of the 'native'. Education was perceived as a panacea for these ills. For this reason, the 'gospel of work' was to be enforced and not just preached until 'natives' learned to benefit for themselves. The idea was to drill the native with healthy, civilized habits, starting with industry.<sup>48</sup> Pius catechetical education was thought to be not

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<sup>44</sup> Lan, *Guns & Rain*, chapter 3; Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*, p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> Richard A. C. Oliver, 'Mental Tests in the Study of the African' in *Africa*, 7, No. 1 (1934), pp.40-46.

<sup>46</sup> James W. C. Dougall, Characteristics of African Thought in *Africa*, 5, No. 3 (Jul., 1932), p.251.

<sup>47</sup> *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3 May 1895, 'Native Education'.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*



enough as the ‘veneer of Christianity does not protect against kleptomania and dipsomania which follow the breakup of strong tribal custom and authority.’<sup>49</sup>

The idea of introducing manual work as part of ‘native’ education was shared by colonial officials in both Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia. The Jesuits in both countries, at Boroma and Chishawasha, structured their educational curricula around the presumption that Africans were indolent and needed more training in practical exertions. Fr Biehler wrote in 1895 that ‘[s]ince laziness is the mother of all vices and the main defect of these Mashonas, I resolved to drive it out of them at any cost.’<sup>50</sup> His Jesuit colleague, Fr Richartz of Chishawasha wrote: ‘The Native must be made to work, otherwise he will give a continual trouble and be a constant danger for peace and prosperity.’<sup>51</sup> The immediate context of these perceptions was the anti-colonial acts of violence that saw Mbuya Nehanda Charwe, Kaguvi, Gumboreshumba, Zindoga, Mapondera and others die in prison. The memory of these disturbances was still fresh. Africans were to be tamed into decent, responsible and hardworking citizens.<sup>52</sup> The doubts about the intellectual capacity of Africans led Richard Oliver to investigate the issue of ‘Mental Tests in the Study of the African’ and to discover that there was no quantifiable difference between African and European children. He published his findings in 1934. To the question of ‘How do Africans compare with Europeans in intelligence?’ his answer after a long presentation of facts gathered in East Africa, was that he did not know.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Father F. J. Richartz, S.J., ‘History of the Zambesi Mission’, *Zambesi Mission Record* 3, 35, (1907), p. 129.

<sup>51</sup> Jesuit Archives, Box 99/7 F.J. Richartz, “Report About Some Suggestions re Settling of Native-Question Especially Native Labour, Wages, etc.,” 17 May 1897, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Oliver, *Mental Tests*, p.45.

While vocational training for Africans was to receive pride of place, the colonial administrations supported this vision in principle only; the actual building and running of schools was left by and large to missionaries. J.H. Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council and leading light in the International African Institute, the journal of which was *Africa*, writing in 1934, claimed that all ‘the mistakes in native education in East Africa have been made by the missionaries’. The reason was ‘that they were the only people who could make them, since they have been the only people engaged in education.’<sup>54</sup>

### **Missionary education in Mozambique**

We have already seen in chapter one how Fr Czimmermann established Boroma mission in Tete in Mozambique as part of the revival of the much earlier but now faded Portuguese missionary enterprise. We have also seen the proliferation of Protestant missions in southern Rhodesia and the establishment of Chishawasha mission on the outskirts of Salisbury. This section considers in greater detail these missions and the influence of their network of satellite schools, beginning with the mission schools in Mozambique.

The Portuguese Catholic church was meticulous in keeping records and statistical information in Mozambique. Registers of baptism, confirmation, marriage and death were standard practice at Catholic missions. Annual statistical returns were forwarded to Lourenço Marques which had become the headquarters of both church and colony from 1906. Students were placed in five categories according to race as Europeans (*Europeus*), Asians (*Amarelos*), Indo-Portuguese, Africans (*Africanos*)

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<sup>54</sup> J. H. Oldham, ‘The Educational Work of Missionary Societies’, *Africa*, 7, No. 1 (1934), p.47.

and *Mixtos*.<sup>55</sup> This reflected the pre-occupation with race in Portuguese colonial administration as well as the ethnic mix of the urban Zambezi Valley settlements and the coastal regions, where historic Portuguese presence was significant. This statistical mapping extended to other institutions directly associated with the Church such as hospitals, clinics, orphanages and guilds.

This statistical evidence offers important clues to understanding the impact of education in the Nyungwe region, but Brian Peterson has noted the methodological problems that can result from the uses of statistical records and census data.<sup>56</sup> These problems are often related to the census being used as ‘an exercise of colonial bureaucratic power in Africa’ and, as such, its politicisation could skew the official demographics to meet perceived fears or needs rather than reflect social realities. Peterson noted that in the case of Mali for instance, the reduction of African religion to ‘fetishism’ and ‘animism’ as categories of enumeration made people shy away from being counted as such. They preferred to be counted as Muslims because it was better respected.<sup>57</sup> Hiding true identities and adopting new, safer identities convenient for the occasion were not unique to Mali as we shall see in chapter four; this was widely practiced in the mid Zambezi by migrant workers. It resulted in what Peterson called ‘aphasia’ and the misunderstanding of social realities. In the case of Church records the pitfalls lie in incomplete information, omissions, readability issues, missing records in a series, exaggeration of figures and competing counter claims by other groups. Sometimes the sheer volume of data presents challenges of selection. Owing to the non-recognition of African religion as religion, there was the

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<sup>55</sup> Arquivo do Arcebispado do Maputo, Moçambique: *Prelazia de De Mocambique Ano de 1932, Ensino profissional na Missao de S. Jose de Boroma*.

<sup>56</sup> Brian Peterson, ‘Quantifying conversion: A Note on the Colonial Census and Religious Change in Postwar Southern Mali,’ *History in Africa*, 29 (2002), pp. 381 – 392.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

tendency to make no reference to it at all. Muslim and ‘heretics’ – Protestants, were at least accorded mention and enumeration in some church censuses. In this way missionary records therefore make poor sources for African religion, at least, in the case of the mid Zambezi.

Mozambique’s educational network of missions and schools was apparently well coordinated judging from the consistency and regularity of annual statistical returns.<sup>58</sup> The *Secretaria da Prelazia de Moçambique e Direção Geral das Missões Católicas Portuguesa* divided the country into seven educational districts.<sup>59</sup> These were Lourenço Marques, Inhambane, Quelimane, Tete, Moçambique, and the areas under the administration of the *Compania de Moçambique* and *Compania de Niassa*.<sup>60</sup> As was the case in Southern Rhodesia, the government in Mozambique, for want of resources and personnel, shed its educational responsibilities not only to the Catholic Church but to the chartered companies as well, such as the *Compania de Moçambique* which governed much of central Mozambique to the border with Tete district. According to the terms of the agreement, the company had to satisfy international conventions, arrange an effective administrative system, pay the officials, pay ‘half the cost of the judicial and ecclesiastical departments’, build a railway line from ‘the Pungwe river to the British frontier’ and within a decade to establish within its concession one thousand settler families from Portugal.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The consistency and regularity of the reports sent to superiors kept in the *Arquivo do Arcebispado do Maputo*, bear testimony to this claim.

<sup>59</sup> *Arquivo do Arcebispado do Maputo*, Moçambique, Caixa 142a, *Mapa do Movimento escolar das Missões Católicas Portuguesa da Colônia de Mocambique, durante a ano lectivo de 1920*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Maugham, *Zambezia*, p. 98

Significantly, the company was to establish primary schools in settlements that had more than six hundred people as well as agricultural schools.<sup>62</sup>

In each district, figures of the number of missionary schools were given, stating the mission centres, the outstations, the numbers of boys only, girls only and mixed sex schools as separate categories. The number of day schools and evening schools and the total number of graduates in the particular year were also consistently given. Mission centres tended to have a number of satellite out-centres attached to which were some ‘rudimentary’ schools as shown in the table below.

Year	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
<b>Tete District</b>	2/7	3/18	4/20	3/41	3/42	3/39	4/46	5/39	5/22	4/39	4/32

Number of schools at the Mission Centre *Na Sede das Missões* versus (/) the outstation schools *Fora da Sede das Missões* from 1920 to 1930 in Tete, Mozambique.<sup>63</sup>

In 1920, Tete had the greatest number of school graduates after Lourenço Marques in the south. Though it had a disproportionately low number of schools – only two main mission schools and seven outstation schools – it produced 2,335 school graduates in 1920.<sup>64</sup> This was because the mission establishments in Tete, Boroma and Lifidzi were large and enrolled larger numbers of students. The largest enrolment was at Boroma which offered more courses and had a more elaborate infrastructure. The districts of Inhambane, Quelimane, Moçambique and the areas under the *Compania de Moçambique* and *Compania do Niassa* together produced

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Compiled from the records of annual returns to the Archdiocese of Lourenço Marques kept in the *Arquivo do Arcebispado do Maputo*, Moçambique, Caixa 142a, *Mapa do Movimento escolar das Missões Católicas Portuguesa da Colónia de Moçambique, durante o ano lectivo de 1920*.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

only 1,076 school graduates. The whole colony of Mozambique had a total of 6,577 graduates. This meant that, 48 per cent of all school graduates in the colony were from Lourenço Marques in the south with Tete producing 35 per cent and the remaining districts combined only 16 per cent. Thus in 1920, the two educational districts of Lourenço Marques and Tete accounted for 83 per cent of the total graduate population of the colony. Statistically, Lourenço Marques district with its 41 schools had an average of 77 graduates while Tete district with its nine schools had an average of 259 graduates. It could be speculated that these figures show that Tete district had the highest concentration of pupils at its schools in the whole colony.<sup>65</sup>

This could give the impression that Tete was inundated with literate people, but this was not the case. Many students at Boroma and Angonia missions were not local, but came from distant regions to pursue vocational courses offered at these missions. The missionary network enabled students from as far as Beira, Villa Perri (Chimoio) and Sena to come to Boroma to train in the practical trades offered there. There was movement across district zones and even across the border with Southern Rhodesia between Chishawasha Mission and Boroma.<sup>66</sup> Baptism registers kept at Boroma showed this regional mixture in the student population. The rather disproportionate numbers of confirmation statistics which were much higher than the baptisms showed that there were students who were baptised elsewhere but were confirmed at Boroma. The confirmations indicated that these students came to the mission as mature young men and women from other regions of Mozambique.

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<sup>65</sup> Figures directly compiled from documents found at the *Arquivo do Arcebispo do Maputo, Moçambique, Caixa 142a, Mapa do Movimento escolar das Missões Católicas Portuguesa da Colónia de Moçambique, durante o ano lectivo de 1920.*

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Mr Marcellino Manuere on 23 August 2008 at Murewa, Zimbabwe. A native of Boroma, he was sent by missionaries to study at Chishawasha in the late 1940s.

While a sizeable proportion of students came from distant places, there was clearly the local component drawn from the nearby villages and outstation schools. Protasio Vicente (discussed in greater detail below), for instance, had come from Degue (also called Kasumbadedza), a settlement between Tete town and Boroma, and Maria Inacia Chassauka from Angonia to the north. They met as students at the mission and, according to records kept at Boroma Mission, married on 6 June 1910.<sup>67</sup> Missionaries were keen to promote such Christian marriages between Christian boys and girls.

Tete district therefore produced a significant percentage of graduates for the whole colony, contributing to the diffusion of Christian ideas. By the end of the decade however, Tete had slipped from second to fourth place in the table of producing graduates. This can be explained by the growth of educational infrastructure elsewhere by the 1930s which absorbed candidates who would otherwise have been destined for Tete schools. Tete, however, still remained the second highest in the aggregated total for the decade. The total numbers of graduates in the decade from 1920 to 1930 were: Lourenco Marques 96,485; Inhambane 10,713; Quelimane 2,198; Tete 30,563; Mozambique 14,183; *Compania de Moçambique* Territories 24,243 and *Compania de Niassa* Territories 3,563.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Registo De Baptismos, Missao de Sao Jose de Boroma.*

<sup>68</sup> The author compiled these figures from the original loose sheets grouped together (in Box 142A) in the *Arquivo De Arcebispado de Maputo, Caixa 142 A, Mapa do Movimento Escolar das Missões Católicas. Portuguesa da Colonia de Mocambique, durante a ano lectivo de 1920.* All the documents of this period were preserved and accessible which made this computation possible.

## Portuguese policy

Portuguese educational policy under the monarchy consistently favoured the Catholic Church to the exclusion of others.<sup>69</sup> This policy was briefly interrupted when the Republican Party in Portugal deposed the monarchy on 5 October 1910 and subsequently established the First Republic.<sup>70</sup> The republic was liberal and allowed many civic freedoms while curtailing those of the Catholic Church which was seen as having been too powerful and partly responsible for the country's economic woes and decline in the international arena: this saw many Portuguese missionaries abandoning the field in the mid Zambezi. At this stage, official policy even in the colonies was anticlerical. Boroma and Miruru, however, weathered this storm and secured missionaries from elsewhere in Europe and its educational enterprise continued. This state of official hostility was only reversed following the overthrow of the republicans in the 1926 military coup that established the single party *Estado Novo*, the New State.<sup>71</sup>

The *Estado Novo* redefined Portugal's relationship with its overseas holdings. The Portuguese colonial empire was to be synonymous with Portugal which originally only referred to European Portugal. The expansion of Portugal overseas was cast as having been an expansion by 'conquest and peaceful acquisition of islands and coastal territories' the outcome of which was a territorial unity glued together by the Portuguese language and the Catholic religion.<sup>72</sup> There were to be no more 'conquered territories' or 'possessions' but rather 'overseas provinces'. With the

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<sup>69</sup> Eduardo Moreira, 'Portuguese Colonial Policy' in *Africa Vol. 17, No. 3* (July, 1947), p.190.

<sup>70</sup> Moreira, 'Portuguese Colonial Policy,' p.190.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



Catholic faith at the core of the ideals of empire, that faith was hamstrung to the conveniences of the state.

For the Zambezi missions, the purity of doctrine was paramount as per the emphasis of the First Vatican council of 1869-1870. This council was alarmed by the sweeping changes brought about by modernity. It therefore inclined towards a more traditional faith that was intolerant of innovation in matters of faith and morality. In the Portuguese territories, this intolerance found a political counterpart in the *Estado Novo* regime of Antonio Salazar who affirmed in an interview ‘that there was only one religion in the country, as also but one national policy, and that, should other lines of thought make their appearance, they would be suppressed.’<sup>73</sup> That one religion was Catholic Christianity. In 1935 a deputy in his government had also declared amid general applause: ‘I affirm the need for intolerance *pro-patria* in all educational establishments, from elementary schools to the universities, education never to be entrusted to anyone not a ‘nationalist’.’<sup>74</sup> Education was harnessed to a national cause, at least theoretically.

The Portugalisation of the colonies generated new social identities, giving rise to the categorisations of *mixtos*, *Europeus*, *amarelos* and so on. Being *assimilado* meant that the indigenous had to divest himself of his own identity to adopt that ascribed to him by the Portuguese in some sort of evolutionary process. There were strict empire-wide rules governing the application for and attainment of the status of *assimilado* and a fundamental legal distinction between *indigena*, the vast majority of the population, and the *assimilado*. That the mid Zambezi hosted a larger

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<sup>73</sup> Moreira, ‘Portuguese Colonial Policy’, p. 184.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

proportion of the Portuguese and Afro-Portuguese for historical reasons than other parts of the interior made this distinction more significant. The town of Tete, and the *prazos* in particular, had a disproportionately high number of *assimilado* who, as Madeiros and Capela have already noted, helped to generate the distinctive ‘Zambesian Ethos’.<sup>75</sup> The *assimilado* were officially Catholic whereas the *indigena* largely followed traditional religion. The *indigena* called themselves *asenzi* in Nyungwe and provided a category from which domestic workers were obtained for the *assimilado* in a pattern akin to servitude. The *mpfummu* at Boroma, Chasafari, had several servants who worked for him.<sup>76</sup> Though ethnically indigenous he had acquired the status of *assimilado* through his role as a *regulo* (chief or headman) and his education at Boroma mission.<sup>77</sup>

The *assimilado* had arisen from the Portuguese vision of civilising the world. ‘The Portuguese ideal was the Christianising of the world for its good, winning in compensation both glory and profit through the exploitation of the captured lands’.<sup>78</sup> The Catholic faith was central to this project and to Portuguese self-image and world glory. The clergy therefore became a highly privileged estate in the Portuguese scheme and these attitudes continued to more recent times in former Portuguese colonies. Thus, Portuguese educational policy wove a cultural and religious narrative into their educational enterprise which promoted the colonial status quo. Once again after 1926, Catholic missions enjoyed the favour of a long-standing tradition of state patronage. They were to continue being generously subsidised in return for playing

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<sup>75</sup> Eduardo Medeiros and José Capela: ‘Processes of Identity-Building in the Zambesi Valley: Ethnic Solidarity and the Zambesian Ethos’ in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: The African Experience*, (Oxford, 2010), p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Irma Jacinta Marcelina Protasio, Tete, 08 June 2011.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Constatino Luncholo, Boroma, 7 June 2011

<sup>78</sup> Moreira, ‘Portuguese Colonial Policy’ p. 184.

the indispensable role of welding the empire together through the Portuguese language and religion.<sup>79</sup> This had implications for the educational scheme of Mozambique. In Tete, church-run schools remained the main access to modern education for African children. The vast rural hinterland, however, remained unschooled and in this respect a critical difference emerged to the situation in Southern Rhodesia.

In the case of Southern Rhodesia there was a strict separation of the Catholic Church and the state. Even though Jesuits were present with the Pioneer Column that marched into Mashonaland to establish the settler state, most of the settlers in Southern Rhodesia had a Protestant background. Christian religious space was therefore much more widely contested and shared. The vast majority of settlers were largely poor, unskilled or semi-skilled and barely educated but had nonetheless migrated to the colony for a better life.<sup>80</sup> The majority of them were 'English-speaking whites from South Africa and Britain who were of working class and lower middle class origins'.<sup>81</sup> They were looking for status, wealth and upward social mobility which made them compete with the rising number of mission-educated Africans. They often complained to the state about the education that was being given to Africans and derided it by questioning its necessity. They tended *en bloc* to oppose the missionary education for Africans as it threatened their aspirations and competitiveness. The First World War did not help matters for Rhodesians. A combination of factors led them to continue lobbying for self-rule which led to the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>80</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White; Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, 1987), p. 93; James A. Chamunorwa Mutambirwa, *The Rise of Settler Power in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), 1898-1923* (Rutherford, 1980), p. 27; Richard Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, 1890-1965* (London, 1983), pp. 44- 45. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 9.

end of British South Africa Company rule in 1923. Meanwhile formal school education continued to expand with the number of government schools increasing, especially in the townships built for workers, but their numbers remained eclipsed by mission schools.

### **Missionary education in Southern Rhodesia: Chishawasha and Kutama**

For both Catholic and Protestant missionaries, in the early colonial days colonial administrators gave the missionaries large territories on which to build their missions and schools, for example, Chishawasha Catholic mission theoretically covered the whole region of the north-eastern corner of Southern Rhodesia. The Jesuit Fathers Richards and Boos and five brothers had founded the mission on an 18,000 acre farm ‘acquired from the Chartered Company’ in 1891.<sup>82</sup> According to Fr Kaibach, it was only in the years 1899 – 1902 that better buildings were put in place, notably a large church.<sup>83</sup> Mr Pauling, the mastermind of the original rail network across the colony that became Rhodesia, was generous to the Jesuits, assisting them to build a limestone kiln when limestone was discovered on the property in 1900.<sup>84</sup> The mission extended to the north-eastern border with Mozambique adjoining the Nyungwe speaking region and theoretically up to the northern Rhodesian (Zambia) frontier. The suppression of the 1896-97 uprisings in Southern Rhodesia provided Chishawasha mission with the first groups of children to establish a school. Children orphaned by the war found refuge with the mission as well as adults who,

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<sup>82</sup> Jesuit Archives, 101 A, Fr Kaibach SJ, Short sketch of the History of Chishawasha (Handwritten). It was Fr Kaibach’s brief handwritten ‘Short Sketch of the History of Chishawasha’ that popularised the notion that the land was deserted when the two fathers arrived there. This may have been a casual observation but more likely, it may well have been meant to recuse the missionaries of the anxiety of lingering accusations of being complicit in dispossessing the natives of their land. This mantra is repeated ‘There were no natives on the land until at the end of the first year’.

<sup>83</sup> Jesuit Archives, 101 A.

<sup>84</sup> Tanser, G. H., *Founders of Rhodesia* (Cape Town, 1950).

demoralised and hungry from the contemporaneous drought, sought the help of the missionaries but also got baptised. Fr Richartz had baptised Kaguvi in 1898 and had offered to look after his children at the mission.<sup>85</sup> From these villagers the mission structured a semblance of a mission. The missionaries' roles often overlapped with those of the civil jurisdictions as they decided on who could and could not stay within the mission territory. In these early days parents were often forced to send their children to school as the boarding school system was thought to separate them from their native environment which diluted or corrupted the Christian values taught at the mission. In a parallel sort of way, the valley around the mission was turned into a Christian village. Here, polygamy and indigenous religious ceremonies were forbidden since the mission village was meant to be a model for the newly civilized. Those who continued the old practices were often expelled.

From Chishawasha mission attempts were made to start schools 'in the parts which were left to [natives]' such as at Seki (Seke) Reserve to the south where a school and a hut for the priest were built, but these were destroyed in the uprisings of 1896-8. After the disturbances, attempts to expand the work of Chishawasha mission continued, resulting in the establishment of Kutama and Murombedzi outstations. In 1911, Fr Richards made a follow-up of Christians who had once settled at Chishawasha but had returned to their old homes west of Salisbury in the Kutama area. According to the Marist Brother Ralf, these Christians were descendants of a certain Chonyenga Kutama whose eldest son was called Ushewokunze. He had many siblings including a younger brother called Nyava.<sup>86</sup> Upon Chonyenga Kutama's death, Ushewokunze inherited one of his father's young wives called VaVenda who

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<sup>85</sup> JAH, Box 452, Letter of Fr Richartz, S.J. to Fr Schmitz at Empandeni dated 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1906.

<sup>86</sup> Br Ralf FMS, 'Kutama Mission 50 years' Golden Jubilee, 1964,

was later inherited by Nyava, the possible father of Thomas Usayi in 1888.<sup>87</sup> It was Nyava who led his people to Chishawasha area where contact was first made with the Jesuit missionaries. During the risings of 1896 he and his people fled to the Makove caves of Chinamhora. It was from here that a certain Chikambi led the clan back to the Zvimba area where their great-grandfather had earlier found favour with Chief Zvimba because of his iron-working and hoe-making skills. From the Mazoe region, Chivinda, the son of Ushewokunze led the other branch of Chonyera Kutama's descendants back to Zvimba.<sup>88</sup> The previous year, in August, Fr Lickorish, was visiting Sinoia (Chinhoyi) when he was informed by the Native Commissioner of Lomagundi, Mr Keigwin that some Africans were asking for a missionary, advising him to hurry as the Wesleyan Methodists were ready to enter the area.<sup>89</sup> This was promptly followed by a pastoral visit which saw about thirty people receiving communion during the first mass at Nyava village in Kutama. This marked the beginning of what later became Kutama Mission. Murombedzi, about 25 kilometres away, also became an outstation of Chishawasha Mission with Patrick Chinatsa serving as a catechist for Murombedzi starting in 1912 and Cassiano, son of Chivinda Ushewokunze, installed as the first teacher-catechist of Kutama in 1913.<sup>90</sup>

In this instance we see a family that makes contact with the Jesuit missionaries at Chishawasha during one of their migrations, encountering the new education and the Christian faith. They then, due to social upheavals, relocated to other places and finally returned to earlier ancestral lands. They take the initiative to invite missionaries, leading to the establishment of schools and new missions. This shows

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<sup>87</sup> Thomas Usayi provided much of the clan history to Fr Michael Hannan SJ and Br Ralph FMS who documented it.

<sup>88</sup> JAZ: 134/6 Fr Karl Schmidt, St Kizito's Parish, Gangarahwe, Murombedzi, 80 Years of Missionary Work in Zvimba, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> JAZ: 134/6 Fr Karl Schmidt, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> JAZ: 134/6 Fr Karl Schmidt, p. 4.

that the new ideas were valorised by Africans who had taken ownership of them. The initiative to request missionaries they called *vafundisi* 'teachers' demonstrates a recognition of the inherent value found in the education and message that the missionaries offered. Africans took up the message of Christianity, made it their own and actively propagated it. The school system provided an institutional context for this propagation through the teacher-catechists. This was a recurring theme across southern Africa suggesting that genuine conversions took place, even if our sources are missionary and therefore likely to push the missionary agenda. But these conversions did not mean parting with traditional religion. Africans by and large identified Christianity with education and did not perceive conversion as meaning a departure from traditional African religions. It was movements such as these that helped spread Christian ideas in the mid Zambezi to places where missionaries had not reached. But as Catholics were pegging their positions, Methodists, the Salvation Army and other Christian bodies were also establishing themselves to the north of Salisbury towards the Zambezi. Protestant missionaries also received land grants from the BSAC to build their missions. In 1914 the Salvation Army was the only church operating in Mazoe District according to a district report compiled at the end of that year.<sup>91</sup> As at December 1917, three different denominations obtained mission sites along the southern boundary of the Negomo Reserve including 'the Salvation Army with Headquarters on Salisbury road, near Mazoe,' and they had established outstations at Jumbo and Shamva to the north of Salisbury.<sup>92</sup>

At Kutama, it was Fr Loubiere, who had been expelled from PEA during the First World War, who became the first resident priest in September 1914. He reduced

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<sup>91</sup> NAZ: NSH 3/1/1, Mazoe District: Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1914, p.8.

<sup>92</sup> NAZ: NSB1/1/1, Mazoe District: Report for the year ended December 1917, Compiled By native Commissioner Mr Drew, p.7.

Murombedzi to an outstation-school while promoting Kutama into a fully-fledged mission, independent of Chishawasha. He further expanded it into a Christian village from 1918 onwards. Schools were then opened at Kawondera in 1935, Mhandu 1947, Katsvamutima 1951, Mareverwa 1951, Matoranjera 1951, Mabvure 1957, Zowa 1958 and Dzingwe 1959.<sup>93</sup> Until 1939, the parish priest of Kutama was also the manager of the schools. In 1963 Murombedzi became an independent parish and an African priest, Fr Gilbert Modikayi became its first parish priest with four African LCBL (Little Children of the Blessed Lady) sisters assisting with missionary work.

For Kaibach, Kutama was really ‘the first station among the natives’ from Chishawasha.<sup>94</sup> Then ‘some years’ later another school was built at the ‘border of Mtoko’s country in the Mangwendis reserve’ 60 miles from Chishawasha. After that, the schools increased ‘chiefly in the eastern and northern directions.’<sup>95</sup> In 1923, according to Kaibach, the eastern schools were gathered around Musami’s kraal with a permanent resident priest there. Kaibach claims that at the end of 1923, ‘a site was acquired much further north at a short distance of the Zambezi River with the intention of sending a priest to reside there as soon as the circumstances permit’. This site remains unnamed as at end of December 1923, which ends Kaibach’s account. This means that on the Rhodesian side, up to 1923, apart from Salisbury, Catholic missionary outreach revolved around Chishawasha, Kutama, Musami and the prospective Zambezi station.

In the Salisbury area, apart from Chishawasha mission in the outskirts, five urban parish missions had been established: St Peter’s Mbare (1910), catering for working Africans in Rhodesia’s oldest township in the city of Salisbury; Kutama Mission

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<sup>93</sup> JAZ: 134/ 6 Fr Karl Schmidt, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Jesuit Archives, 101 A, Fr Kaibach SJ, Short Sketch.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



(1912), named after St Francis Xavier, founded by Fr Loubière to the south-west of Salisbury in the reserves of Chief Zvimba; Musami Mission (1923), founded by Fr Daignault to the north-east of Salisbury, Makumbi Mission (1924), named after the Visitation of Mary was opened to the north of Salisbury and All Souls Mission in Mutoko (1930) was founded by Fr Esser to the north-east. Like Kutama, these missions had school outstations spread out like tentacles into the surrounding communities. Often, their excelling students were sent to the main missions to train as teachers and to learn practical trades.

### **Encounters at Boroma and Chishawasha**

The trades taught in the main missions included bookbinding, pottery, tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, upholstery, ironworking, wood-cutting, brick-making, building, gardening, domestic work and laundry work.<sup>96</sup> By 1904, Chishawasha had become the model of missionary success in southern Africa, attracting many eminent visitors such as the agriculturalist Owen Thomas.<sup>97</sup> Boroma, on the other side of the frontier, was the leader in training in practical skills such as carpentry, leatherwork and bricklaying. These skills increased the employability of Africans and inserted them into the colonial capitalist economy. The emphasis on industrial education was partly at the instigation of the colonial government and partly due to the conviction of the missionaries that Africans needed a practical orientated education and seemed to be meeting the needs of the state. The Southern Rhodesia Education Ordinances of 1899 and 1903 required mission schools to provide industrial education as a condition for receiving government grants.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Arquivo do Arcebispado do Maputo, Moçambique: Prelazia de De Mocambique Ano de 1932, Ensino profissional na Missão de S. José de Boroma.*

<sup>97</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 128.

<sup>98</sup> Zvobgo, J.M., *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe, 1890-1939* (Gweru, 1996), p. 369.

The impact of missionary education on mid Zambezi society and its mark on the religious landscape is illustrated by some of its graduates. In the case of Chishawasha we have already seen in chapter one its first convert, Joseph Munyongani of Mutoko, a boy of seventeen seeking out the missionaries and subsequently establishing a long-term relationship with them. We are not told of his motives for seeking out the missionaries, but given that young men at the time often travelled far and wide looking for employment opportunities in the new mines, farms and mission stations, it was likely that Joseph was looking for work. However, he also found religion at the mission. A contemporary of Joseph, but on the Portuguese side of the border was Protasio Vicente. Vicente illustrated the typical lifestyle of the groups that were produced by the convergences on the Zambezi. They had genetic links with the Portuguese Empire (Portugal, Goa, Angola, Cape Verde) outside of Mozambique; spoke Portuguese as well as the language of the valley *chiNyungwe*; and identified with Catholicism and often sent their children to mission schools while at the same time practicing traditional religion and *mhondoro* within the dominant African cultural idiom.

### **Protasio Vicente, teacher-catechist**

According to an entry in the baptism register of Boroma Mission, up the Zambezi River from Tete town,

On the Tenth day of October of 1915, in Nhaondue, in the Prazo of Boroma, in Tete District, in the Prelature of Mozambique, a catechist Protasio Vicente baptized in danger of death [*em perigo de vida*] a man he renamed Protasio, previously called Meia, born in Nhaondue in 1888, a legitimate child of Buxa a launderer [at the mission], of Nhaondue and Lidia a female launderer of Nhaondue.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Missao de S. Jose de Boroma, Tete: Baptismos 21 Junho 1914-26 Dezembro 1917, Vol. V anos 1914-1917*, No. 61.

While this record establishes persons, time and place of the event, corroborative archival and oral sources complete the picture to reveal complex historical processes. Registering the names of the baptized was an established procedure in missionary practice. It is clear therefore that at this particular time and place in 1915, there existed a place named Nhaondue within the missionary area of a crown estate called *Prazo de Boroma*. Nhaondue was one of the 35 places and outstations that were served by Boroma mission. Meia was baptized in *periculo mortis* which means that he was gravely ill although the record is silent on how and why. The likelihood is that he probably died sooner rather than later because such rites were normally administered only to those in imminent danger of death, such as the last stages of a terminal illness or a fatal accident. That this was done by a teacher-catechist, Protasio Vicente, a local man rather than a missionary priest, highlights once again the central role played by local agents in spreading Christianity. Whether Meia recovered or died soon after, we do not know, but if he died, then he would have been about 27 years old. That Meia had to have his name changed to Protasio demonstrates that, quite apart from the theology of Christian baptism which required renaming the baptized with a name that had some Christian sentiment, lay catechists had a leeway in naming their candidates thereby demonstrating a degree of autonomy.

Meia is described as the son of Buxa and Lidia, both launderers. It is highly probable that they would have practiced their trade at the nearby Boroma Mission which was the centre of the Jesuit *prazo*. This is supported by the fact that Nhaondue was within walking distance, upriver from the mission. In the early 1900s the mission was the hub of Christianity and modernity. It provided jobs, skills training, education and

opportunities for social advancement. Meia's parents would have been instrumental in requesting the services of a catechist. Getting baptized at the age of close to thirty in a setting where infant baptism was the norm raises questions, particularly if he was of legitimate birth as the text suggests. Why he was not baptized at a younger age and only when in danger of death suggests intended or circumstantial difficulties in complying with a general church norm at the heart of mission territory. Perhaps weakened by sickness or in the face of death he probably had to accept baptism. That he subscribed to an alternative belief is beyond the evidence of this entry but cannot be ruled out. Many people believed that baptism could bring about a cure from sickness. Non-compliance to mission norms is also found by the catechist who baptised him, Protasio Vicente.

Protasio Vicente, like Patrick Chinatsa of Murombedzi and Cassiano of Kutama, was not only a catechist but also a school teacher. He also became a renowned organist at Boroma mission.<sup>100</sup> He was born at Degue (*Degoe, Degue*) also known as Kasumbadedza, about ten kilometres upriver from Tete town and later sent to the boarding school at Boroma to get an education. It was here that he met and married Maria Inacia (Chasauka) of the *Phiri* totem. By her totem, it is clear that Inacia was a Zimba or Maravi from the north of the Zambezi. Some of his children claimed he later became a schools manager, but this is unlikely given that such a post was usually reserved for mission superiors. Moreover, his frosty relationship with the missionaries who disapproved of his family lifestyle would not have been conducive to him being promoted to such a position. Protasio was a *mistu* - a person of mixed

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with *Irma* Jacinta Protasio Vicente, Tete Mozambique, 8 June, 2011. Sr Jacinta was one of the daughters of Protasio Vicente. She was born Marcellina in 1924 but had her name changed to Jacinta when she joined the convent. She was the main source for this section along with other children of Protasio, descendents and former pupils who still remembered him at Boroma.

race. His father Vicente was a *mistu* from Goa, India who married a local woman.<sup>101</sup> This was quite common in the Zambezi Valley communities which had at least four centuries of interethnic unions. His children, however, were not unanimous about his origins. Some claimed his ancestry lay in Goa while others claimed Vicente was of Portuguese mixed race from Angola or Cabo Verde. The difference was the same, as all these places could have had intermixtures for which the Portuguese were particularly renowned. Protasio's clan spirit, however, was Marecha which was associated with Angola. When he made ritual offerings to his *mizimu* spirits, he would drape a table with a white cloth, put candles, wine and have a sumptuous dinner and then addressed *popotera*, his spirit Marecha.<sup>102</sup> According to the testimony of his descendants, Protasio was related to Kanyemba, who was originally from Goa, who had settled near Zumbo up the Zambezi River and established a large clan there.<sup>103</sup>

At Boroma mission, Protasio was considered a *nyakudza* - a foreigner, who had no totem. He adopted the totem *Marunga* which was given to such people by the autochthonous population. Maria Inacia was not of mixed race like her husband. She had suffered the misfortune of serial miscarriages and infant deaths, with only five children surviving infancy. Partly because of this high infant mortality, Protasio decided to marry a second wife, Christina Chasafari, the daughter of the *nyakwawa* (paramount chief) of the Boroma area, and had ten children with her. According to custom this was acceptable, but it was a total disgrace in the eyes of his Jesuit employers at the mission. He went to great pains to hide his polygamous situation from the missionaries, who wanted the mission village at Boroma to be a model of

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Paula da Gloria Protasio, Bulawayo, 6 February 2011.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Gabriel Avelino, Beira Mozambique, 28 June 2011.

civilisation and Christian living. He shuttled Marcelina, his eldest daughter by his second wife, from one relative to another. At one point she had to live for two years with relatives as far away as modern day Umtali (Mutare) in Southern Rhodesia.

To Protasio's horror, Marcellina decided to become a nun in the late 1940s, one of the first four African girls in Mozambique to join the convent as nuns. The mission offered young girls what seemed an attractive alternative lifestyle. Protasio was bitterly opposed to his daughter's decision, remonstrating '[i]f it is those long white robes that you fancy, I can buy you dozens of them',<sup>104</sup> but she prevailed. Protasio sent all his children to school and had them baptised as Catholics. His large family became one of the well-known Christian families of Boroma, notwithstanding that his polygamous marriage was unchristian. Protasio married his youngest daughter from his first wife Maria Inacia to the eldest son of the second wife of Chief *Mpfumu* Chikafa of Mufa of the *Chirenje* totem.<sup>105</sup>

### ***Mpfumu* Malizani Chikafa (d. c. 1976)<sup>106</sup>**

*Mpfumu* Chikafa lived outside the Christian village of Boroma. He was installed by the Portuguese at Tete as a *regulo*. While not living within the mission, he sent his children to school at Boroma to be educated by the missionaries. Chikafa was nicknamed *mbvalamasese* (one who wears skins).<sup>107</sup> Even as a *regulo*, Chikafa was also a *nyakudza* – a newcomer – in the area he ruled under the paramount chief *Nyakwawa* Malekeza. But he was a different kind of *nyakudza* because he was a

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with *Irma* Jacinta Protasio Vicente, Tete Mozambique, 8 June, 2011

<sup>105</sup> *Original do Registos dos Baptismos, Missao de S. Jose de Boroma, 1954-1964.*

<sup>106</sup> This section is based on interviews with descendants of Chikafa and elders living in Tete, Degue, Chiringa and Boroma. Domingo Marizane (born 1944) was one of the younger sons of Chikafa whereas Lucia Cumpeu (born 1937) was one of his younger daughters still living in 2011.

<sup>107</sup> *Regulo* was the term used by Portuguese administrators for local chiefs.

Tonga from among the Mandie people at the confluence of the Zambezi and Ruenya Rivers. His father, Tembo, had settled at Tete in the 1880s and practiced subsistence farming there. From the accounts of his descendants, it is not clear what brought Tembo and his family to Tete but Chikafa was born shortly after their arrival. As a child his mother was attacked by a crocodile in the Zambezi River at Tete and was never seen again.<sup>108</sup> His early childhood was spent with his father who renamed him *malizani* (Nyungwe) meaning ‘finish off’. In later life, in the 1920s, Chikafa was appointed a *regulo*, *mpfumu* (headman) of a village called Mufa. This was about ten kilometres from Boroma Mission. Chikafa not only presided over the various disputes amongst his people, but also facilitated through the local medium, *mphondolo*, annual rain ceremonies at a pool not far from Boroma mission. The pool never dried up and was separated by a range of mountains from the river. In spite of his adherence to indigenous beliefs and practices, Chikafa gave all his children Portuguese and Christian names, such as Tomaz, Aspirante, Gemina, Lucia, Domingo and Torje and sent his children to Boroma Mission for their education. Although he accepted the recognition accorded him by the district administrators at Tete, Chikafa continued with the social and religious functions of his autochthonous community.

Protasio Vicente already belonged to the privileged class of *mistu* and *assimilado* and identified as Catholic while at the same time maintaining the worldview of his maternal connections. As a teacher at the mission, Vicente was economically dependent on the missionaries whereas Chikafa depended on his wealth in cattle and social status as a local chief. Chikafa was therefore able to mobilise his people for

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<sup>108</sup> Interviews with Domingo Marizane, Chiringa Tete, 9 June 2011 and Mrs Lucia Cumpeu, Degue, Tete, 9 June 2011.

rituals regardless of the wishes of the missionaries nearby. The likes of Protasio and Chikafa gave their children Christian names, sent them to school to learn to read and write and make things. These were basic requirements to fit into a fast-changing world. Missionary religion was not always perceived as a life-changing affiliation but rather as a resource to be drawn upon as dictated by existential needs. At the same time there were deeper conversions to Christianity such as that which motivated Protasio's daughter to enter the convent or which made Munyongani attached to Chishawasha mission, whatever the other factors may have been in their case.

Various social categories gravitated toward the missions. Those fleeing war or accusations of witchcraft, which was literally a death sentence, found refuge in the mission and were among the first converts. For missionaries, apart from other provisions, education provided an immediate point of contact, especially with children who were more likely to embrace new ideas. But this education had a strong catechetical bias designed for initiation into the Christian way of life. The old men and women were often too steeped in their ways, so attention was focused on children, the youth and younger women. According to the baptismal record, only a dozen people had been baptised at Chishawasha six years after the founding of the mission and most of them were not Africans.<sup>109</sup> Kaibach attributed the slow process of conversion of the Shawasha natives to their 'inconsistent character' complaining that there were only six to seven baptisms in 1896. The Jesuits at Chishawasha resorted to active recruitment of children for school, penalising their parents for nonattendance. As a result, there was a total of some 4,200 baptisms and 400

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<sup>109</sup> Jesuit Archives Harare, *Missio Zambensis -Domus*, (Chishawasha) from No. 1, 1893.



marriages by 1923.<sup>110</sup> When Cardinal Archbishop Arthur Hinsley of Westminster made an apostolic visitation to schools in British ruled territories in southern Africa in 1928-29, he was impressed by the manual skills taught by missions in the central districts of Southern Rhodesia. He remarked that he preferred building a school to building a parish church.<sup>111</sup>

The expulsions of nominal mission-educated Christians from the mission village demonstrated the persistence in following indigenous customs. In 1925, Fr Burbridge noted that in spite of the expanding education, the power of the ‘witchdoctor’ was

as active as ever amongst the great mass of the people. To what extent the atrocious customs for which it stands have in fact been suppressed it would be rash to judge. This much is certain: its sinister shadow will rest in sunny Rhodesia for many a year to come and can only be chased away by religious education. The greatest importance therefore must be attached to religious teaching and moral education.<sup>112</sup>

The expansion of mission schools and the increase in the overall numbers of graduates brought in their train new forms of social interaction within the wider society of the middle Zambezi. The educated school graduates challenged traditional interpretations of events and spread new models of articulating human experience. If religion is understood as the articulation of human experience through signs and symbols, then the new educated African elite were in the front line of the encounter between traditional religion and Christianity. Preachers, pastors, catechists and lay Christian organisers were the earliest strata of the new elite. They were soon followed by school teachers and nurses – all being professions closely oriented towards missionary goals. British and Portuguese officials encouraged the training of

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<sup>110</sup> Jesuit Archives Harare, 101 A, Fr Kaibach SJ, Short sketch of the History of Chishawasha (Handwritten).

<sup>111</sup> JAH, Box 135/2, ‘Cardinal Arthur Hinsley Visits Africa’, paper.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Fr Burbridge, 1925, p. 31

school teachers. Schooled young men became critical of both their own indigenous institutions as well as the colonial and missionary structures which had trained them and under the social ambit of which they now lived. The despondency of those who had received a rudimentary education, and had become native policemen, gardeners, farm labourers and domestics was often seen as a result of little education by the equally little educated settlers in Rhodesia, but as a result of the disintegrating customary bond by the more thoughtful scholars. There was a widespread perception in the decade leading up to the Second World War that African communities had suffered some kind of disorientation as a result of the encounter with colonial rule. In 1936 Eileen Jensen Krige described the state of Africa in the wake of the colonial encounter as '[d]isturbance, institutional dislocation and disintegration'.<sup>113</sup> As a result, '[t]he detribalized native so often proves to be one at loose ends, detached from the familiar background, with his sanctions taken away, his controls and restraints lost, and no intelligible substitute in their place, that he is a misery to himself and a menace to his neighbours'.<sup>114</sup>

This conclusion seems to have been proved right by Ibbotson's *Report on a Survey of Native Juvenile Delinquency in Southern Rhodesia* where it was found that by 1944, about 70 per cent of delinquent youths had not been to school and the majority of their cases were related to petty theft.<sup>115</sup> Almost all of these were committed by boys under the age of eighteen. It was rare for girls to be found amongst juvenile offenders. The report concluded that there was 'a close connection between lack of

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<sup>113</sup> Eileen Jensen Krige, 'Changing Conditions in Marital Relations and Parental Duties among Urbanized Natives', *Africa*, 9, No. 1 (1936), p.1.

<sup>114</sup> Donohugh, 'Essentials of African Culture', p. 337.

<sup>115</sup> Percy Ibbotson, *Report on A Survey of Native Juvenile Delinquency in Southern Rhodesia, March 1944 – December 1944* (Bulawayo, 1945), p. 30.

education and the prevalence of delinquency among Bantu children'.<sup>116</sup> The report demonstrated that delinquency was a new problem of the 1930s, possibly created by the emergence of city life that lacked the social controls of rural life. 'Unless in the future the question of native education is tackled energetically, Salisbury will be faced with a serious problem of native juvenile delinquency which will be followed at a later stage by a further considerable increase in the number of adult native criminals operating in the city.'<sup>117</sup> The report recommended that compulsory education should be introduced in urban areas in order to reduce crime. The emphasis on urban meant the continued marginalisation of the largely rural mid Zambezi. Educational content was to remain practical, with industrial training being given a priority along with sports and recreation. This was seen as a panacea for the social problems that the disintegration of the social fabric of indigenous communities was causing in the cities. Religious and moral instruction was thought to be necessary and needed to be accorded the same standing as the 'secular subjects'.<sup>118</sup>

### **Impact of mission education**

By redefining conceptualisations of the social and religious terrain in Christian terms, mission education created new models of interpreting the world which confronted the African world view with its supernatural reading of nature, life and events. Education generated a mind-set shift away from the traditional religious to the new Christian perspective. That shift was the basis of the challenge to gerontocratic power and the start of independent action amongst especially women

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Arthur Mayhew, 'A Comparative Survey of Educational Aims and Methods in British India and British Tropical Africa', *Africa*, 6, No. 2 (1933), p.176.

and young men. Young women like Jacinta Protasio could follow an alternative lifestyle, for example, as nuns, against the wishes of their parents. At a time of limited lifestyle choices, this freed them from the predictable mould of marriage and patriarchal control. Elders generally blamed education for the disobedience of their children. The question 'Is that what they teach you at school?' became a catchphrase in correctional parlance when parents and elders cautioned their youngsters.

With the usurpation of chiefly power by District Administrators and Native Commissioners in Southern Rhodesia and *chefes dos postos* in Mozambique, traditional morality lost much of its religious footing, and was being replaced by that of Christianity and colonial civil law. Thus the belief in supernatural punishment for wrongdoing was shaken and many taboos which were held to keep African society intact began to disintegrate. Audrey Richards writing in 1935 noted,

Some natives are abandoning tribal rules because they find them burdensome; and some are living in conditions where it is impossible to carry them out-perhaps working at a mine too far to be able to care for their kinsmen or to carry out certain religious rites. Other natives again, many of them Christians, are caught between clashing moralities. In either case the majority are suffering, I believe, from a perpetual sense of guilt, expressing itself in a constant anxiety for some kind of supernatural defence.<sup>119</sup>

Arthur Mayhew observed that,

education itself-must necessarily tend to weaken tribal authority and the sanctions of existing beliefs, and in view of the all-prevailing belief in the supernatural which affects the whole life of the African it is essential that what is good in the old beliefs and sanctions should be strengthened and what is defective should be replaced.<sup>120</sup>

The solution to the changes which observers thought was a growing sense of anomie in some African communities was, according to Fr Shropshire, more Christian education:

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<sup>119</sup> Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witch-Finders,' p.459.

<sup>120</sup> Mayhew, 'Educational Aims and Methods', p.176.

Not until a truly Christian and scientific education has corrected the balance of the present native psychological complex, and enabled the Africans to meet their phobias with a critical mind, giving them confidence in themselves and ability to control their own environment, will they come to see that the wonders of magic and sorcery are not so marvellous as the wonders of a truly and proportionately developed personality, the more especially if that personality at the same time maintains the true 'abandon' of the fullest Christian life.<sup>121</sup>

However, the missions in the Nyungwe speaking region of the mid Zambezi were far apart. Missionaries, teachers and students often moved between these centres which had been founded strategically in view of the possibility of further expansion. That expansion did not happen in the 1930s. Europe, the source of missionaries and funds, was trying to recover from the First World War and the ensuing economic depression, and was on the brink of another devastating war; no further expansion took place until the middle of the twentieth century, after the Second World War. As resources to build new missions were limited, the beneficiaries of mission education therefore remained relatively few in relation to the total indigenous population. Thus an interviewee claimed, there were no schools in those days beyond Boroma and Tete.<sup>122</sup> It was mainly the mobility of people that diffused Christian ideas from missions and administrative posts. Gabriel Avelino's father, for instance, was shuttled from place to place at the service of the Governor of Tete. He was an African *assimilado* with Goan and Portuguese blood. He was a polygamist who preferred to send his children to Boroma for their education because there were no schools in the different posts where he gave a semblance of Portuguese presence.<sup>123</sup>

This meant that up to the 1950s when missions began to proliferate as former out-stations developed into independent missions, most of the people in the mid Zambezi

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<sup>121</sup> Fr Shropshire, as quoted in Chavunduka, *Traditional Healers*, p.422.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Mr Gabriel Avelino (aged 83), Beira Mozambique, 18 June 2011.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

depended on their indigenous education and religious resources. While it was clear that aspects of the practice of African traditional religion had changed, the propensity to a religious interpretation of events persisted. Morality remained hinged on beliefs in the dictates of the ancestors and their connection to the chiefly system. The fear of witchcraft did not necessarily diminish because of education; people continued to explain misfortune in terms of the old idiom that included witchcraft.<sup>124</sup> There were those who exploited this fear to attain their own ends, often using new ideas picked up but not fully understood from the missions. They combined these creatively with practices in African traditional religion to start witch-finding movements. While for Christians evil was explained in terms of Satan and sin, for African religion it was personified in the witch. It was easy therefore for witch eradication movements to flare up and wane quickly, especially in times of uncontrollable change.

In her studies of education and women in Southern Rhodesia, Elizabeth Schmidt concluded that during the period 1870 to 1939 missionary education was at first resisted but towards the end of the period it became an attractive voluntary option for many. While she rightly concluded that 'neither the missionaries nor the colonial state could control the outcome of African education', she seems to limit its objectives by suggesting that 'the ultimate objective of missionary education for African girls was the creation of hardworking, virtuous Christian wives, suitable companions for the emerging African male elite'.<sup>125</sup> It is generally true that missionaries wanted to create men and women of virtue, but they were indifferent to the domestic convenience of African men, whether elite or not. They wanted to

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<sup>124</sup> Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witch-Finders', p. 458.

<sup>125</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 154.

create a new society based on a Christian vision; marriage and domestic life was very much a part of that vision and often it mirrored the contemporary European models. Not everything European, however, found favour with missionaries; missionary remarks abound warning of the moral dangers of certain influences coming from Europe and they wanted to limit the impact of these on their presumed innocent flocks. Education prepared people for an urban existence. The highest concentration of Christians was not in the central zones of the mid Zambezi but at its edges, in the urban and mission centres. Beyond these the majority of people practiced indigenous religion. Even by the 1960s this picture appears to have prevailed.<sup>126</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The integrative and flexible character of African religion, noted in the introductory chapter, facilitated the appropriation of new ideas and the generation of a range of socio-religious manifestations while Christianity re-coded itself in the local culture. African religion adopted the new ideas and redeployed them from what Ato Quayson has called the 'indigenous conceptual resource-base'.<sup>127</sup> Generally the response was a mixture of acceptance, differentiation, redeployment and indifference. There was a more rapid expansion of Christianity in those areas where traditional local structures were weakest or absent. In the mid Zambezi valley, this expansion was mitigated by the slow penetration of Christian institutions and the presence of the chieftaincy system and its continued alliance with the *mhondoro*. Individual migrants, however, took advantage of the new and expanding infrastructure to travel and spread new ideas picked up at centres where missionary institutions were established.

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<sup>126</sup> *Anuário Católico do Ultramar Português, 1964*, 2ª Edição (Lisbon, 1965).

<sup>127</sup> Ato Quayson, 'Means and Meanings: Methodological Issues in Africanist Interdisciplinary Research,' in *History in Africa*, Vol. 25 (1998), p. 308.

Missionary education, therefore, way beyond the location and numbers of the actual schools and through its graduates, fashioned a mind-set conducive to Christian teachings on the one hand while providing necessary skills for the colonial economy on the other. Mind-set migration entailed a migration from values that were now conceptualised as incompatible with the new values. The mission education system transmitted a culturally conditioned content of skills, abilities and ideas that created a new value structure amongst Africans. This structure was self-replicating, normative and exclusive. It was self-replicating in that it generated a whole new range of psychological, spiritual, social and economic needs that could only be met by resources that only a western education could provide. It was exclusive in that it claimed the position of being the norm, thereby diminishing indigenous values systems. It was because of this relegation in the conceptual world of ideas that by the 1930s mission education had begun to erode the intellectual and authority structures upon which African religion was built, thus undermining African religious belief systems. In this process African traditional religions became an immediate casualty as nothing in the new and increasingly dominant social and economic structures supported its supernatural interpretation of events.

The fact that its beneficiaries found western education a gateway to individual self-determination, freedom from patriarchal control, social mobility and a more effective engagement with the growing capitalist economy, undermined traditional religion. The growing 'educated elite' were disengaged from their traditional habitat of ideas and beliefs as they perceived them to be incompatible with their new advantaged status. Their numbers, however, were few and so could not shift the critical mass of opinion away from the traditional idiom; this required more time and more schools.



After the 1940s, colonial administrators and their various agencies seemed united in a common chorus of advocating education as the panacea for the social ills emanating from the growing population in the towns that lacked a moral compass as they disengaged from the controls of rural patriarchal authority. To close this gap literate Africans, especially in Southern Rhodesia, founded new Christian movements with a deeply African perspective independent of the mission churches. While education equipped many locals for life in the emerging social and economic order and made inroads into structures of traditional religion, it was but one factor in driving religious change. The next chapter will show how the consolidation of the borders mitigated that change.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The consolidation of the border and the politics of identity in early twentieth century mid Zambezi**

This chapter examines the expanse of the Nyungwe speaking region and its division into Shona and Nyungwe areas during the period of the consolidation of the colonial boundary. The boundary not only shaped identities, but also local perceptions of space with the new district centres and mission stations becoming the new centres of political and religious authority, thereby undermining the chief's kraal and territorial *mhondoro* domains. While internal national boundaries changed several times, the international boundary between Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa was much more difficult to revise, giving it a power of its own in shaping identities. The reshaping of land space alienated the mid Zambezi people from their own historic regional links and traditional perceptions of space, thereby undermining their territorial religious systems. This brings us to the last dimension of the chapter, namely, demonstrating the extent to which the dynamics of boundary and ethnicity in the mid Zambezi impacted on religious change.

#### **Borders, ethnicity and identity**

A salient feature of the mid Zambezi was its relatively high ethnic intermixtures, especially to the east around Tete town and its immediate hinterland. Malyn Newitt has argued that while there were permanent poles of identification such as a common language, chiefly titles and religious spirit cults which existed for many centuries in East Central Africa, the whole region was 'a kaleidoscope of shifting political

formations' which gave rise to changing patterns of identification by both self and by others.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the theme of identity imposes itself immediately when we begin any discussion of the mid Zambezi populace. The simplified picture that we have today of the Shona in Rhodesia and the Nyungwe across the border in Mozambique is a result of colonial endeavour and anxiety to clearly demarcate areas of territorial control; otherwise these peoples were intermingled across the boundary. Thus when boundaries are discussed, especially in Africa, the theme of ethnicity cannot, in fairness, be overlooked.

Yet ethnicity is complex and the danger of simplification is high, making it not only often vague but difficult to define.<sup>2</sup> According to Alexander Keese, ethnicity is almost always linked with a common past, formulated through common legends of origin and group events, and a self-perception as a 'we-group' defined against another, usually with a distinct language, though not necessarily.<sup>3</sup> These elements become solidified and established by repeated use. Paul Nugent adds the dimension of common space to ethnic identity which brings in the salience of the border as a factor. For Nugent, ethnicity or group identity is often associated with a bounded state, just as race is frequently associated with skin colour.<sup>4</sup> The creation of the border, therefore, according to this view, immediately sets in motion the processes of self-identification to accord with the boundary. The strength of identities constructed in the face of a boundary cannot be underestimated because in some border areas sociological studies have shown that 'locals have far more sympathies and feelings

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<sup>1</sup> Malyn Newitt, 'Kinship, Religion, Language and Political Control: Ethnic Identity among the Peoples of the Zambezi Valley,' in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: The African Experience*, (Oxford, 2010), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> See Wyatt MacGaffey, 'Changing Representations in Central African History', *Journal of African History* 46(2) (2006), pp. 189-207, 202-206.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Keese, 'Introduction' in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: The African Experience*, (Oxford, 2010) p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.55-56.

of solidarity for national compatriots with a different ethno-cultural identity, than for members of the same ethnic group who are citizens of a different state'.<sup>5</sup> This means in theory that the Shona groups of the mid Zambezi in Zimbabwe or Mozambique could be more sympathetic to Cewa foreigners from Malawi than to fellow Shona who are Zambian nationals for instance. This was illustrated in the establishment of *sahwira* relationships with Malawians and perceived foreign Mozambican nationals who flocked into Rhodesia as labourers, as will be shown in chapter four.

Territorially bounded nationalism can create a new self-identification which could override ethnic cohesion. The creation of the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe, while remaining porous, added a layer to group identity even though individuals very easily traversed the frontiers of group identity under the pressures of need and, sometimes, conflict. In the case of the north-eastern border of Rhodesia and Mozambique individuals switched identities for economic reasons to take advantage of the better economic conditions prevalent in Rhodesia at the time.<sup>6</sup> This fluidity is why ethnicity has been seen as such a nebulous concept. Malyn Newitt blatantly sees it as 'an elusive concept' generating confusion in 'its origin, development and its meaning to different people at different times'.<sup>7</sup> He sees self-identification as primarily functional to garner support and protection by being members of the group. Citing Antonio Gamito and Livingstone, he shows how

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<sup>5</sup> Keese, 'Introduction', *Ethnicity*, p. 13, referring to studies by William F. S. Miles and David Rochfort, 'Nationalism versus Ethnic Identity in sub-Saharan Africa', *American Political Science Review*, 85(2), 1991, pp. 393-403, 400-401.

<sup>6</sup> Gunnar Haaland, 'Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the social organisation of cultural difference* (Bergen:Univ. Ford, 1969), pp. 58-73, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Newitt, 'Kinship, Religion, Language', p. 67.

people with the same language, customs and habits can split to form a different ethnic group and adopt a different name, thus generating more confusion.<sup>8</sup>

Newitt concluded that, this notwithstanding, the idea of ethnicity was not just a fiction to be simply dismissed as an invention of missionaries and colonial administrators. In a highly unstable, mobile and turbulent region such as Zambesia it was common for groups to break allegiances and establish their own identity and group to afford each other protection and support. Ethnicity was a fluid commodity – in keeping with the fluidity of the region which formed and reformed for five centuries, as far back as records could reach. This is quite removed from the permanent ‘tribes’ idea which the scientific anthropology of European enlightenment tried to conjure into existence.<sup>9</sup> Newitt’s analysis seems to fit in with the mid Zambezi situation from the examples of the chieftaincy origins compiled by colonial Native Commissioners we shall consider below.

Illustrating Newitt’s conclusion and bringing in another perspective, Felicitas Berker contended that ethnic identifications were not always invented by colonial governments and that they were not always confined to particular regions and their rulers.<sup>10</sup> She appealed to the case of South-East Tanzania where, to use her own words, ‘crucial elements of the classical “invention of tribalism” narrative are conspicuous by their absence’.<sup>11</sup> Here, she claimed, ethnic terms functioned within larger geographic and social terms of reference which were not of the colonial state. East Africa entered the colonial era at a time of intensifying commercial exchange

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<sup>8</sup>Newitt, ‘Kinship, Religion, Language’ p. 69, citing Gamito, A.C.P., *King Kazembe*, translated by Ian Cunnison (Lisbon; *Junta da investigação do Ultramar*, 1960 [1854], Vol. 1, p. 64. David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries* (London: Murray, 1865), p. 160.

<sup>9</sup> Newitt, ‘Kinship, Religion, Language’, p. 90.

<sup>10</sup> Becker, ‘Vernacular Ethnic Stereotypes’, pp. 93-121

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

and global competition and people at every level in the region responded or were affected in various ways. Pre-colonial trade and commerce had already produced particular kinds of identities associated with particular roles in the long distance trade routes that cut across various populations. Thus the Nyamwezi were to be seen as one of Tanzania's peoples as if they were an ethnic group when, in fact, they originated as porters from all sorts of backgrounds. As Terence Ranger also observed, the same could be said of the elephant-hunting Makua and indigenous agricultural Mwera.<sup>12</sup> This could also apply to the Chikunda of the mid Zambezi who were a particular social category but cannot now be defined as a 'tribe'.

### **Nyungwe ethnicity**

This line of analysis appears to apply in one sense to the Nyungwe people of the mid Zambezi region. Tete town, as an old centre of a region with wide trade networks from precolonial times, developed group identities associated with trade, commerce, migration and racial mixtures, as well as autochthonous groups. In precolonial times Tete was the centre of commerce for the whole of the mid Zambezi right up to the Zimbabwean plateau. An 1867 map showed the whole area north and south of the Zambezi including the Mount Darwin area of present day Zimbabwe as being in the *Distrito de Tete* and part of Portuguese East Africa.<sup>13</sup> The people of Tete were often referred to by the Shona groups as *vazungu*, which in *chiNyungwe* refers to Europeans, but they were in fact Africans from Nyungwe. Asians, particularly Arabs and Indians were called *amwenye* in *ChiNyungwe*. Beach noted that '[t]he African traders from Nyungwe were called *vazungu*, but they were much closer to the Shona

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<sup>12</sup> See also Terence O. Ranger, 'European attitudes and African realities; the rise and fall of the Matola Chiefs of South-East Tanzania' in *Journal of African History* 20 (1), 1979, pp. 63-82.

<sup>13</sup> NAZ: Ab Moçambique, Sheet No. 580, *Zambezia E Paizes Adjacentes*, 2<sup>a</sup> Edição, Lisboa 1867.

in many ways than they were to their employers in the town.’<sup>14</sup> The profile of the *vazungu* given by Beach corresponds with the profile of the Chikunda given by the Isaacmans and Peterson. Their Tete origins leave no doubt that they were Nyungwe.<sup>15</sup> It was only with the arrival of the *varungu*, the British Europeans who founded Salisbury that the focus of trade shifted and eventually shut the Tete links after pushing their boundary deep into what was hitherto a Portuguese sphere of influence.<sup>16</sup>

Though not called by that name as yet in precolonial times, Nyungwe speaking groups migrated from the environs of Tete town westwards over layers of pre-existing Tavara, Korekore and Zezuru areas which have been classified as Shona. The names of the settlements such as Boroma, Marara, Changara, Chioko, Chipembere (all in the Tete province of Mozambique) are as much Shona names as they are Nyungwe names and they preceded the general use of the term Nyungwe. Changara and Chioko are names of former Mwene Mutapa rulers who are often considered to be Shona. Medeiros and Capela consider Nyungwes (Nhungwè) Senas (Asena) and Chuabos (Atxuabo) as new identities encompassing individuals of very different origins converging on the centres by which they came to be called.<sup>17</sup> Because of mixtures and creolisations, these groups named themselves after the centres where they lived or frequented. The increasing influence of these areas meant that their language spread and gained commercial value.

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<sup>14</sup> Beach, *Mapondera*, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Allen Isaacman and Derek Peterson, ‘Making the Chikunda: Military Slavery and Ethnicity in Southern Africa, 1750-1900’ in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2003), pp. 257- 281; Isaacman, Allen and Barbara, *Slavery and Beyond*.

<sup>16</sup> In his work, ‘Mapondera’ cited above, David Beach chose to use the terms which the mid Zambezi Shona groups used to refer to foreigners, such as *vazungu* for the Portuguese and the people of Tete/Nyungwe, and *varungu* to refer to the British who had come to the region from the south. By his admission however, ‘If applied to African history in general, this policy would create confusion’. Beach, *Mapondera*, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> Medeiros and Capela, ‘Processes of Identity-Building’, p. 39-40.

Just as ‘Shona’ as a generic term was imposed somewhat earlier to refer to related groups who identified themselves as Karanga, Korekore, Zezuru, Ndau, Manyika and Kalanga, Nyungwe was imposed over the Tonga, Tavara, Barwe and some Korekore.<sup>18</sup> Fr Martins Manuel dos Anjos, compiler of a Nyungwe dictionary, believed that the Shona peoples and names in Tete province are remnants of a time when Shona conquerors ruled over the local Tonga, Tavara and Korekore peoples.<sup>19</sup> This corresponds with Gerald Mazarire’s theoretical notion that ‘there existed a large region of broadly similar languages, beliefs and institutions, larger than present-day Zimbabwe and stretching into areas now defined as South Africa, Zambia and Mozambique. . . . within that zone, there was a constant movement of people, goods, ideas, and a multitude of different self-identifications’.<sup>20</sup>

According to Madeiros and Capela, the Nyungwe, rendered *Nhungwe* in Portuguese orthography, were one of the new identities that emerged in the Zambezi valley along with the Senas (Asena) and Chuabos (Atxuabo).<sup>21</sup> They claim that these designations appear only in the twentieth century even though the languages themselves can be traced to much earlier times.<sup>22</sup> The first dictionary published in 1899 calls what was clearly *chiNyungwe*, ‘*lingua Tetense*’. By 1910, Maugham wrote about the ‘Wa-Nyungwe of Tete District’,<sup>23</sup> speaking of them in a manner that

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<sup>18</sup> See the map of the twenty languages of Mozambique in Figure 4, p. xvi above.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Fr Martins, Manuel dos Anjos, at Tete town on 13 June 2011, author of *Elementos Da Lingwa Nyungwe, Gramática e Dicionário (Nyungwe-Português-Nyungwe)* (Roma 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Mazarire, ‘Reflections’, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Nyungwe as an ethnic designation seems to have been unknown before the nineteenth century. One of the first dictionaries published in 1899 was clearly in the language today classified as Nyungwe but was not called by that name. See Victor Jose Courtois, *Dicionario Portuguez-Cafre Tetense – ou idioma falado no Distrito de Tete e na vasta regio do Zambeze Inferior*, Coimbra, 1899.

<sup>23</sup> Maugham, *Zambezia*, p. 295.



suggests that they were already a distinct group in the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> To this day Nyungwe and Tete are used interchangeably to refer to Tete town. If the term Nyungwe was derived from Tete and then used to refer to similar languages spoken in Tete province south of the Zambezi, then on account of the dialectical differences, in so far as those languages reached out across the border with Rhodesia, it follows that Nyungwe was spoken and indigenous to Rhodesia as much as to PEA. It could be surmised that the Nyungwe-speaking region was defined by the same token by which the whole province was named Tete, when in fact Tete was only a small town on the Zambezi. The region is not so designated on the basis of ethnicity, but rather because, *chiNyungwe*, adopted from the language spoken at Tete, became a *lingua franca* for the area. The Tonga, Tawala and Korekore in PEA used it. But groups from Tete who spoke *chiNyungwe* also migrated even before the popularisation of the ascription 'Nyungwe', to settle in areas now in Rhodesia, establishing their own chieftaincies and becoming headmen in their own right.

While the Nyungwe-speaking people were Bantu speaking like their Shona neighbours, they were made up of layers of exogenous others over a core of the people who spoke *chiNyungwe* at Tete town and its environs. The processes leading to the emergence of the Nyungwe or *aNhungwe*, included ethnic intermixtures and creolisations.<sup>25</sup> The groups which spoke Nyungwe included descendants of Afro-Portuguese and Afro-Asians, who converged on Tete and identified themselves with the Nyungwe spoken there rather than the Portuguese they spoke. It was to such groups that Native Commissioner Edward was referring when he wrote in 1899

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The *a-* or *wa-* in *aNyungwe* is a common Bantu prefix equivalent to 'of' or 'the' See Martins, *Elementos Da Lingwa Nyungwe*, p. 39-40.

about the Bafungwi who panned for gold in the Mazoe River and traded it ‘principally with the coloured traders from Tete and other places on the Zambesi’, but who were now prevented from crossing into British territory to trade. This restriction made Native Commissioner Edward believe that the gold panning would soon be given up altogether.<sup>26</sup> The previous year a Mr A. R. Byron, then Acting Native Commissioner of Mtoko District, had complained about Portuguese natives trading in British territory resulting in the confiscation of their goods.<sup>27</sup> Regional commerce which had been going on for centuries and the social connections that had developed as a result of it amongst other factors were now actively being curtailed by the establishment of the border. But the contacts appear to have continued nonetheless as a 1921 letter by a clerk in charge at Bindura NC offices to the Superintendent of Natives at Salisbury noted, ‘I have the honour to forward herewith three samples of weaving done by Tete natives who are plying their trade in this district’.<sup>28</sup>

It is in this milieu that the Chikunda find their slot amongst the Nyungwe-speaking groups associated with Tete. ‘Chikunda’ is derived from a common Bantu word - *kunda* which means ‘conquer’ or ‘defeat’.<sup>29</sup> The multiethnicity of the Nyungwe is mirrored in the composition of the Chikunda who ‘were captives transformed into soldiers, who came from various social and political formations’.<sup>30</sup> They were drawn from various ethnic groups on the Zambezi, initially to work for Portuguese settlers at Tete and on their estates called *prazos* and their origins can be traced to the

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<sup>26</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for Quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup> 1899, M’rewas District, p. 580.

<sup>27</sup> NAZ: NSJ Vol.1, Letter dated November 16<sup>th</sup> 1898, p. 178.

<sup>28</sup> NAZ: NSB1/1/1, Letter of Clerk in Charge at the Native Commissioners Office – Bindura to the Superintendent of Natives, Salisbury. No. 14/21 dated March 30<sup>th</sup> 1921.

<sup>29</sup> Martins, *Elementos Da Língua Nyungwe*, p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> Madeiros and Capela, ‘Process of Identity-Building’, p. 39.

seventeenth century. Many of them were drawn from the Chewa and Nyanja-speaking areas north of Tete. The Kaitano chieftaincy discussed below fits in well with the profile and lifestyle of Chikunda adventurers who, apart from their other skills, were also renowned hunters. The native commissioner of M'rewas may well have been referring to Chikunda when he wrote in 1898 that Portuguese traders were reportedly selling guns 'again' at the price of 30/- cash each.<sup>31</sup> The Chikunda traversed the mid Zambezi on various errands. The collapse of bonded labour and the decline of the prazo system in the mid nineteenth century left many in the social category of Chikunda free to pursue their own plans. Many settled amongst other groups. In the process they spread the language that came to be called *chiNyungwe* as well as other European cultural trappings picked up from their association and service with the Portuguese.

Paul Nugent notes that very few Africanists today would hold onto the notion that African identities are rooted in a stable pre-colonial past or that they were colonial inventions.<sup>32</sup> The position of the present study is that African identities fall within a spectrum, ranging from those that are larger and rooted predominantly in a more distant pre-colonial past, albeit being modified by the colonial experience, to those that emerged later and were consolidated by the colonial experience for various reasons, to those that emerged precisely because of the colonial experience. The colonial intrusion was so deep that it impacted on all the above categories and yet was too short a period to be the sole factor in identity formation. It did, however, provide the linguistic and intellectual tools to define these identities. In this way the

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<sup>31</sup> NAZ: NSI,1/1/1, Letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, Salisbury, from a Mrewas NC, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1898, p.85. 30/- means thirty shillings.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Nugent, 'The Historicity of Ethnicity: Mandinka/Jola and Ewe/Agotime Identities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in Alexander Keese, (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: The African Experience*, (Oxford, 2010), p. 127.

‘invention of tradition’ options fall away in favour of the position that identity formation is dynamic and is always in process. Any single identification is a snapshot of a particular moment and place in the evolution of ethnicity or shared identity. There are, however, hooks that prolong a particular identification in a certain period for a certain time and depending on the nature of the identity, it can be long or short lived.

Paul Nugent has argued for much deeper roots of African ethnicities of which the twentieth century manifestations are best regarded as mutations rather than colonial inventions. He argues that early European travellers borrowed ethnonyms that Africans were already using for each other along with the stereotypes that went with them, all of which enjoyed remarkable longevity.<sup>33</sup> This was true of the case study he made among the Mandinka, Jola, Ewe and Agotime identities in the Gambia, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau region of West Africa. A similar pattern seems to have prevailed in South-East Central Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) where, for instance, the term ‘Karanga’, which the Portuguese used to name a region and people of the Zimbabwean plateau, was adopted from the local people. Even though this term changed its meaning later to eventually refer to a small group of Shona speakers in the central region of Zimbabwe in the Masvingo region, it has enjoyed longevity and has lasted for at least five centuries.

As with the Nyungwe of Tete, the Agotime of Paul Nugent were named after a place rather than a bloodline. *Ago-ti-me* simply means ‘the people living amongst the fan palms’. These people had spread out to form a number of settlements.<sup>34</sup> Unlike other ethnic discourses that centre on bloodlines, this was almost certainly not the case

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>34</sup> Nugent, ‘Historicity’, p. 130.

with the Agotime, claims Nugent. In this they share a very similar pattern with the Nyungwe who are even more complex because of their other layers of both bloodlines and sub-ethnic identifications, yet are also named after a place. In an interview with Mr Armindo Lourenço, when the author asked ‘what are you?’ he responded ‘*Ife ndife aBoloma ife*’ (in *chiNyungwe*) which means ‘we are of Boroma’, so his first self-identification was with a place of origin.<sup>35</sup> Mrs Cumpeu spoke of her father as ‘*mba Mandie*’, ‘one from Mandie’ but who came to settle in Tete.<sup>36</sup> Bairo Dube who lived in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, called himself Sena but identified himself with Nyungwe as ‘*carteira yathu ikulu*’ meaning ‘our big centre.’<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it is almost always the case in the Nyungwe language that people are identified by where they come from, such as *aSena*, the people from Sena, *aKilimane*, people from Quelimane, and so on, and in the case where the ethnonym has gained general currency, by the language spoken such as *aZezuru* or *maZezuru* (referring to one of the larger population groups on the Zimbabwean plateau).

The Ewe discussed by Nugent could be interpreted according to the ‘invention of tradition’ paradigm because colonial rule did make it easier for them to think of themselves as sharing a common identity and the Bremen Mission on either side of the border was credited with creating a standardised written version of Ewe based on the Anlo dialect and popularised through church and school.<sup>38</sup> There are parallels and similarities with the formation of a Nyungwe identity in the above examples. The Nyungwe language was committed to writing by Catholic missionaries, it was named after a place, its speakers identified more with a place rather than with

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Armindo Lourenco, Tete, 15 December 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Lucia Cumpeu at Degue, Tete, 16 June 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Bairo Dube, Bulawayo, 8 February 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Nugent, ‘Historicity’, p. 136.

specific bloodlines, its identity comprised various social groups and its region of origin was the mid Zambezi even though it borrowed extensively from outsiders.

### **Nyungwe, Chikunda Identity formation and migration culture**

As noted above, the Nyungwe were made up of various ethnic categories who identified with Nyungwe or Tete. Migration culture in the middle Zambezi antedated the colonial-era labour migrations that began in the 1890s and intensified in the late colonial period. This section further consolidates the origins of Nyungwe using oral sources from the region. Testimonies of Nyungwe-speakers and their descendants consistently show that the ethnic landscape of the middle Zambezi was shaped by layers of African regional migrations, internal localized migrations and injections of overseas immigration over a long period of time. Uxorilocal marriages, in which the husband lived in the locality of his in-laws, institutionalized socially motivated migration patterns. Polygamy and interethnic marriages cemented the social character and the settlement patterns of communities along the middle Zambezi River. Matteus Maoza summed it up when he said ‘It is just as well that we all call ourselves *aNyungwe* by virtue of living in Tete and speaking *ChiNyungwe*. Nyungwe is like Afrikaans in South Africa, it was created here in Tete’.<sup>39</sup>

Nyungwe has also been described as a language of trade used at Tete very much like Swahili further north on the East African coast. Maoza explained that he considered himself Nyungwe even though his ancestors came from Zululand with Zwangendaba but branched off to remain in Tete. Maoza gave the history of his ancestors’ settlement in the region in the following paraphrased version:

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Matteus Maoza at Tete, Mozambique, 10 June 2011. At the time of the interview Maoza was a retired teacher aged about 70. His responses seemed a mixture of oral tradition and information gleaned from what he had read. He had a clear mind with an orderly presentation of his answers.

When Shaka's mother died, not many people sympathized with him because he was cruel. He then decided to kill many other people whose mourning was portrayed as mourning his mother. Many of his generals deserted him. One of them, called Zwangendaba migrated north and settled at Mufa Kakonde, the source of the Mufa River (near Tete) for a long time. Some of his followers dispersed to settle at Mpadwe [to the south-east of Tete town]. Thrilled by the waters of the Zambezi, they settled for good and intermarried with the local people. At Mpadwe there remained a group of Zwangedaba's people who for a long time did not mix with others, but they have since become Nyungwe (*asanduka aNyungwe apaMpadwewo*). At Chikoa, *pakaChomba*, (in a place called Chomba), they met with Kanyemba's group. When asked, these people always said they came from Bulawayo in what is now South Africa [not the Bulawayo of Southern Rhodesia, the old capital of King Lobengula]. They crossed the Zambezi River and proceeded to what became Malawi and then Tanzania and Kenya. They returned to settle in Angonia (now a district in Tete province). They are called the Ngoni. In my visit to Malawi I met [some of] these Zulu-speaking people. My father died at the age of 107, he belonged to the Nguni of Zwangendaba.<sup>40</sup>

Maoza identified Chiefs Gosa, Matope and Matambo as the original rulers on the outskirts of Tete town from the time of these incursions. An assortment of the Tete Nyungwe, Tawala, Ngoni, Sena, Tonga of Chioko and their chief, Matope, as well as the Manyika and Phimbi were all to be found in the Nyungwe-speaking region of Tete province. According to Maoza, the *aBarwe* were Makombe's people but many of them fled the fighting with the Portuguese to Southern Rhodesia. Some settled in Tete while others crossed the Zambezi to Maravia, now a district to the north -west of Tete province, where they came to be called *aPhimbi*. The Phimbi got their name when they were asked, 'What are you running away from?' to which they replied by vocalizing the sound of the gun, 'phi-mbi-i-i!' The name stuck.<sup>41</sup>

Maoza's oral version may be inaccurate in a lot of detail and lacking in chronology, yet it fits roughly into what scholarship has established. Newitt described the area to the north of the Ruenha River, the limit of the Barue Kingdom, and the Mazoe region as 'full of refugees from Barue who had fled from Sousa's [Manuel Antonio

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

de Sousa] reprisals and were members of the Barwe royal house there to stiffen resistance.’<sup>42</sup> But this all happened at the dawn of the twentieth century. The Shaka-related migrations had happened much earlier. Notwithstanding these weaknesses, Maoza’s account does point to the rich and complex African ethnic diversity of the Middle Zambezi even before we factor in the layer of Afro-Portuguese-Goan mixtures which predated the Nguni factor and also still constituted the Nyungwe speaking people.

The well-documented families of Afro-Portuguese-Goans had Portuguese names, but were better known by their local Nyungwe names. José do Rosario Andrade (Kanyemba), was still alive in 1899, Inácio de Jesus Xavier (Kalizamimba), José Araujo Lobo (Matekenya) (d. 1894) and others were all Nyungwe speaking.<sup>43</sup> A famous warlord called *Kusvipa kunamalodza*, meaning in *ChiNyungwe* ‘extremely dark in complexion’, was of Angolan ancestry but was counted as Nyungwe. The better-known and documented rulers in the mid Zambezi beyond the Mvurwi and Mavuradonha mountains at the turn of the century were the *vazungu* / *azungu*, Karizamimba, Chimbangu, Sakani, Perizengwe, Matekenya and Kanyemba. There was also an influential Portuguese settler on the Zimbabwe plateau called Variadye, all of whom were nominal Catholics.<sup>44</sup> *Azungu* in *chiNyungwe* means Europeans, in this case, the Portuguese. But they were *azungu* in name only, to all practical intents and purposes, they were Africanised in both blood and culture. In Mozambique, around 1950, chiefdoms were mapped. Gerhard Liesegang used these maps in his

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<sup>42</sup> Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*, p. 322.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>44</sup> Beach, *Mapondera*, p. 21.



work.<sup>45</sup> The chief or *nyakwawa* at Tete was *Nyakwawa* Magaso. To the west, at Mufa near Boroma was *Nyakwawa* Malekeza; one of his headman was *Mpfumu* Malizani Chikafa nicknamed 'Mbvalamasese'. The appointment of Chief Chikafa has already been discussed in chapter two.

These figures have stolen the limelight in historiography because of their exploits as militant *prazo* rulers, but they were just a few of many like them or their imitators who did not rise to prominence. Protasio Vicente, Luis Caetano Dias, the Pereiras, the da Cruzes and others also traced their ancestry to the Portuguese or their settlement of Goa in India.<sup>46</sup> The warlords were typically mixed-race Afro-Portuguese, sometimes with Goan blood as well. They married numerous wives for all sorts of reasons.<sup>47</sup> They had large followings of Chikunda. They were generally connected to Tete either for administrative reasons, in collaboration with the Portuguese authorities, or as natives of Tete. They were called *azungu* in Nyungwe with the double meaning of 'European' or 'boss'. The term has been anglicised to *muzungos* in English sources.<sup>48</sup> Asked if all these people were Nyungwe, Matteus Maoza replied 'Yes, they considered themselves Nyungwe'.<sup>49</sup> All the African names of these *muzungos* were in Nyungwe which lends further weight to the collation of

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<sup>45</sup> According to Gerhard Liesegang 'In Mozambique a schematic map of chiefdoms covering the whole of Mozambique irrespective of forms of land ownership was prepared for the census of Mozambique, possibly that of 1950, and was in use in 1960 and 1970. This can be matched with published lists of chiefs and data on ruling lineages obtained in interviews. From this, in southern Mozambique it is possible to trace the approximate core areas of African states existing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because the lineages and clans governing them were generally perpetuated as lineages of the local chiefs ruling in the twentieth century. Only in some of the later studies based on administrative sources in areas beyond Southern Rhodesia was it possible to apply this approach.' Liesegang, 'David Beach (1943-1999)', p. 372.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Matteus Maoza, Tete, 10 June 2011.

<sup>47</sup> All interviewees in Mozambique described the *prazeiros* and *guerreiros* (fighters) as having practiced polygamy.

<sup>48</sup> See Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*; Isaacman and Peterson, 'Making the Chikunda', and Isaacman, and Isaacman, *Slavery and Beyond*.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Matteus Maoza, Tete, 10 June 2011.

Nyungwe-speakers and the Chikunda. Asked about the relationship between these two designations, the Zimbabwean Mr Ngirazi (born 1924) claimed that he was a Chikunda of Sena origin but spoke Nyungwe.<sup>50</sup> The followers of these itinerant *azungus*, the Chikunda, were responsible for spreading the Nyungwe language which justifies the claim of the existence of a Nyungwe-speaking region in the middle Zambezi which transcends the colonial frontiers. Newitt makes two important observations in this connection:

The armed followers of the muzungos, with their wives and children, soon acquired a 'tribal' identity of their own. They proudly called themselves *A-Chikunda* and wherever they burnt, destroyed, and enslaved they also planted colonies. Chikunda villages spread along the Luangwa and north and south of the Zambezi.<sup>51</sup>

Allen Isaacman and Derek Peterson have also made a similar claim that the demise of the *prazo* system left many former Chikunda jobless, forcing them to settle amongst clans who were prepared to welcome them.<sup>52</sup> This was such that at the partition of 1891, Newitt claims, 'a large part of the territory occupied and settled by Chikunda fell into British hands'.<sup>53</sup> This was the case with the north-eastern border of Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique; as in Northern Rhodesia, the BSAC inherited a large Chikunda population replete with its chiefs and headmen, many of them descendants of the Afro-Portuguese. The Chapoto chieftaincy of Dande to the north-east of Zimbabwe, to this day, claims descent from the nineteenth-century Portuguese *prazeiro*, Jose Rosario Andrade.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mr Ngirazi in Goromonzi, Zimbabwe, 7 May 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*, p. 305.

<sup>52</sup> Isaacman and Peterson 'Making the Chikunda' p. 261.

<sup>53</sup> Newitt, *Portuguese Settlement*, p. 308.

<sup>54</sup> Marja J. Spierenburg, *Strangers, Spirits and Land Reforms: Conflicts about Land in Dande, Northern Zimbabwe* (Leiden, 2004), p. 26.

The fame of the *azungu* was never again matched by their successors because of the latter's absorption into colonial British and Portuguese rule in 1890. Even though Portugal was weak, its hand was strengthened by British recognition of its superintendence of the eastern territory. Where a Nyungwe royal or chiefly succession remained, the successors of the *azungus* could no longer rule with the impunity of their forbears – which had been a reason for their renown. They were now reduced to British or Portuguese subjects. The imposition of an overarching political power in bounded territories therefore curtailed the power of indigenous rulers who were gradually, through coercion and other means, made to obey and serve a higher authority. Their power was further eroded by the departure of men who were forced or attracted to cross the border to work in European farms and mines. They could no longer exercise their chiefly authority as in earlier times.

Testifying to a similar result following the imposition of an overarching greater power at a much later date in post-independent Mozambique, Domingos Chikafa and his sister Lucia Cumpeu confirmed that their clan *ufumu* (sub-chieftaincy) was made redundant by the socialist FRELIMO government at independence in 1975 and replaced by the *secretario dos bairros*.<sup>55</sup> In addition Domingos reminisced of his father:

He was rich. He had sheep, cattle, and goats. The *mwenye* [Indian traders] used to crook [cheat] him, not steal from him, no. He died in Kasumbadedza/Degue. He was buried on the banks of the Zambezi and it is thought his grave was washed away by the river. . . . I saw from my father when he got old, he could not sustain his wealth. And we, his children, could not sustain his wealth either. We failed.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Mrs Lucia Cumpeu at Degue, Tete, on 16 June 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Domingos Chikafa at Chiringa, Tete, on 16 June 2011.

The lifestyle and settlement habits of the Nyungwe speakers in the region makes a trans-frontier Nyungwe speaking region identifiable which stretched from Tete through the colonial frontier to Northern Eastern Rhodesia. Their situation was akin to what Jeanne Marie Penvenne observed:

Mozambique's people, like the rivers and mountain ranges, spill outside the national frontiers and feed the centrifugal forces which challenge the bounded political entity called Mozambique. Makonde, Shona, Chewa, Yao, and Shangaan people link Mozambique to Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa, just as the Zambezi, Chire and Limpopo rivers link headwater villages of the hinterland watersheds to the countries river ports and Indian Ocean Harbours.<sup>57</sup>

*ChiNyungwe* became the dominant language on the south side of the Zambezi. The current linguistic map of Mozambique fails to show the full geographical spread of the Nyungwe speaking population, being defined more by the political boundary rather than the actual settlement patterns of the Nyungwe.<sup>58</sup>

It clearly marks, however, their south Zambezi predominance as one of the twenty major language groups in modern Mozambique.<sup>59</sup> Smaller numbers of Nyungwe speakers were also to be found in the border areas of modern Zambia and Malawi. According to Maoza, much of the Nyungwe speaking territory to the west of Tete spilling across the frontier with Zimbabwe is traditionally *Tawala* (Tavara) land:

The original owners of that area were the Tawala. The *azungu* [Afro-Portuguese] went to rule over them. Those close to them were the *assimilado*; my sister was married to a Kanyemba. They fought all the way to Zumbo. Wherever they controlled, they established a tax system. But Inácio de Jesus who had fought for the Portuguese killed himself because the Portuguese were making his wives pay tax. Inácio de Jesus lived here in Tete. And he had a lot of children. He killed himself. He died as Chikoa. He had many relatives here in Tete. He killed himself because he was heartbroken

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<sup>57</sup> Jeanne Marie Penvenne, 'Mozambique: A Tapestry of Conflict' in Birmingham and Martin *History of Central Africa*, p. 233.

<sup>58</sup> *Ministerio de Educação, Moçambique, Agenda* (Maputo 2011) p. 8 -10

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

‘*Adabzvipha na raiva*’ [because of the actions of the Portuguese government].<sup>60</sup>

The Tawala no longer exist as a language group on the present linguistic map of Mozambique.<sup>61</sup> In 1976, Carlos Ramos de Oliveira sketched much of the region to the south of the Zambezi well into Southern Rhodesia as the region of the *Tauaras* (Tawala).<sup>62</sup> The region has been replaced with Nyungwe. This superimposition across the region therefore must be a more recent structuring based on the existence of scattered Nyungwe settlements across the region.

Mr Gabriel Avelino painted a similar picture to Matteus Maoza’s account, but unlike Maoza’s ancestors who migrated from another part of the region, Avelino’s ancestors came from further afield, across the seas.<sup>63</sup> He was related to the Kanyemba clan and was emphatic that Kanyemba originally came from Goa, but married many local women. Gabriel Avelino’s father was a civil servant in the Portuguese government around the time of the consolidation of colonial rule in the early 1900s.

The Portuguese ruled distant places through the *Chefes dos Postos*. Ntengombalame, the *posto* of Angonia district in Tete province, was opened by my father. He was educated at Boroma. The Kanyemba [clan] are our relatives, we were one regime. The Portuguese would not go to the bush, they sent educated Africans instead.<sup>64</sup>

Gabriel Avelino went on to confirm what is already known about the role of chiefs in Portuguese colonial administration – they were the eyes, ears and hands of the

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Matteus Maoza in Tete on 10 June 2011.

<sup>61</sup> The current linguistic map of Mozambique shows twenty languages that are spoken in Mozambique. The Tawala area up to the line along the border with Zimbabwe is shown as the area of *ChiNyungwe language*. Source: *Agenda, Ministerion de Educacao de Republica de Mocambique, Ministerio de Educação, Moçambique, Agenda* (Maputo, 2011) p. 8 -10.

<sup>62</sup> Carlos Ramos de Oliveira, *Os Tauaras Do Vale do Zambeze* (Lourenço Marques, 1976).

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mr Gabriel Avelino Dias at Beira in Mozambique on 21 June 2011. Mr Dias was 83 years old at the time of the interview (he was born in 1928). He went to school at Boroma and was a schoolboy around 1943 and claimed to have been taught by the Jesuits. In 1948 he migrated to Southern Rhodesia to work in Kwe Kwe, but did not stay there for long.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

administration, tax collectors and labour recruiters. He professed knowledge of the Tonga chief, *mpfumu* Chikafa who lived on a hill facing Mufa River not far from Boroma Mission.

Chikafa was a *grande mpfumu* [big chief]. I saw him with my own eyes. I was born in Chiuta. My father was Luis Caetano Dias, his father was from Goa; he came as a soldier. They were dark skinned Indians. My grandfather married the sister of Kanyemba called Natalia. Kanyemba was a *grande guerreiro* [big fighter]. Protasio Vicente belonged to this group of foreigners. My father had many wives and many followers, he had homes in many places and did farming. There were no schools in these remote places.<sup>65</sup>

Asked about the origin of the Nyungwe language and identity, Avelino professed ignorance, save observing that,

*ChiNyungwe* is a very small language. I don't know how it spread. The first priests were teaching in *ChiNyungwe*, but I don't know. Good Nyungwes [i.e. good *ChiNyungwe*-speakers], however, are to be found at Massangano, Mandie, Boroma, Marara, Changara, Cabora Bassa and just a small part across the Zambezi. It's a language that follows the Zambezi River. Boroma was a centre of Nyungwe. The priests must have promoted the Nyungwe language because they used it to teach catechism.<sup>66</sup>

The role of the missionaries in promoting the Nyungwe language is supported by the fact that the first elaborate Nyungwe dictionary, *Elementos de Grammatica Tetense* (Coimbra, 1899), was produced by the Jesuit Fr Courtois in 1899.<sup>67</sup> The fact that this dictionary was not given the name 'Nyungwe' could indicate that at this time the use of Nyungwe to refer to the language was not yet widespread, lending weight to arguments that the use of 'Nyungwe' to refer to a language and people was popularised in the early twentieth century. The surrounding Tavora, other immigrants, and the people of Boroma and Tete town, being important missionary

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Gabriel Avelino, Beira, 22 June 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Gabriel Avelino, Beira, 21 June 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Victor José Courtois, *Elementos de Grammatica Tetense* (Coimbra, 1899). Listed as first in Martin's *Elementos da Lingua Nyungwe*.

centres, must have provided much of the standard diction of the Nyungwe language. Equipped with a language, the missionaries had a tool for their outreach.

It would appear therefore that missionaries, internal migrants from Tete town, colonial officials and the *prazeiros* or warlords and their armies of servants were responsible for the spread of the Nyungwe language across traditionally Tawala, Tonga, Shona and Nsenga territories. The significant degree of mutual intelligibility of these languages worked in the favour of Nyungwe, which was the only printed language in the region apart from Portuguese and Shona and English across the boundary in Southern Rhodesia. Instead of learning the new dialects, Mozambican officials, missionaries and catechists preferred to impose and use Nyungwe in communicating with the natives whatever their specific dialects or ethnicities. By 1922, the designation ‘Nyungwe’ appears to have been well established as a distinct language. Le Roy refers to it several times as a language spoken on the Zambezi in reference to the common Bantu root *-ima* as the root of ‘*m-tima* (Nyungwe)’ meaning ‘heart’.<sup>68</sup>

The role of missionaries in the process of ‘making the Nyungwe language’ was supported by similar processes that were taking place elsewhere in the region. Further south of Tete in the eastern region of Southern Rhodesia called Manicaland, the three churches there, in their mutual antipathy and rivalry, adopted similar approaches. The three mission stations – at Old Umtali the American Methodists, the Anglicans at St Augustine’s Penhalonga and the Catholic Trappist mission at Triashill – became ‘the three power-houses of *chiManyika*’ the dominant regional

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<sup>68</sup> Alexander Le Roy, *Religion of the Primitives* (New York, 1922), pp. 92, 329, 330.

dialect of the Shona language in east Rhodesia. Ranger concluded that '[t]he investment in the new language by African teachers and catechists did more than anything else to produce a sense of distinct Manyika identity. . . thus helped to "make" ethnicity.'<sup>69</sup>

A final illustration of the process of Nyungwe expansion through local internal migrations is presented in Sabado Lunga's account.<sup>70</sup> He said of his family:

My father was a polygamist with four wives. In my 'mother's house' we were four children. My father left Nyungwe with my grandfather to settle among the *aTawala* [also rendered Tavara] where he married other wives. People used to pay taxes in those days. My father's name was Antonio Lunga. He used to go with the Portuguese census officials into the districts. Wherever he found a nice place to settle, he just settled there and married some local women. I was born among the *aTawala*. My grandfather was a hunter and was among the first people to use a gun and to speak Portuguese. My grandfather had plenty of guns and cattle and servants. Their wives were from Nyungwe but the others they married among the *aTawala*.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly, Sabado's grandfather could not have been among the first people to use the guns as guns had been in use in the Zambezi valley for generations already. What is clear is that he was of Tavara maternal ancestry.

The spread of Nyungwe influence carried with it some Catholic Christian ideas picked up from Tete and the Portuguese influence there. When trans-frontier labour migrations increased, Nyungwe speaking migrants brought their Catholic religion to some remote regions of the Middle Zambezi and onto the Rhodesian plateau. They constituted some of the first congregants when Catholic churches were later established. The story of Arubino Chimkupete illustrates this. Arubino Fernandes

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<sup>69</sup> JAH, Paper by T.O. Ranger, The Mission Churches of Manicaland, (Undated, probably 1970s or 80s), p.5.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Mr Sabado Lunga in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 07 February 2011. Sabado Lunga (born 1937), was a retiree of Mpilo hospital in Bulawayo where he had worked as a laboratory assistant. He migrated to Rhodesia in the 1960s to find work.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



Chimkupete (d. 1977) left his native Tete and arrived in Southern Rhodesia in 1915.<sup>72</sup> Arubino came from Boroma Mission. He went to Rhodesia to join his father, Joseph Chimkupete, who had migrated earlier and worked at 'Pies' on Cameroon Street, the first bakery in Salisbury. Arubino lived with his father and frequented church services at Saint Peter's in Mbare, the first urban African township in Mashonaland. He then found a job as a messenger at D.J. Morgan, before leaving to work at a garage specializing in making trailer wheels and horseshoes. When the *murungu* (Shona) of the garage relocated to Concession he went with him. It was at Concession that he met Anastacia Dunizha Kuruzeza, his future wife, who had also come to Southern Rhodesia following her father, Jack Andrea Nyautete, who had left Mphende in Tete. Jack Nyautete was a renowned *chiremba* (Shona, or *nyabezi* in Nyungwe), healer, who had treated the household of Chief Samarengu and married one of the chief's daughters, who bore Anastasia Dunizha. Jack had ended up working as a cook in Concession after leaving his family in Tete. Arubino and Anastasia married and had two boys: Arubino Junior (who died in infancy) and Fredrick Bzvingwe Chimkupete (1929-2009). In 1929, both Arubino and Jack left Concession to work on the farms in Banket. Later, Arubino Senior found a job as a petrol attendant at JH Voster Garage in Sinoia (Chinhoyi) and was helped to find a place to stay by fellow Nyungwe migrants, Tomazhi and Stephan.<sup>73</sup>

When Arubino settled in Chinhoyi in 1935, there was no Catholic church there. From 1936, Arubino Chimkupete and Stephan gathered people to pray at their house in the evenings; this was the beginning of an organized Christian community in the area. Stephan then introduced a Jesuit, Fr Swift, to Arubino Chimkupete, and from

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with Prisca Mupfumira in Harare, Zimbabwe, 28 April 2011. Mrs Mupfumira is a granddaughter of Arubino and Anastacia.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

1937 bi-weekly Masses were held at Chinhoyi in the newly built magistrates' courts of Chinhoyi. The Europeans had their mass first, separately from the Africans. This happened while Arubino Chimkupete worked at Karundi Engineering and Milling Company. When his employer moved to Umboe Rural Council at Nakaswa, Arubino went with him. His duties included blacksmithing, tending the furnace fire, distributing mealie meal and beans to the other workers and sounding the siren to wake the compound for duties. In 1954 he quarrelled with his *murungu*, employer, who had shot dead his pig. This marked the end of his employment and he went back to Chinhoyi where he lived with Nyautete (who died in 1970). Arubino, like many others, never returned to his native Tete. Arubino and colleagues were some of the minority Nyungwe-speaking labour migrants into Southern Rhodesia before the 1930s. Often they crossed into Southern Rhodesia on foot and undocumented.<sup>74</sup> It is about such migrants that George Kay wrote 'In view of the manner in which international boundaries cut across tribal lands and the massive circulation of labour migrants between the countries of south-central Africa, it is expected that a fair number of Africans born elsewhere will be domiciled in Rhodesia.'<sup>75</sup>

The ascendance of Salisbury in Rhodesia began to impose restrictions on the movement of peoples as it took charge of the landscape and drew district boundaries. Salisbury authorities made it clear to Tete people that they could no longer move in and out of Rhodesia at will as they had done in the past. But by this time Nyungwes were already well established in north eastern Rhodesia; the Native Commissioners identified several Nyungwe chieftaincies that were incorporated into Rhodesia and were recast as Shona polities. It is here that we find the politics of identity being

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<sup>74</sup> Interview, Prisca Mupfumira, Harare, 28 April 2011.

<sup>75</sup> George Kay, *Rhodesia: A Human Geography* (London, 1970), p. 64.

played out through mapmaking, language manipulation and the claims of state power. The reports generated by the delineation teams portray the mid Zambezi as a mosaic of different groups. The older pre-colonial chiefs were close kin with new arrivals being offered positions of headmen. There were others who came from distant lands, thereby putting to rest claims of homogeneity in the mid Zambezi in terms of ethnicity and cultural traits. What appears to have happened, however, is that newcomers were absorbed into the religious system of the autochthons which, in the case of the mid Zambezi, was based on the royal *mhondoro*. As we shall see in the next chapter, it was only in the mines and farms where labour immigrants were a majority that we find foreigners keeping their varieties of religion.<sup>76</sup>

### **The borders, boundaries and territorial solidarities**

As early as 1892, the alternative name for Tete in a map produced that year was given as ‘Nungwe’ (Nyungwe).<sup>77</sup> The map showed a route which ran from Fort Salisbury in a northerly direction via Mt Hampden and Mazoe, an area described as home to the ‘Basezuru [Zezuru] tribes’. The route then turned eastward through the estuaries of the Mazoe River and between the Luia (Ruia) and Mazoe Rivers through what was described as the area of the ‘Mukolikoli [Korekore] tribes’. It proceeded through the tsetse-infested region through Rusambo, crossing the Luia (Ruia) River again to join the Mufa River and then to Tete, also called ‘Nungwe’.<sup>78</sup> In 1897, the Rhodesians erected one of only two telegraph lines in Rhodesia connecting Tete and

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<sup>76</sup> For instance, the *Nyau* religion of masked dancers came from Nyasaland, northern Tete province and eastern Zambia.

<sup>77</sup> NAZ: Map, Ia Graham, Accession No. 37, Map Showing route from Fort Salisbury to Tete, by Lt. M.D. Graham and completed by C.N. Thomas, 1892.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Salisbury. It stretched from Salisbury through Mazoe, Mount Darwin and Matopis near Mt Susa Moio to end at Tete.<sup>79</sup>

Most of the mid Zambezi on the Rhodesian side of the frontier, was called Mazoe District according to an 1897 map of the region.<sup>80</sup> By 1905, the internal boundaries on the Rhodesian side had been revised. A contemporary map showed Rhodesia divided into two roughly equal provinces, Matabeleland and Mashonaland. The Mazoe district was restructured to become North Mazoe and South Mazoe, Mangwendi District was split into three: Mrewas (Murewa), Mtoko (Mutoko) and Marandella (Marondera), while Salisbury remained unchanged. Most of what was Mazoe became the rather large Mt Darwin District, while the designation 'Mazoe' receded towards Salisbury and eventually ended as a small district immediately to the north of the capital by 1927. In this year Lomagundi (to the west of the mid Zambezi) remained unchanged. Mrewas became Mrewa District after ceding a large part of its western side to Salisbury District. Mtoko remained a separate district<sup>81</sup> and Salisbury and Tete remained the major towns of the mid Zambezi.<sup>82</sup>

The 1927 maps reveal an expanding network of roads, railways and telegraph lines which must have expanded the local perceptions of the landscape and facilitated travel. However, from Salisbury, the furthest roads into the Zambezi valley ended at

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<sup>79</sup> NAZ: Map, Ia Graham, Accession No. 37, Map Showing route from Fort Salisbury to Tete, by Lt. M.D. Graham and completed by C.N. Thomas, 1892.

<sup>80</sup> In Southern Rhodesia the mid Zambezi was first divided into three administrative districts (Lomagundi, Mazoe and Mangwende) in 1897, and then into six districts in 1905 (Lomagundi, North Mazoe, South Mazoe, Mrewas, Mtoko and Marandellas). In 1927, while the six districts remained, the names were changed to Lomagundi, Darwin, Mazoe, Mrewa, Mtoko and Marandellas. These were to remain largely unchanged until the 1960s when eight districts were newly defined: Sipolilo, Darwin, Mutoko (which shared the international boundary with Tete province in Mozambique) Mazoe, Bindura, Shamva, Mrewa and Goromonzi. Salisbury remained a separate district while Sipolilo had been carved out of the old 1897 Lomagundi District.

<sup>81</sup> NAZ: Acc. No. 421 La, Map of Southern Rhodesia, Issued by the Surveyor –General, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1927.

<sup>82</sup> NAZ: FM 1563, A Map of Rhodesia Divided into Provinces and Districts under the Administration of the British South Africa Company, 1905.

Sipolilo to the east of the Lomagundi District and Mount Darwin in the Darwin District. The road to Tete through Murewa and Mutoko had been completed, becoming the highway connecting Salisbury and Tete. All the main roads radiated from Salisbury. The north-bound railway lines towards the Zambezi from Salisbury ended at Sinoia in the Lomagundi District. Another line, after a circuitous route, terminated at Shamva mine in Mazoe District. With all this development, Salisbury became an emerging economic powerhouse. There was no similar infrastructural development on the Tete side. This transport network meant that in 1927, most of the Zambezi valley and the regions following the international boundary between Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa remained remote. Travel undertaken for any considerable distance was via footpaths and dirt roads which were susceptible to the vagaries of the seasons: during the rainy season (from October to March) most of these dirt roads were generally impassable. In spite of the remoteness and absence of good roads, people still moved between and from these remote areas to the new centres of economic activity around Salisbury.<sup>83</sup> Regional

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<sup>83</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for Quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup> 1899, M'rewas District. Native Commissioner W. Edward, reported taking a patrol at the end of April 1899 to 'Fungwi' meeting the paramount Chief 'Chizungu' and local sub-chiefs of the area, 'Nyanjera', 'Gamari', 'Mapika', 'Kaperi' and 'Kapvura'. He wrote, 'The kraal of the last mentioned sub-chief lies about 6.5 miles west of the junction of the Nyaderi [Nyadire] and Mazoe rivers and about 180 miles from Salisbury. The natives here have never done much work and were very timid but friendly & I had no difficulty in getting a lot of natives to go to Salisbury for work.' (The absence of road infrastructure did not bar travel. It is noteworthy that Edward made his patrol after the rainy season, as passage was easier. More people were likely to be found at their kraals around April, May and June and not in their fields. During the dry season, people here also panned for gold on the Mazoe River. Elsewhere in the same report, Edward thought that 'A good supply of 200 boys a month can be obtained from this district' and boasted of sending some 400 'boys' through his district from central Africa and Tete. (To the east, of the same region, at the point where the boundary of the British Territory sharply projects into P. E. A. on the north-eastern corner of Rhodesia (and also remote in terms of major communication links) was the land of Chief M'kota about whom NC Edward complained repeatedly about the non-payment of hut tax. Here again, in this remote corner of the colony, Edward urged the Chief and his headmen to pay tax and send people to work.

job seekers crossed the border at many different points as will be seen in chapter four. By the 1960s the mid Zambezi in Rhodesia had changed into eight districts.<sup>84</sup>

Whereas Rhodesian ‘natives’ travelled generally in the direction of Salisbury, many ended their journeys prematurely in the roadworks, railways, European farms and mines to earn the money needed to pay taxes levied by the government.<sup>85</sup> The case of Chief M’kota illustrates this. On his tour of duty from 16<sup>th</sup> September to 26<sup>th</sup> October 1898, a Mr A.R. Byron, then acting native commissioner travelled with the boundary delimitation commission and later made a report to the Chief Native Commissioner. In the report he mentioned a certain ‘Chief M’kota in the north western part of this [Mtoko] district’ whose people got their water from the Mazoe River though they lived about a mile or more away.<sup>86</sup> Byron wrote: ‘The Chief Chigi M’Kota came around about midday with a few headmen. We had a long talk and I questioned him as to his not paying hut tax.’<sup>87</sup> After warnings and threats he pledged to co-operate. By the end of November Chief M’kota had paid £3 from his own huts, which Byron considered ‘as nothing’.<sup>88</sup>

‘I [Byron] informed him that i[t] was nearly two months since I saw him and warned him to get his chiefs to come in and pay up the first week in November, he replied that he had sent his boys into Salisbury to work[,] this statement I informed him I could not accept as I had persistently told all chiefs including Chigi M’kota to send his [. . .unclear. . .] here in order that I could send them into the Chief Native Commissioner. Mc [M’kota] then replied that he was unable to make his people pay up their taxes.’<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> NAZ: Acc. No. 1943, Ha Zimbabwe 1988, Zimbabwe Administrative Areas, Map showing administrative Districts (1969 and 1982).

<sup>85</sup> NAZ: NSJ Vol.1, Mtoko District, Report for Month ending October 31<sup>st</sup> 1898, To the Chief Native Commissioner Salisbury p. 183ff.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 184ff

<sup>88</sup> NAZ: NSJ Vol.1, Mtoko District, Report for Month ending November 30<sup>th</sup> 1898, To the Chief Native Commissioner Salisbury, p. 194).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Byron complained that no labour had been sent to the Labour Bureau or to the Native Department. In the last report of the year 1898, the Acting NC, A.R. Byron wrote again that '[t]he Paramount Chief Figi [different spelling] M'kota who has made no effort to pay or make his people pay, has sent in a small sum [unclear] £16. But I estimate he should with his chiefs be able to [pay] up at least £160'.<sup>90</sup>

From this, it appears that generally it was young men who were on the move to seek employment and possibly repatriated the money to their elders in the rural areas, but this is a subject for the next chapter.

### **The Religious Domain**

Beneath the colonial district demarcations lay the older precolonial polities which retained and perpetuated the pre-colonial, traditional forms of political and religious authority. The colonial delineation officers did not recognise these traditional authority structures; they referred to all the rulers as 'tribal chiefs and headmen'.<sup>91</sup> Many chiefs were, in fact, addressed as *ishe* or *mambo*, meaning 'king' and indeed, to all practical intents and purposes the chiefs were final authorities in their territories, commanding resources and their allocation, controlling armies and weapons, and dispensing justice.

The colonial administrations not only superimposed new district boundaries but made sure to expropriate the chiefly powers. At first, the Rhodesians sought to destroy the chieftaincy system altogether, but made a U-turn in the 1930s.<sup>92</sup> The change of policy was partly a result of the limits imposed on colonial governance by the shortage of resources and personnel in light of the size of the territories to be

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<sup>90</sup> NAZ: NSJ Vol.1, Mtoko District, Report for Month ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 1898, To the Chief Native Commissioner Salisbury p. 239.

<sup>91</sup> There were various local designations and titles for local leaders such as *machinda*, *makumbo*, *mambo*, *ishe* and *changamire* which reflected different hierarchies and positions of subordination.

<sup>92</sup> See Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*; Jeater, *Marriage, Pervasion, And Power*.

administered. As a compromise, chiefs were incorporated in the governance system under the native departments. This arrangement maintained a semblance of the older system of the twining of political and religious authority because some chiefs were still appointed under the guidance of *mhondoro* mediums. The colonial administrations did not demand much of the chiefs apart from the collection of tax, labour, loyalty and the curtailments noted in chapter one. This left plenty of room for local continuities at the command of local agents, meaning that change was not simply colonially driven; the experience of colonial rule set in motion other processes that independently rerouted change under the initiative of indigenous agents.

### **Sipolilo and Lomagundi Districts**

In the old Lomagundi District of 1897, the westernmost end of the mid Zambezi was the area described in 1965 as Sipolilo District comprising Sipolilo, Kachuta, Bakasa and Dande Tribal Trust Lands.<sup>93</sup> Communities here were delineated in the 1950s.<sup>94</sup> Around this time the area had chiefs Chipuriro, Nematombo, Dandawa and their headmen. These chiefdoms had precolonial roots according to their myths of origin. Associated with the chieftaincies were the spirit mediums *masvikiro* such as a certain James of Masangu kraal who had succeeded a certain Chinyati.<sup>95</sup> There was another James of Nyakasikana kraal, host of the ‘tribal spirit’ *mhondoro* of Nyanhowe. The

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<sup>93</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/7B.P. Kaschula, District Officer, Delineation Team, 14 October 1965, Report on Sipolilo District: Sipolilo, Kachuta, Bakasa and Dande Tribal Trust Lands.

<sup>94</sup> NAZ:S2929/3/7, [In General Introduction to] Delineation Reports: TTLs in Mtoko District, March 1965, by CJK Latham Sen. Delineation Officer. A community was defined as “a locality, a geographic entity whose boundaries are defined by the people living in it and recognised by them as an entity, and in which there are a number of institutions (family, economic, educational, religious, etc) serving their basic needs, a sense of togetherness within the locality which exceeds any sense of togetherness with outsiders that they may have, and a potential to work together in matters of common need.”

<sup>95</sup> NAZ:S2929/2/9, B.P.Kaschula, Delineation Officer.



Christian first names of these mediums shows the influence of Christianity in naming by this time, which nonetheless did not stop the named from being mediums of royal ancestral spirits. Chiefs Nematombo, Dandawa and Nyamunga, as well as headman Mudzimu, were relatives; they spoke *chiKorekore* and were of the vaGowa ‘tribe’ of the Zambezi valley. They were part of what Chet S. Lancaster described as a ‘congerie of Central Bantu cultivators spread along three hundred miles of the Middle Zambezi Valley, in the area where the borders of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique meet’.<sup>96</sup> These chiefs had chosen different totems to distinguish themselves from each other.<sup>97</sup> The practice of changing names and even totems has been noted above. Dandawa and his people had originally lived right on the Zambesi River valley, near Mana Pools. During 1958 they were moved to the Rengwe area at the time of NC Mr Dawson where they found some *vaKorekore* people.<sup>98</sup> Headman Mudzimu’s people had migrated from Msana in modern day Bindura, not far from Salisbury. In the Zambezi valley the Mudzimu people encountered the autochthonous *vaMbara* people of the Gowa country. During 1956 the entire community was moved from Gowa to Urungwe (Hurungwe) to make way for the construction of the Kariba dam because they “would all be drowned if Kariba dam burst and, therefore, had to move to higher ground”.<sup>99</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> August 1953, when headman Makazinga died the Mudzimu chieftainship was abolished by the Rhodesian government who, for convenience, decided to place the people directly under Chief Dandawa. But the Mudzimu group complained: “We are different people! Dandawa’s *mutupo* [totem] is *Tembo/Mazvimbakupa*: we are *Gumbo*

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<sup>96</sup> Chet S. Lancaster, ‘Political Structure and Ethnicity in an Immigrant Society: The Goba of the Zambezi,’ in Igor Kopytoff, (Ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, 1987), p. 102.

<sup>97</sup> NAZ:S2929/2/9, October 1965, p.46.

<sup>98</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/9, Kaschula, Feb.1968, p. 31.

<sup>99</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/9, p.37.

*/Madyirapanze* people we have been forced to praise Dandawa. We want our chief's badge back".<sup>100</sup>

### **The Mazoe and Darwin area**

What became Darwin District by the time of the Central African Federation (1953-63) replaced the old Mazoe District of 1897. It shared the longest stretch of border with Tete Province in PEA in what is now Mashonaland Central Province. According to the present Chief Chiweshe (personal name Matthew Chitemamuswe) today it has 27 chiefs and about 50 headmen.<sup>101</sup> Darwin had several chieftaincies that claimed PEA origins and spoke *chiTavara* and Nyungwe alongside *chiKorekore*. Chief Chiweshe claimed pre-colonial origins for his chieftaincy and kinship with chiefs across the border in Mozambique including Chief Makombe and Chitsiko of Mukumbura whom he visited often.<sup>102</sup> The hereditary chiefly titles delineated in the 1960s in Darwin district were Nyakusengwa (also called Mukosa); Gwangwava; Nembire; Chigango; Chizwiti; Kaitano; Dotito; Chitsatu; Kandeya; Chipara; Pachanza, Matope; Makuni; Hwata; Chimanda; Rusambo; Magaranewe; Chitange and Katevera.<sup>103</sup> Of these nineteen, seven were reported as originating from Portuguese territory, and were originally Nyungwe speaking: Nyakusengwa (Mukosa), Kaitano, Dotito, Chipara, Pachanza, Chitange and Katevera.<sup>104</sup> These chieftaincies show the interpenetration of the population of the border between Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia and the spread of groups originally from

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<sup>100</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/9, p. 37.

<sup>101</sup> Interview, Chief Chiweshe, Matthew Chitemamuswe, St Albert's Mission Centenary, 15 October 2014.

<sup>102</sup> Interview, Chief Chiweshe, Matthew Chitemamuswe, St Albert's Mission Centenary, 15 October 2014. Asked about the origins of his people and chieftaincy Chiweshe replied, 'I am Korekore. We the Korekore people were here long before colonialism and we used to move up and down the Zambezi valley at will here in Zimbabwe as well as in Mozambique. Long ago our Mambo was Mwenemutapa and the seat of his rule was located about fifteen or twenty kilometres from here.'

<sup>103</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2 Delineation Reports.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Nyungwe. When the BSAC began to administer the area of Chimhandanda in the Mt Darwin area, the chief at the time was Chatambarara who decided to move altogether to Portuguese East Africa, leaving the area to a SviKepuru Tsanyati Mukosa. Some villages related to the Nyakusengwa chieftaincy, for example Muzenga, Chari, Nyamawanga, and Zenga, are in Portuguese East Africa.<sup>105</sup> This does not mean that the chiefs in or from PEA were all Nyungwe speaking as there were ethnic Shona speakers in PEA as well, but there were chiefs as shall be shown below who were Nyungwe and over time some of them adopted Shona identities.

According to a report, 'Chief Nyakusengwa was installed by the *mhondoro* of Koswa the female ancestor of the tribe. Rainmaking and harvest ceremonies were still held in this area in the 1960s and were regarded as serious business. The Chief plays no significant part in this except to call people together in order that beer and other offerings may be prepared.' The actual ceremony was in the hands of the medium *svikiro* of the *mhondoro*.<sup>106</sup> According to Latham, Chief Nyakusengwa was given two messengers trained in Salisbury and paid for by the state treasury which had 'enhanced the authority of the Chiefs with regard to criminal activities to no uncertain degree.'<sup>107</sup> Even in 1964 this area of Mt Darwin remained remote; it was served by one access road, buses reached the Chief's village once a week, there was only one school and 'one very small African owned store'.<sup>108</sup>

In 1965, Headman Kaitano presided over 30 villages with over 1,540 taxpayers. This translated to a population of about 5,400 people.<sup>109</sup> His personal name was

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<sup>105</sup> NAZ:S2929/2/2 p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2 p. 6

<sup>109</sup> It was decreed in 1913 by the Native Administration that the African population be calculated by multiplying the number of taxpayers by 3.5. See Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, footnote 14, page 242.

Chimbuwe and Luiwisi was his *makumbo* (legs) or deputy. His totem *mutupo* was the Portuguese-sounding Arubero, Marunga. His 'tribe' was classified as *Azungu*, which means European in *chiNyungwe*. His appointment was approved by his 'tribe' and its spirit medium - *mhondoro*. Kaitano claimed descent from the Mwene Mutapa Mutota, according to D.P. Abraham whose genealogy merges with the local traditional names, Nemhuru, Benura, Mutembaneni / Nyakusengwa, Chiuriri then Kaitano.<sup>110</sup> According to the 19 Jan. 1965 report, Latham wrote of the Kaitano people:

This tribe or clan is said to have migrated from Nyungwe somewhere in Portuguese East Africa "kwa Tete". Exact locality of this district is not known [to Latham]. Two brothers Musakanya and Chibango, according to my informants, left Nyungwe on a hunting trip and made their way into the present Kaitano dunhu [*dunhu* means area or region or locality]. This area they liked so much that they elected to stay and were finally allocated a dunhu or province by Mukombwe the then ruling Monomotapa. The boundaries I was informed, of the original *dunhu* allocated by Mukombwe are the same as those met with to-day.<sup>111</sup>

Latham further described the Kaitano region as 'a dry, undeveloped area' and the people 'apparently very poor' ... Owing possibly to climactic factors and general isolation, the people are backward and seem to lack energy and initiative'.<sup>112</sup>

Chief Dotito presided over 46 villages and had about 1,400 taxpayers in 1965. The then chief Dotito was called Manyika, his tribe was described as Nyombwe while his language was Korekore. An intriguing point however, was that on the front page of the report there is a correction of 'Nyombwe' to read 'Nyungwe' signed by C.J.K. Latham himself, the original compiler of the report. This could mean therefore that the Dotito lineage was Nyungwe and originally from PEA. The then reigning Chief Dotito had been appointed in 1938 with the intervention of the Native Commissioner

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<sup>110</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2. D. P. Abraham,

<sup>111</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2, Report on the Kaitano Community, Headman Kaitano, Chief Chizwiti, Mukumbura TTL: Mt. Darwin District, 19 Jan. 1965.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

who had refused the people's choice after the death of Chief Bveke on 15 September 1929. There followed disagreements over the rightful successor, and when the people chose Muchadakwenda, an old man, the NC vetoed him because of age and what he considered as a general lack of intelligence in favour of the younger 35-40 year old Manyika, who was 'of good physique, intelligent and has personality'.<sup>113</sup> Several of his headmen such as Chitsatu, Kandeya, Chipara and Pachanza were, according to Latham, related to Chief Dotito. On account of the size of this chieftaincy and its influence, it was not surprising that the NC intervened in the selection of the successor.

Of Headman Chitange, Latham observed that they were a small group of people who did not have a recognised territory of their own, but lived under chief Mukosa. 'These people came from Portuguese territory in the fairly recent past as a result of tribal wars in the area.'<sup>114</sup> Chitange's people had six villages at the time of Latham's report and headman Chitange was appointed by the 'tribe' and the Native Commissioner. His personal name was Nyabaya designated *muchinda waNyakusengwa, muzukuru, mambo, Ishe*; his *Mutupo* was *humba* meaning pig; his 'tribe' Tawara. The tribe migrated from PEA in 1917 as refugees from the Makombe rebellion and were given asylum by Chief Nyakusengwa, and settled in territory traditionally Chipara's.

Headman Katevera's people lived under Chief Rusambo. Their founding *mhondoro* was Anadondo and their *svikiro* medium was Gonja. Their early history noted that Muchenje, an early ancestor, had lived near Tete. His son Marukutira migrated to

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<sup>113</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2, Report on the Dotito Community: Chief Dotito: Kandeya Tribal Trust Land: Mt. Darwin, Dated 24 November 1964.

<sup>114</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2, Report on the Chipara Community, Headman Chipara, Chief Makuni, Chimanda Tribal Trust Land: Mt Darwin, dated 22 December 1964 by C.J.K. Latham, p. 3.

this area but it was Chiwadi, a female descendent, who was given the area called Tsombe by Princess Nyahuwi, one of Mwene Mutapa Mutota's relatives.<sup>115</sup> The presence of Tete or Nyungwe groups in border areas of North-Eastern Rhodesia is therefore established.

These groups could also be found deeper inside Southern Rhodesia. Chief Nyachuru who had thirteen villages and 704 taxpayers also hailed from PEA.<sup>116</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Nyachuru clan originally had the Mutupo Marunga, and that they were of Vazungu and or vaChikunda descent; This might show some relationship with Chief Chapoto who has the Mutupo Marunga; and whose tribe is Marunga (vaZungu) and who spoke a mixture of Chikunda and Chikorekore. (Nyachuru's area to Chief Chapoto – near Kanyemba – is only 150 miles by road North of Sipolilo). It also may be of significance that the Tangwena, who speak a mixture of Chikunda and ChiManyika, have the chidau Simboti, which is the Chidau which Nyachuru people took when they shed Marunga. Chikunda being a common denominator in all three backgrounds.<sup>117</sup>

Chief Nyachuru now used the title *Ishe/mambo* and the totem *mutupo* Shumba. His territorial *mhondoro* was Gwangwadza hosted by the *svikiro* Rusina.

The history of Nyachuru starts with the words, 'At a river called Gombe in PEA, there lived a man by the name of Muzungu: he was a light-skinned person, his tribe was the VaZungu. Gombe was the Nyika of the VaChikunda. Muzungu had two sons, Chitengu and Chimbangu: Muzungu's Mutupo was Marunga; they tabooed the flesh of all animals with nails'.<sup>118</sup> When Europeans arrived in what became Rhodesia, Chihuri Mpepe was the sixth chief of the Nyachuru people, the first having been Chitengu himself. Chihuri died between 1912 and 1918; Tsarara was

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<sup>115</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/2, Report on the Katevera Community: Headman Katevera: Chief Rusambo: Chimanda TTL. Dated 26 November 1964.

<sup>116</sup> NAZ:S2929/2/3.

<sup>117</sup> NAZ:S2929/2/3, Revised and amended report on the Nyachuru Community; Chiweshe TTL; Mazoe District, 1967 May, by R.H.D. Alves, Acting District Officer, original report 8<sup>th</sup> March 1965 by Latham.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

recognised as the ninth chief by the Rhodesian government on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1965.<sup>119</sup> From this description of these group and their chiefs, a picture emerges of the extent to which Tete Nyungwe people were dispersed across the frontier into North-Eastern Rhodesia. If we extract the principle generated by David Hughes' argument in his book *From Enslavement to Environmentalism*, namely that European 'settlers and colonization continue to shape politics' and apply it to African new settlers in new locales, then the character of the mid Zambezi has been defined by this Nyungwe dispersal.<sup>120</sup>

### **Mutoko in the Mangwende District of 1897**

Mtoko District, according to the 1897 administrative map of Rhodesia, lay to the north-east of Mangwende district. In the 1960s it had six chiefs and nineteen headmen.<sup>121</sup> It was described by the then Senior Delineation Officer, C.J.K. Latham as 'probably one of the most interesting in Rhodesia. For this reason, a fairly detailed study has been undertaken – especially in the areas of Chiefs Mtoko and Charewa.'<sup>122</sup> Chief Mutoko had the largest chieftainship by far at the time the delineation reports were compiled in the 1960s.<sup>123</sup> After Chief Kativu died on 14 December 1954, a certain Jani was appointed on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1957. While Chiefs Mutoko and Nyakuchena trace their origins in PEA and arrived at different times, Chief Mkota's ancestors came from present day Zambia, in the Choma area of

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<sup>119</sup> NAZ: S2929/3 p. 2, Revised and Amended Report on the Nyachuru Community: Headman/Chief Nyachuru: Chiweshe TTL: Mazoe District, by R. H. D. Alves, Acting District Officer, Concession, may 1967 for District Commissioner.

<sup>120</sup> David McDermott Hughes, *From Enslavement to Environmentalism: Politics on a Southern Africa Frontier* (Harare, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> NAZ: S2929/3/7 p.1-2; Mtoko, Mkota, Ngarwe, Chikwizo and Mudzi TTLs. The six chiefs and their headmen were: Charewa (five headmen; Chindenga, Kawaza, Kadiki, Nyamakope and Nyamtsahuni), Nyakuchena (three headmen; Nyakatangure, Katsande and Makosa), Chimoyo (three headmen; Nyamanza, Kazingizi and Manyange), Nechombo, Mtoko (eight headmen; Nyamukapa, Kabasa, Rutsito, Rukau, Nyakuna, Kaunye, Makochera and Kawere) and Chief Nyamkoho.

<sup>122</sup> NAZ: S2929/3/7 p.3.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 97

Mbire. M'kota shared a boundary with Chief Magaso of PEA and Chief Mukosa of Darwin.<sup>124</sup> Chief Nyakuchena and his people are said to have come from Mbire, but according to Kaschula the elders claimed to have come from 'a far-away place somewhere in the north – probably in PEA, south of the Zambezi'.<sup>125</sup> They moved into the area and called it Do'Ora.<sup>126</sup> Headman Nyakatangure's people were under Chief Nyakuchena, and perhaps came from Mutota's country in Darwin or Sipolilo. Their founding ancestor was said to have been one Kabandazi who settled at Makaha. Around 1913, during NC Morkel's term they were forced to move into Chief Nyakuchena's area like the Katsande, Makosa and Nechombo people. Headman Makosa's people, under Chief Nyakuchena, had the totem Nyanguru (clouds) and were vaTonga from vaBarwe and they called their language *ChiBarwe*. They claimed no land, and admitted to being foreigners, *vatorwa*. Of this group, Kaschula wrote:

I am informed that Makosa himself broke away from the tribe towards the end of the last century – though some say in 1918. Their relatives in PEA are chief Makombe's people. Apparently the black Portuguese soldiers (vapurisa) used their positions to exert undue pressure on local inhabitants. . . These crimes resulted in Makosa leaving PEA and migrating to Chief Nyakuchena's country.<sup>127</sup>

The Mutoko people were called the Budya, but according to the District Officer then, a Mr Snell:

The vakuru [elders] of the Budjga people know very little of their early history but it would appear that they came from an area called Mengare, a remote piece of country in Portuguese East Africa along the Zambezi valley, not far from Tete. They were ruled by one, Dziwaguru. The tribesmen of Dziwaguru were always occupied in search of new and fertile lands, and they eventually arrived in the area which is known as Mtoko today. Soon Nehoreka, a son-in-law of Dziwaguru, and Mukombwe and Chikonamahwe, principal aide of the chief, ventured further west-wards where they came

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p.47

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 62.



across one, Makati, a powerful chief living near the present Mount Mtemwa. Many years later Nehoreka defeated Makati, and the latter and his people fled leaving everything behind them. In this successful assault Nehoreka was ably assisted by one, Mapahwe (Mapatswe), young son of Mukombwe. Nehoreka himself settled in the territory between the Nyadiri and Chitora rivers, now [1965] known as the chieftainship of Charewa, and Mapahwe was given the territory between the Chitara and Mudzi rivers, known now as the chieftainship of Mtoko.<sup>128</sup>

### **Mosaic mid Zambezi**

From the above, the impression one gets is that of a politically fractious mid Zambezi – a mosaic of variegated polities. But this is a result of the sources generated by the delineation officers. The NCs were primarily concerned with the identifiable community.<sup>129</sup> There appears to have been no effort to uncover the links between these communities as that was not the main quest. It is common knowledge that informers could withhold information from colonial officers or give information that politically suited them. But more so, the chieftaincies described above already indicate linkages between them. The various titles by which the local rulers were known show that, in fact, the small scale polities were linked into much wider networks of power which created blocks much larger than the individual chiefdoms. The chiefs were often blood relatives, even if they lived long distances apart. The linkages did not constitute something like a country in the modern sense and are not comparable to the modern state system. This means that while the political formations may not have been states in the modern sense of a state, the indigenous population in fact lived in much larger polity formations than given by the surface impression of fractious tribal groups. For lack of the kind of infrastructure and technology introduced by the occupying colonial forces, they remained largely disparate and isolated from one another, eventually generating linguistic peculiarities

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<sup>128</sup> NAZ: S2929/3/7, p. 101, By J. W. M. Snell, District Officer.

<sup>129</sup> NAZ: S2929/3/7, [In General Introduction to] Delineation Reports: TTLs in Mtoko District, March 1965, by CJK Latham Sen. Delineation Officer.

– dialects. It was the *mhondoro* mediums who often kept the regional connections and acted as historians who remembered the old connections.

So mediums were more than religious figures: they were specialists in the historical knowledge of the past of their people, in effect folk historians. In fact, one of the key tests to become a *mhondoro* medium was knowledge of the past of the lineage group.<sup>130</sup> Therefore the Mwene Mutapa state was in all probability as expansive as it has been portrayed. The evident autonomy of the chieftainships does not diminish the fact of a larger collective in a loose political system, given that many chieftaincies in the mid Zambezi claimed to have been allocated their location by an ancient Mutapa ruler.

### **Impact on religious change**

As the colonial boundaries took effect, the traditional spirit provinces gradually lost their relevance as new needs increasingly became better addressed by compliance with the new boundaries. Tete and its language became a pole of identity. In this way migration became a critical factor in changing the religious landscape of the middle Zambezi. Migration not only changed the demographic and ethnic constitution of the region but was a factor in the flow of ideas that changed its religious landscape. The 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act was the last of a series of Southern Rhodesia pieces of legislation which dislocated people from the plateau to the valley. It was crafted on the background of the policy of segregation that led to severe overcrowding and land degradation in the Reserves as large pieces of land were allocated to settler farmers. Many of the displaced people were relocated to the Dande area of the mid Zambezi to make way for European commercial farmers. The

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<sup>130</sup> Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 307.

act was not really meant to create the ‘contented peasantry’ and ‘stable working class’ it purported; rather it was aimed at enforcing European private ownership of land and forcing de-stocking and conservation practices amongst Africans. It met mass resistance and fuelled nationalistic politics led by the growing educated elite from the now longstanding mission schools. In 1959, a former Land Development Officer in the Native Agriculture Department, Ken Brown, wrote:

The majority of arable areas in reserves are already so eroded and so exhausted of fertility that nothing short of a 12 to 15 year rest to grass will restore them to a state of structure and fertility which would enable economic crop production to commence.<sup>131</sup>

The Land Husbandry Act was subsequently repealed in 1961.

The relocation of Africans in Southern Rhodesia introduced yet another layer of migrants into the mid Zambezi, but instead of them being from Mozambique they were Shona-speakers, originating from the central plateau of Southern Rhodesia. These migrants shared old historical religious practices in the same ancestral tradition that was common to Africans in the valley. They also subscribed to the same key ancestral figures of Nehanda, Chaminuka and Kaguvi, although many had converted to Christianity which was more established in the plateau region and so reinforced the Christian traditions from the south (such as the Methodist, Catholic, Salvation Army and Apostolic Faith Mission).<sup>132</sup> Alongside these churches were now the Johane Masowe and Johane Marange African initiated churches. In 1952, the first Masowe church was established in Dande in the Zambezi Valley.<sup>133</sup> The Masowe church adopted Christian ideas but adapted them to pre-colonial indigenous

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<sup>131</sup> Ken Brown, *Land in Southern Rhodesia* (London, 1959).

<sup>132</sup> See David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (Oxford, Harare, 2006).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

structures in which spiritual leadership was not tied to gender but to the choice of the guiding spirit.

Apart from religion, the ethnic demography also shifted as more Shona-speaking people were relocated to the mid Zambezi, increasing their dominance and diluting the Nyungwe-speaking presence, thus relegating their identity more to Mozambique. In 1951, according to an analysis by Scott, the geographical distribution of non-indigenous African employees in the districts of the middle Zambezi was as follows: Lomagundi to the west had about 60,000 employees, 75 per cent of whom were in the agricultural sector, the other 25 per cent were equally divided between mining and other occupations; Mazoe had about 50,000 employees of whom more than three-quarters were in the agricultural sector with the remainder shared between mining and other occupations. In each case, 60 per cent were considered foreign. The frontier district of Darwin had nearly 10,000 employees of whom nearly 80 per cent were engaged in farming and 40 per cent of all the employees were considered foreign. Murewa had 10,000 employees, about 90 per cent of whom were engaged in agriculture and 50 per cent of the total was considered foreign. Mtoko had about 8,000 employees, 30 per cent being considered foreigners. In 1954, Peter Scott had attributed '[t]he recent increase in the migration of Mozambique Africans . . . partly to more intensive recruiting in the Tete District, where the R.N.L.S.C. has enjoyed sole recruiting rights, but particularly to the expansion of the nearby Rhodesian tobacco industry, with its heavy demands for seasonal labour.'<sup>134</sup> This was supported by George Kay's analysis of the census data of 1962, ten years later.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Peter Scott, 'Migrant Labor in Southern Rhodesia' in *Geographical Review* 44, No.1, (1954) p.33.

<sup>135</sup> Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 64.

The mid Zambezi valley on the Mozambican side did not see the mass of the newly resettled as did the valley on the Rhodesian side. The boundary had gained force as a defining feature in the consciousness of the population. It reshaped concepts of boundary and territoriality in the colonised as they now could identify with different power centres; it reconstituted peoples' identities based on new concepts of 'citizenship'; it reduced the expansive tendencies of African polities, the descendants of *prazos* rulers near and around Zumbo ceased to expand politically to connect with their people in Rhodesian territory. The boundary froze wholesale migrations and curtailed the freedom of movement and helped enforce a perimeter of what Eduardo Madeiras and Jose Capela called the 'Zambesian Ethos' on the Mozambican side of the border.<sup>136</sup>

## Conclusion

From this perspective, it can be seen that the consolidation of the border between Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa marginalised the mid-Zambezi, diminished old solidarities and added a layer of self-identification. The town of Tete was eclipsed by the growth of Salisbury. The Rhodesian authorities relegated the Nyungwe to Mozambique by constraining their activities in Rhodesian territory and drawing new internal district boundaries. While Nyungwe speakers in Mozambique continued to claim some allegiance to Tete, thereby reinforcing their Nyungwe identity, those in Rhodesia were left at loose ends with some, claiming to be Shona, buying into the Rhodesian construct, even though their language was distinct from standard Shona. When the Rhodesian economy was booming just before and after World War II, the indigenous Rhodesian Nyungwes were joined by increasing new waves of Nyungwes who came to work in the European farms, mines and towns of

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<sup>136</sup> Madeiras and Capela, 'Process of Identity-Building' p. 37.

Southern Rhodesia. But their identification as foreigners sapped their confidence as they now looked upon the 'Shona' as the real owners of the lands whose wealth they sought. They appealed to the friendlier older solidarities that recognised their relatedness which was enshrined particularly in their common religious culture.

Since ancestral religion did not recognise the border, practicing it built bridges between the Nyungwe on both sides of the border, as well as with the Shona. This helped traditional religion to remain dominant in the now peripheral middle Zambezi aided by the continued minimal penetration of state and mission institutions. The state was experienced only when its officials made a rare visit to remind the chiefs and headmen of their responsibilities to send 'boys' to work and to collect taxes for the state. Nyungwe-speaking people in both countries continued to frequent the other to attend family ancestral rituals. This exchange was further aided by the fact that the *mhondoro* spirits were believed be able to possess anyone, even foreigners, irrespective of their territorial origins. The possessing spirit would then lead the possessed medium to the territory of the possessing *mhondoro*. A daughter of Protasio Vicente described during an interview how, during her own childhood in the 1940s, the spirit of Marecha possessed a Zambian man who then walked all the way on foot to Protasio's homestead at Boroma. He was found by the cattle pan one morning, still in a trance and revealed himself as hosting the clan spirit of the Vicente clan who had come to his children. He amazed everyone by the knowledge he seemed to have of Protasio Vicente's family.<sup>137</sup> In another interview, the Chitsungu people claimed that even today, a medium called Zilota who lived on the Mozambique side of the border, had earned the trust of many Korekore on the

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<sup>137</sup> Interview, Paula Da Gloria Protasio, Bulawayo, 6 February 2011.

Zimbabwe side who flocked there for guidance because the local mediums were perceived to have become too preoccupied with money which rendered them fake in the eyes of the community (see chapter four for further details).<sup>138</sup>

The international border between Rhodesia and Mozambique redefined identities by adding a new layer of self-identification as the same ethnic groups learnt to officially call themselves Rhodesians and Mozambicans. The internal district borders redirected the places of appeal from the chief to the district officers at the new district centres. But this shift of loyalties did not fundamentally alter the older belief systems as they were only functional and considered to belong to a different order. That is why the border populations continued to disregard the frontier in pursuit of their familial and religious ties at the many porous crossing points.

The colonial border porous, though it was, was in many cases internalised by communities who shared a common ethno-linguistic identity and became a territorial frame of reference.<sup>139</sup> Nugent concludes that the border has helped shape the way in which ethnicity is articulated. The international boundary has graduated the efforts (proceeding at different paces) as in the West African scenario of redefining identity by indigenous agents (the so-called ethnic project) and has acted as an effective barrier to the realisation of the ethnic project.<sup>140</sup>

When the Rhodesian colonial government set about consolidating its border by preventing the movements across it, it was attempting to lay to rest once and for all the noises that the Portuguese were making about land which had been under their

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<sup>138</sup> Interviews, Chitsungu Group Interviews, St Raphael's Mission Chitsungu, 11 October 2014.

<sup>139</sup> See Nugent, 'Historicity' p. 140.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

influence for centuries that was now Rhodesian territory, especially in the north east.  
Some maps still showed a huge area of the north east as Mozambican territory.



## **Chapter 4**

### **New missions, labour migration, money and identity 1945-1960s**

We have seen in chapters two and three above, the extent to which education and boundary making influenced the processes of identity formation and religious change in the mid Zambezi. Such change was not uniform across the region as communities in proximity to administrative centres such as towns and mission establishments had more contact with established state and church institutions than remote ones. However the emergence of new social categories who travelled more often, began to bridge the rural-urban divide. This chapter focuses on an additional dimension to socio-religious change that resulted from a combination of wage migrant labour, increased uses of money and a Rhodesian development-focused economy in the background of a new wave of post-world war two missionary expansion.

It is argued in this chapter that the accelerated growth of the Rhodesian economy drew ever increasing numbers of labour migrants from neighbouring territories who traversed the mid Zambezi. Their presence not only impacted on the demography of the region but shaped identity and religious practice. It was no longer just the ‘Tete boys’ (those from Tete province in Mozambique) or the ‘Nyasa boys’ (Those from Nyasaland, now Malawi) who migrated looking for jobs, but local rural folk as well. The migration of women also became a more visible phenomenon. Alongside these was the growing number of mission graduates. The resultant encounters, often away

from immediate kin, broadened mental horizons and expanded the crosspollination of ideas and perspectives. The cumulative impact of this was that it was no longer possible for the kin and village based traditional religious practices to continue as in the past. Religious leaders adjusted to the new realities and adopted new usages. But the absence of robust local institutions to manage these adaptations meant that the changes remained disparate and localised, held together by a common cultural weight of tradition.

The initial reticence of Rhodesian ‘natives’ to join the labour market led to the importation of labour from the neighbouring territories of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Nyasaland (Malawi) and even as far afield as Tanganyika (Tanzania). These labourers introduced a different texture to the religious landscape. Masked dancing religious societies called *gure*, associated mainly with Cewa speakers from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and northern areas of Tete Province, became a visible feature in the farming and mining compounds. But for the north-eastern areas of Rhodesia, the adjacent Tete region in Mozambique remained the prime source of labour. This reinforced the Nyungwe-speaking population in the north-east of Rhodesia and also necessitated the signing of a special Tete Agreement between Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. Foreign and local migrants found their way into the major towns of Bulawayo, Harare, Chinhoyi and Mutare and the mining and farming settlements of Mazoe, Shamva, Mt Darwin, Raffingora and others. In these new locations, traditional religion based on clan and chieftaincy structures became more difficult to practice, even though in some farming and mining compounds migrant workers were permitted to select their own chiefly figures. The increases in Rhodesian ‘native’ labour resulted in greater rural-urban interactions. This, coupled

with a politically restive African population in the Southern Rhodesia of the 1940s and 1950s, led to a policy U-turn that phased out migrant labour in 1958.<sup>1</sup>

The movement of workers between their workplaces and rural homes or territories of origin with their money and goods gave them a new status. It also meant the flow of ideas – even to remote areas in the mid Zambezi. But that flow was both ways. ‘Foreign’ Labour migrants often retained their language, culture and religious beliefs and practices and tailored them to their new environments in the mining towns and farms. The continuities and adaptations in the culturally embedded religious beliefs and practices made them particularly resistant to complete erosion. Christian ideas also migrated, challenging entrenched traditional beliefs and offering alternative answers to existential questions. Migrant workers narrowed the gap between town and countryside. Money became more widely distributed, replacing many traditional forms of transacting. It gave a new angle to socio-religious change. As Audrey I. Richards put it in the case of Northern Rhodesia: ‘Fathers could no longer require two or three years of labour from their sons-in-law, as in the old days, but received a money payment of some ten shillings or so instead’.<sup>2</sup>

Improved road networks allowed missions to spread their tentacles (outstations) deeper into the mid Zambezi as they followed up on converts who had picked up Christian ideas in urban settings and mission stations. Most missions in the Nyungwe speaking mid Zambezi were built between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. The *vadzimu* and *mhondoro* religion in the mid Zambezi had to contend with the ascendant churches that had the colonial socio-economic setting in their favour.

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<sup>1</sup> Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Richards, ‘Anthropological Problems’ p.128

Continent-wide African nationalist ideas carried by mission-educated elites sought to reassert what was considered authentically African. Those advantaged by education took more independent initiatives in a range of social spaces, forming clubs, associations, religious, political and social groups. This changed the colonial and missionary narratives from the earlier preoccupation with ‘civilising’ to negotiating and preaching the gospel in a non-coercive manner.

## **A Changing Religious Landscape**

Current literature on socio-religious change in the region has focused on the liberating force of Christianity for the ‘oppressed’ social categories of women, youths and foreigners who had a limited stake in the male dominated gerontocracy buttressed by traditional religion.<sup>3</sup> The narrative is that these categories found Christianity useful in providing opportunities to achieve personal goals and to meet their interests. David Maxwell comments, ‘Christianity offered members of these social categories the opportunity to reformulate social relationships in ways that were more conducive to their interests’.<sup>4</sup> In his study of the Hwesa people of Katerere, an adjacent region, Maxwell concluded that:

The first reason for the strong association of women and youth with the new Pentecostal movement is that members of these social categories were its founders. Women and youth had less of a stake in the old order and were more willing to break away and challenge it. The second reason is the Pentecostals’ explicit challenge to patriarchal religion.<sup>5</sup>

This assumes that patriarchal religion was insufferable for these social categories as a consequence of their disenfranchisement and plain victimisation, with women, who

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<sup>3</sup> Lan, *Guns & Rain*; Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*.

<sup>4</sup> David Maxwell, ‘Witches, Prophets and Avenging Spirits: The Second Christian Movement in North-East Zimbabwe’ in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 25, Fasc. 3, Religion in Contemporary Zimbabwe (Aug., 1995), p. 317.

<sup>5</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, p. 198.

as ‘outsiders in a patrilineal society,’ often bearing the ‘brunt of witchcraft accusation’.<sup>6</sup>

However, this assessment could be tempered by giving due consideration to the impact of other broad shifts. For instance the colonial economy’s demand for male labour could leave women in the majority in the villages. They would be the majority in the new religious movements. Similar processes of male rural depopulation were underway elsewhere in the region. Writing in 1932 in the case of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), anthropologist Audrey Richards observed: ‘It must be remembered that the young men of a village tend to go in a body to the mines and to return in a body. Thus in the interim period only the women and old men may be left.’<sup>7</sup> Richards continues with specific reference to the ‘North Rhodesian copper mines near Ndola’ noting that ‘[a]ccording to census figures an average of forty per cent of the adult males are absent from their villages, but the figure rises as high as sixty per cent in certain districts at special seasons of the year’.<sup>8</sup> Shona men preferred to leave women at the rural home as they sought jobs and money in the towns and this preponderance of women in the villages may have accounted for their visibility and gravitation towards the new rural religious movements. African religious evolution and change cannot simply be located in a context of crisis and pathos.

While there is no doubt that women, youths and the disenfranchised had fewer privileges in a patriarchal system that favoured male elders, traditional society generally safeguarded women and the young. Power and influence came not so much as a result of gender, but of time. Both men and women tended to become more

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>7</sup> Richards, ‘Anthropological Problems’ p.125.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.124.

powerful and influential as they grew older, because apart from generally having acquired more wealth, they were perceived to be closer to becoming ancestral spirits in death. Some elderly women and men were sometimes considered ancestors in the religious sense even before they died simply because of their age. In principle, women could be *mhondoro* like their male counterparts. Khoswa in Mutoko and Nehanda in the Zambezi valley are examples of these. The spirits possessed both the young and old and often the fact of being possessed generated social capital for the host, regardless of being a woman or youth or foreigner. Moreover, anyone could manipulate the system to their advantage. Some women who felt oppressed in their marriages resorted to initiation into hosting various *shave* spirits in order to gain respect.<sup>9</sup> Christianity provided an additional avenue for women to express their interests. During the author's field work, a woman at Boroma prided herself on the reputation that nothing could be done to her as she possessed magical charms in the form of numerous bead necklaces, hanging round her neck for all to see. She was baptised a Catholic as a child like most people at Boroma mission.<sup>10</sup>

## **Early forms of paid labour**

Paid porters and guides were among the first categories to enter the modern labour market in the nineteenth century. Richard Thornton (1838-1863), the young geologist who worked with David Livingstone, reported in his diaries numerous occasions when he paid porters for their labour and bought food and utensils from the villages along the Zambezi River.<sup>11</sup> Thornton made notes of the prices of food,

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<sup>9</sup> Interview, Innocencio Marcos Luncholo, Boroma, 6 April 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Seen on visit to Boroma for interviews, 6 April 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Edward C. Tabler (ed.), *The Zambezi Papers of Richard Thornton, Geologist to Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition*, Volume II, 1860-1863 (London, 1963).

trade goods, and ‘articles of native manufacture’ in his sojourn from 1858 to 1860. He observed that it was ‘the custom at Tete to pay natives the whole of their hire before they commence their work.’<sup>12</sup> Of his hired ‘natives’ Thornton noted;

The natives did not like my style of travelling and were suspicious of my writing and observations. They often ran away, or refused to proceed, then I had to hire others, if I could, or turn back. For the same reasons, I could not go where I wanted. Few men would follow me into the country of the independent tribes which surround Tete at a few days distance.<sup>13</sup>

Thornton spoke with his porters and guides in Portuguese, a testimony to their long acquaintance with the Portuguese along the river. On one recorded occasion, when he crossed a river called Demoufa [Mufa River], he inquired about the prices of goats and meal before buying ‘2 pots, 2 calabashes for ½ fathom, [and] agreed for a pig for 3 fathoms and a sheep.’<sup>14</sup> If goods were priced in this manner it was likely that Zambezi porters were paid in cash. Though Thornton worked with Livingstone, with whom he had a frosty working relationship, he was not a missionary. When he was fired by Livingstone and opted to go it alone he suffered from a shortage of funds which, according to Tabler, may have been the reason for his meticulous record-keeping regarding money and prices. He died prematurely after having made a useful geological survey of the Zambezi from Tete through the Cahora Bassa rapids to Zumbo.<sup>15</sup>

A younger contemporary of Thornton, the Jesuit Father John Weisskopf (1848-1883) who on 10 July 1880 had been appointed superior of the Catholic Mission at Pandamatenga, further up the river near present day Victoria Falls, noted in his diary on 4 November 1880: ‘The boys who arrived yesterday with Mr Walsh are paid off,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>14</sup> Tabler, (ed.), *The Zambezi Papers*, p. 183.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. xvii.

except the two that had to guard the goods'.<sup>16</sup> We are not told how much and what currency was used or whether it was payment in cash or in kind. A Jesuit colleague of Weisskopf, the English Fr Alfred Weld, however suggested that porters were paid 'in the barter of cotton goods, beads, and other articles of European manufacture'.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes their pay was not given at the beginning as with Thornton's Tete 'boys', but at the completion of the task as it was not always easy to control 'an army of often unmanageable porters, deserting at a moment's notice, and, as sometimes [happened] . . . carrying off in their flight the most valuable baggage'.<sup>18</sup> Desertions were not uncommon.

Even though porters were sometimes paid in goods, money appears to have been a frequently used commodity in nineteenth century central Africa. Mother Patrick, an Irish missionary nun, described how, as part of the Pioneer Column that occupied Mashonaland to establish Rhodesia, they stopped to buy fresh produce and milk and goats from the natives. She did not mention the prices or the currency used but the general tone in her diary entry suggested that money rather than barter was used.<sup>19</sup> Missionaries and settlers used money as a matter of course. In his report of November 1887, Weld appealed for funds from his benefactors in South Africa and Europe explaining that 'debts had been contracted' in the work of evangelization and:

Property had to be secured lest opportunities should be lost and because the working of the whole machine depended upon it; though immediate payment could not be made. . . . the ever-increasing need of funds to embrace opportunities on which the salvation of souls may depend, urge us to solicit

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<sup>16</sup> Eddie Murphy, SJ (ed), *John Weisskopf, To the Zambezi, 17 May to 25 June 1880*, Jesuit Archives, Harare. Published originally in Dutch: *Naar de Zambesi Midden-Afrika, -Gulpen: Snelpersdruk van M. Alberts- Uitgever*, 1880, translated by Bas Jongeling, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> Fr Alfred Weld, *The Mission of the Zambezi*, (London, 1887) p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> CO 7/1/1. Mother Patrick O.S.D., Journal of Mother Patrick (Mary Patrick Cosgrave) 1890 to 1994; transcribed in the Government Archives Salisbury from the original in 1938.



earnestly the aid of all who desire to purchase salvation for many, and increase grace for themselves, at the price of some of those means which bountiful Providence has given them.<sup>20</sup>

By the time of the establishment of colonial rule in 1890, the use of money was established in the Middle Zambezi in both the Portuguese and the British spheres of influence.

Returning to the early 'native' attitudes towards formal work, it appears that consistency was low and desertions were high. At the end of 1898, Acting NC A. R. Byron complained about the conduct of the fifty natives hired as porters for the boundary commissioners, to carry goods from Mtoko to Makaha. He reported: 'The desertions were numerous. In this instance they proved themselves to be as unreliable as the rest of the Mashona tribe, when it comes to regular daily work lasting a month.'<sup>21</sup> Another NC for M'rewas District, W. Edward wrote in a letter to a Mr Blake: 'In accordance with your wish I am herewith sending you 30 boys for 3 months work wages 10/- 15/- and 20/-, Nos 878 to 907. I would request that you be very careful in reporting any deserters. Please forward the sum of £4-10. Being registration fees for above boys'.<sup>22</sup> It seems Edward had little difficulty in securing 'boys' to send to work, he claimed in his report that he visited the paramount chief of the district whom he called Chizungu and his sub-chiefs Nganjera, Jawari, Mapika, Kaperi and Kapvura. This area is about 10 Kms from the confluence of the Nyadiri and Mazoe rivers some 280 Kms from Salisbury. He wrote 'I had no difficulty in

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<sup>20</sup> Fr Alfred Weld, 'The Zambezi Mission,' November 1887.

<sup>21</sup> NAZ: NSJ Vol.1, Mtoko District, Report for the Quarter ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 1898, p. 244.

<sup>22</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Letter No. 323/99 to Mr Blake Esq. November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1899, M'rewas District, by W. Edward, NC., p. 676.

getting a lot of natives to go to Salisbury for work.’<sup>23</sup> Apart from farms and mines, Salisbury was a great pull for workers at the turn of the century.

The raft of tax legislation introduced by the colonial government necessitated paid labour, pushing especially young men into formal employment. Apart from working in the mines and farms, ‘natives’ were hired as cooks, waiters and houseboys, as well as native policemen.<sup>24</sup> Some became mealie guards at railway sidings such as in Mazoe, a good farming area. A 1923 letter from an NC based at Bindura suggested that native policemen be paid 30/- per month.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the old hut tax, ‘alien tax’ and ‘dog taxes’ were introduced adding to the list of expenses that included duplicate registration certificates, judicial fines, Portuguese passports, school fees, cattle dipping fees for parasite prevention, not to mention clothes and other domestic items.<sup>26</sup> Even foreign ‘natives’ had to pay the ‘alien tax’. According to a circular dated November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1917 and signed by the Native Commissioner’s Office of Mazoe District, every foreign ‘native’ had to pay tax after a year’s residence and employers had to report any ‘natives’ due for tax.<sup>27</sup>

Audrey I. Richards wrote in 1932 that with ‘the introduction of money values’ natives came ‘to reckon success in terms of wage-earning ability’.<sup>28</sup> The pursuit of money weakened the loyalty to the home village and its leadership; it became more important to get the money to survive in the colonial dispensation and meet immediate new needs than to abide by the strictures of traditional ‘comensality’.

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<sup>23</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1899, M’rewas District, by W. Edward, NC, p. 579.

<sup>24</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1899, M’rewas District, by W. Edward, NC, p. 662. NC Edwards wrote a letter No. 314/99 titled ‘The Kit for Native Boys’, dated October 29<sup>th</sup> 1899 requesting a kit for the newly recruited boys, as they had never received the kit and were wearing their own clothes.

<sup>25</sup> NAZ: NSB 1/1/1; NC’s Office 14<sup>th</sup> June 1923.

<sup>26</sup> NAZ: NSB1/1/1 Native Commissioner Mazoe, Returns for the quarter ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 1919.

<sup>27</sup> NAZ: NSB1/1/1 Mazoe District: Circular, Mr Drew.

<sup>28</sup> Richards, ‘Anthropological Problems’ p.123.

Even the marriage institution was compromised as men left their families for employment in distant lands in search of both money and the adventure of living in a different setting. 'Within the individual family, the absence of men had obviously weakened marriage ties, and changed the milieu in which the children are brought up. In the wider group of kinsmen the old code of mutual help between relatives was subject to new strains.'<sup>29</sup> The weakening of marriage ties had a corresponding weakening effect on the religious underpinnings of the traditional marriage institution which had as much to do with families as with their ancestral spirits. It is in this light that migrant labour impinged upon traditional religion necessitating new adaptations.

### **Labour migrations**

The perception that Mashona boys were unreliable was one of the reasons for a preference for labourers from further afield. Locals steeped in an agricultural cycle tended to be 'busy in their fields' particularly in the cropping season from late September to early May<sup>30</sup> and this resulted in seasonal labour shortages. Foreign labour not only supplemented local labour but was more stable. Native Commissioner W. Edward reported in 1899, 'I have passed about 400 central Africa and Tete boys through to Salisbury to work. Most of these boys are cooks and waiters, houseboys etc.'<sup>31</sup> According to George Kay, as early as 1911, over half of all Africans employed in Southern Rhodesia were from neighbouring countries, particularly Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Mozambique.<sup>32</sup> Foreign labour proved more reliable as it was more difficult for foreigners to abscond or return to

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.125

<sup>30</sup> NAZ: NSB1/1/1 Native Commissioner Mazoe, Returns for the quarter ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 1919.

<sup>31</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Report for quarter ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1899, M'rewas District, by W. Edward, NC, p. 583.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

their distant native lands at will. This trend continued to make dependence on international labour the norm in Southern Rhodesia's early years. 'Mozambique, third source of migrant labour before World War I, permitted recruiting only in the sparsely populated Tete District.'<sup>33</sup> But these labourers did more than just domestic chores; they supplemented the general shortage of manpower in a developing colonial economy that had broader cosmopolitan obligations.

Tim Stapleton, building on work done by Peter McLaughlin and Melvin Page, has shown that Rhodesian Africans and labour migrants contributed a significant figure to what was called the Rhodesia Native Regiment (RNR) of the First World War. He was writing about the ethnic, regional origin and pre-enlistment occupations of the recruits into this regiment, the only one from Rhodesia. His conclusion was that:

Men from other territories in Southern Africa (primarily Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique) made up from 62 to 70% of the regiment's numbers, which meant that they were in the majority, but not as much as previous historians have estimated. Zimbabweans [Rhodesian natives] made up somewhere between 29% and 38% of the regiment's strength.<sup>34</sup> [and that t]he previous occupations of the soldiers illustrate the strong link between the regional migrant labour system and recruiting for the regiment. Over half the soldiers had been miners before enlisting'.<sup>35</sup>

He notes that the depression in wages in the mines and farms made many miners and farm labourers enlist in the military which paid better wages and was funded by Britain.

Portuguese East Africa had its own labour needs for which it was either reluctant or unable to pay a competitive wage so its people preferred to go to Rhodesia. This was yet another reason for the greater presence of Nyungwe-speaking people from Tete in the north-eastern districts of Southern Rhodesia. But later, recruitment shifted to

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<sup>33</sup> Scott, 'Migrant Labor' p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Tim Stapleton, 'Composition of the Rhodesia Native Regiment during the First World War: A Look at the Evidence' in *History in Africa*, Vol. 30 (2003), pp. 295.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

the Guro area of central Mozambique, especially for the tea estates of eastern Rhodesia. When the Rhodesia government imposed restrictions on labour recruitment in 1913 to retain workers for its own needs and prohibiting recruitment for the then Union of South Africa (now the Republic of South Africa), it forced the Union to rely on southern Mozambican labour.<sup>36</sup> This left the labour of central Mozambique and of the Tete region concentrated in Southern Rhodesia. This strengthened the cross-border links as labourers repatriated their earnings to their villages and frequently crossed the frontier as dictated by kin social needs.

On the whole, statistically, Mozambican workers in Rhodesia were still a minority in the second decade of the twentieth century as Southern Rhodesia was at greater liberty to source labour from its northern dominions of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and particularly Nyasaland (Malawi) from whence came the vast majority of labourers. They were called 'Nyasa' boys by colonial officials and as we shall see below, *manyasarande* by indigenous Southern Rhodesians. That these recruits were literally boys is significant. Youth brings with it a greater openness to new ideas, flexibility and greater mobility born of the absence of long-established home commitments. This explains why it was from within their category that local mission agents were to be found and it is they who founded new religious movements that challenged old traditions.

The Nyasa boys or *manyasarande* travelled through Tete to Southern Rhodesia as that was the nearest and most direct route. Of the seven labour migration routes into Southern Rhodesia that crossed the Zambezi River, five of them were at various points through the Nyungwe speaking region of Tete. The Southern Rhodesian government had to place ferries at several points along the Zambezi for the safe

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

passage of these migrants. The testimony of an early settler in Rhodesia, Mrs Marjorie L. Harris, gives an insight into how the migrant labour system worked.

Mrs Harris had been first married to Mr A. L. Holland whose job had been that of ‘Supervisor of Facilities for the passage of Northern natives.’<sup>37</sup> Though interviewed in 1983 she gives quite a cogent picture of the system as it operated in the 1920s and 1930s. Mrs Harris’ first husband worked for the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) which had three stations at Salisbury, Bulawayo and Livingstone (in what is now Zambia). The bureau was to supply labour to farmers and others. According to Mrs Harris, ‘The boys signed on for a year and received half their pay each month and the other half in a lump sum at the end of their year. We didn’t recruit labour; the boys just came and said they wanted to sign on.’<sup>38</sup> Labour was in high demand and employers were required to have a licence to recruit.<sup>39</sup>

In 1926 the Hollands were stationed at a large village called Chikoa, up from Tete on the Zambezi. She recalled:

Once we were settled, we decided to go on an inspection of the ferries. There were five of these, I think, on the banks of the Zambezi, as far up as Feira, in Northern Rhodesia. Feira used to be quite an important place before the 1914 war and a number of white people lived there. This was near Zumbu [Zumbo].<sup>40</sup>

The idea of the job was to start making it safer for Africans from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to get to Southern Rhodesia to work. All the time the natives were walking down to look for work and when they arrived, they were thin and hungry and not fit to work anywhere. They had trouble on the way down, especially the ones who had to cross the Zambesi. The local

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<sup>37</sup> NAZ: ORAL/261, Mrs Marjorie L. Harris, Interviewer: Narrated by Mrs Harris, Transcriber: Mrs E House, Date of Recording: c. 1983; Place of Interview: Mrs Harris’ home – 16 de Braose Way, Steyning, BN4 3FD, Sussex, England.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>39</sup> NAZ: NSB 1/1/1; No. 14/67/23 Office of the Native Department: Bindura, to the Native commissioner – Mazoe, Application for an Employer’s Recruiting Licence Mr Charles Edwin James Price.

<sup>40</sup> NAZ: ORAL/261, Mrs Marjorie L. Harris, Interviewer: Narrated by Mrs Harris, Transcriber: Mrs E House, Date of Recording: c. 1983; Place of Interview: Mrs Harris’ home – 16 de Braose Way, Steyning, BN4 3FD, Sussex, England, p. 12.

villagers used to treat them badly. They would be forced to work in their gardens for just a little meal, and on the way home, laden with cloth and other goods, sometimes with a bicycle piled up with the goods.<sup>41</sup>

[They were often robbed.] You see they preferred to use their earnings to buy goods. It looked more important and, I suppose, was more useful to them in their homes than just money. These boys were often taken by canoe to the sandbank in the middle of the river and not taken on until they'd parted with all their goods or money.<sup>42</sup>

JoAnn McGregor describes a similar strategy in her book *Crossing the Zambezi* of how the Tonga experts on the uses and abuses of the Zambezi River used it for all sorts of military, strategic and criminal purposes against adversaries.<sup>43</sup>

Many migrants walked in small groups of usually young men and slept either in villages or in the bush.<sup>44</sup> Most reached their destinations in Rhodesia, but some settled in Tete. In interviews carried out among the Nyungwe-speaking people in a remote village called Chipembere in Mozambique, the people spoke of a shrine started and run by people of Malawian descent.<sup>45</sup> The term Chipembere, meaning 'rhinoceros' is common to many languages in the region. There was no dating attached to the shrine, and the residents could only say that it had been there for a long time. When a 65 year old man was asked when the shrine was established, he said it existed before he was born. If that was the case then the shrine would have been active by the 1940s. It is probable that the Chipembere shrine was started by people of Nyasaland origin.

Peter Scott traced the origins of most Nyasaland migrants to a region which, according to Matthew Schoffelleers, was dominated by the Chisumphi and Mbona

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> McGregor, *Crossing the Zambezi*.

<sup>44</sup> Scott, *Migrant Labor*, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, *Secretario de Bairro*, Chipembere in Tete, Mozambique, 3 July 2012.

religious systems.<sup>46</sup> The ‘Chipembere shrine’ could have been established by a Cewa lineage that had become Nyungwe and the shrine may have been related to the Chisumphi or Mbona religious networks. The presence of this shrine in this landscape shows that the *mhondoro* system, closely tied to the Shona-speaking groups, was not the only tradition of African religion even though it was certainly the most widespread in the mid Zambezi. Manuel do Anjos Martins averred that there was a *ntsato* python cult and a *nyarugwe* leopard cult as well, to the far west of the province along the Zambezi River.<sup>47</sup> This means that there were at least the Mbona, Chisumphi, *nyarugwe* and *ntsato* religious systems in the region alongside the better documented *mhondoro*, Dzivaguru and Karuva cults in the early twentieth century.

In order to control the movement of migrants and curtail straying, the Southern Rhodesia government decided to improve and shorten the time of travel from Nyasaland. It was for this reason that the ferries were introduced in 1925 with Mr Lance Holland appointed as supervisor. A medical centre to treat migrants was opened at Darwin. This was followed by the introduction of what was called the *Ulere* (*ChiCewa* word for free and comfortable) transport system in the 1930s, a free service offering rations and accommodation along the way. It also supported independent African and Indian transporters. To further streamline migration, in 1935 the Nyasaland government permitted organized recruiting. By this time many Nyasas were allowed to bring along their families.<sup>48</sup> The streamlining process was not foolproof however; many used the free transport system to get into Southern

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<sup>46</sup> Schoffeleers, (ed.), *Guardians of the Land*.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, Fr Manuel do Anjos Martins, Tete, Mozambique, 7 July 2012.

<sup>48</sup> NAZ: A5, National Archives of Zimbabwe, ‘Report of the Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor to Enquire into Emigrant Labour, 1935’.



Rhodesia and from there proceeded to South Africa. Others migrated independently of the recruiting agencies and government controls. When intensive labour recruitment for Southern Rhodesia expanded and shifted from Nyasaland to the Tete province in Mozambique, it was the Nyungwe-speaking people, in their rich ethnic mix, which formed the greater proportion of Mozambican labour migrants.

Since Tete was not a British domain like Nyasaland even though it supplied a significant percentage of labour to Rhodesia, an agreement was signed between the two colonial governments on 21 July 1925. When it expired (on 31 March 1934)<sup>49</sup> it was replaced by a new agreement signed on 30 June 1934 by Jose Ricardo Pereira Cabral, Governor General of Mozambique and C. H. Rodwell, Governor of Southern Rhodesia.<sup>50</sup> This permitted the recruitment of labour in Tete district by individuals and organisations duly licenced to do so, provided the monthly average of Tete people in Southern Rhodesia at any time did not exceed 15,000; the Government of Mozambique was to maintain an officer at Salisbury, a ‘Curator of Portuguese Natives in Southern Rhodesia’ or simply ‘Curator’, to represent the government in matters to do with the Tete recruitment. Recruiters were also to pay Mozambique a £100 per annum fee. Those licenced to recruit would pay £1 to the Curator for a two year renewable passport for each native recruit. Tax obligations according to Rhodesian law were binding on Tete natives. The Curator was to ensure the safe passage of native labourers back to Tete at the end of their work period. Apparently the Mozambican government did not gain much from this agreement because ‘no fees, duties, taxes or charges whatsoever shall be payable to the Government of

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<sup>49</sup> NAZ: S13865, 1914-1935, An Agreement concerning Recruitment of Native Labourers in the District of Tete in the Province of Mozambique, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1925, J.R. Chancellor Governor, Rhodesia; Portuguese Curator and Chairman and Managing Director of the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau.

<sup>50</sup> NAZ: S13865, 1924-1935, Government Notice, No. 620, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1934, ‘The Tete Agreement’.

Mozambique by reason of recruiting labour in terms of this agreement'. But '[a]n amount equivalent to the whole of the native tax collected in the Salisbury Municipality from natives of the district of Tete and to half of such tax collected elsewhere in Southern Rhodesia shall be paid to the Curator'.<sup>51</sup>

When employment statistics first became widely available in Southern Rhodesia in 1931, there were 179,092 registered African workers in the colony, working by and large in European enterprises.<sup>52</sup> Of these, 49,487 were from Nyasaland and they dominated most central districts of the country, as well as parts of the mid Zambezi region. They penetrated 'European areas', providing long term and stable labour. A further 35,542, originating in Northern Rhodesia, were spread out mainly in the western and southern regions. The smaller number of 14,896 Mozambican migrants was heavily concentrated in the Nyungwe-speaking border areas to the north east and east. Mozambicans generally preferred seasonal employment which enabled them to remain in regular contact with their nearby homelands across the border. There were also 76,184 Southern Rhodesian native labourers.<sup>53</sup>

By the mid-1940s Mozambican migrant labourers began to outnumber those from Nyasaland and had long overtaken those from Northern Rhodesia. Tete ceased to be a transit region for Malawian migrants but itself became the main source of labour for Southern Rhodesia. These would have been mainly Nyungwe-speaking Mozambicans familiar with Catholic Christianity. The *Ulere* transport system continued to be the major transporter of organized labour. In 1950, the system transported 3,353 Nyasas and about 2,335 Northern Rhodesian Africans from

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<sup>51</sup> NAZ: S13865, 1924-1935, Government Notice, No. 620, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1934, 'The Tete Agreement' Article 7 and 8.

<sup>52</sup> Scott, 'Migrant Labor'.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

Misale, 2,795 Nyasas from Salima, and ‘more than 10,000 Mozambique Africans from Tete’.<sup>54</sup> By 1951, Mozambicans were the largest foreign workforce in Southern Rhodesia, peaking at 101,618 workers, nearly a third of the total. In the same year, indigenous Southern Rhodesian workers, broadly grouped as Shona and Ndebele by the colonial authorities, reached 241,683 and their numbers continued to rise.<sup>55</sup> Government policies in Mozambique were to a great extent responsible for driving out labour to neighbouring countries, especially Rhodesia.

### **Women labour migrants**

The statistics were often of registered males only, saying nothing about families, women, and those who migrated for other reasons. In the case of Northern Rhodesia, Audrey Richards observed: ‘Besides the greater opportunities thus opened up for white residents in the territory, the lorry traffic has had the unexpected effect of attracting to the mines increasing numbers of women who had previously found the distance too great to walk.’<sup>56</sup> In Southern Rhodesia, there were women migrants, such as Unica Manyika of Murenge village in Murehwa, who recalled that she migrated with her husband from Mozambique to Southern Rhodesia during the reign of King George (most probably George VI, 1936-1952). Unica recalled that it was fashionable in those days to migrate to Rhodesia for a better life.<sup>57</sup> The Portuguese in Mozambique were very cruel, she claimed. Around harvest time government agents raided villages and beat up the young men with iron spiked sticks called *mbalamatodya* so that many ran away. Asked if she had been back since, she replied,

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<sup>54</sup> NAZ See Nyasaland Protectorate Ann. Rept. Labour Dept. for the Year Ended 31st December, 1950, Zomba, 1951.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Richards, ‘Anthropological Problems’ p.125

<sup>57</sup> Interview, Unica Manyika, Murewa, Zimbabwe, 12 May 2011.

‘I went back twice to bury my parents and to do the ceremonies [for the dead]. I am settled here now; my husband was buried here so I do not want to go back.’<sup>58</sup>

She claimed to have belonged to no church in Tete: ‘we used to smoke and drink and go to the dances. But here I go to the AFM [Apostolic Faith Mission]. We are not allowed to do those things anymore’. Although she claimed to be ethnically Tavara rather than Nyungwe or Chikunda, she said the tattoos on her face – typical of the Chikunda according to Allen Isaacman – were, in fact, just copied from others and had no other significance; they were just a fashion of those days. Unica Manyika’s story complicates the official picture regarding the reasons for migration. It was not just jobs, but peace of mind and personal security as well. Moreover the fact that she was from Tete, but identified herself as Tavara and understood Nyungwe yet now spoke a heavily accented Shona questions the validity of classifying people neatly into ‘clear cut’ categories of language, religion and ethnicity. Identity seems indeed to be a fluid concept.

The story of Unica Manyika seems to confirm the picture given by Elisabeth Schmidt that the mid-1940s saw unprecedented numbers of women beginning to migrate, either as individuals or with their husbands.<sup>59</sup> Adventurous single women increasingly broke away from rural life and headed for the towns, to live with relatives, to find work, or for other reasons – one of the signs of the breakdown of rural patriarchal control of women. This facilitated an emerging pattern of foreign African males marrying local Shona women in the mines, farms and towns, generating a social phenomenon of a generation with ‘foreign’ fathers and local

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 11.

mothers as local Shona men tended to leave their wives to look after the rural homes. Some lived with their wives in the towns but they were a minority. In an article written by G. H. Hartley published in the journal *NADA*, as at 30 June 1957, there was a total workforce of just over 73,000 in Salisbury alone. Of this number, 18% or 13,272 were married.<sup>60</sup> The article noted a class of Africans who were forming a permanent and integral part of the urban community, the overwhelming majority of whom were foreign males.<sup>61</sup> The article lamented the shortage of accommodation for workers and for many others who had gravitated to the town without formal employment. The Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act of 1946 and 1951 had sought to address the problem of migrant worker accommodation. It required employers to provide accommodation for their workers on their premises or rent for them in the African townships.<sup>62</sup> African women who migrated to the towns therefore would have found a society in which the majority were men. Some of these men needed women.

The population of European Rhodesians had also been increasing steadily in the five decades of colonial rule and so were their enterprises. They brought a diverse range of new skills and capital which expanded the colonial economy. The influx of Europeans to Southern Rhodesia during the Second World War raised their population to 80,000 by 1945, significantly more than in any other part of tropical Africa.<sup>63</sup> In 1947, the growth rate of the European settler population outstripped that

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<sup>60</sup> G. H. Hartley, 'The Development of an African Urban Community: A Study based on observations made in Salisbury of the strata within the city's African population, the problem of housing with suggestions for future development' in *NADA* (date and issue could not be ascertained, but possibly 1957), p. 87

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>63</sup> Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 46.

of the African population and jumped from 80,000 to 120,000 in 1950.<sup>64</sup> The overall African population in Southern Rhodesia stood at about 1.7 million in 1945, rising to about 2.5 million in 1950. Population growth contributed to the shift toward the labour-intensive agricultural and manufacturing sectors which eclipsed mining as the main economic activity. Mining and farming towns and communities, therefore, provide interesting sites for viewing adaptations to traditional religious beliefs. Whereas in 1904 there were 545 European farms in Southern Rhodesia with 4,200 African workers, by 1921 the number of European farms had risen to 2,427 with 58,500 workers.<sup>65</sup> The Mazoe District population as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 1914 was 11,110 with 1,850 domiciled alien taxpayer natives from other territories and 3,500 other working natives which, according to the report's author, should be included in the native total population.<sup>66</sup> Salisbury had become a modern city with a civic administration, libraries, banks, customs and immigration offices, sporting facilities and numerous leisure sites. The European population in the city had jumped from 18,179 in 1941 to 40,510 in 1951. The May 1956 figures put it at 62,000 while that of employed Africans was 97,000 with 1,700 Asians and 2,050 Coloureds or people of mixed race.<sup>67</sup> The combination of a fast growing economy and population placed Southern Rhodesia at the forefront of economic growth in the region after the Union of South Africa. PEA lagged behind in economic development relative to Southern Rhodesia. The completion of the Kariba Dam wall in 1958 was not only an isolated development in a remote backyard, it also marked the economic edge that the Rhodesians had over their Portuguese counterparts who completed the construction of the Cahora Bassa Dam in Mozambique only as late as December 1974.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>65</sup> Phimister, *Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, p. 61.

<sup>66</sup> NAZ: NSH/3/1/1.

<sup>67</sup> Major W. J. Gyde, 'Historical Notes,' in *The City of Salisbury Official Guide* (Cape Town, 1957). p. 29.

## **The influence of global trends, in Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia**

The rise to power of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in 1932 inspired ambitious economic revival in the Portuguese colonies. He ruled for 32 years and was determined to make Portugal competitive as a colonial power, which translated into a repressive labour regime in Mozambique that virtually enslaved the population by bonding it to unpaid labour called *chibalo*. The authorities in Lisbon considered Mozambique, not as a colony but as a part of metropolitan Portugal. After the Second World War, Portugal actively promoted settlers in Mozambique in a fashion similar to Southern Rhodesia. The settlers gravitated towards the cities of south and central Mozambique. Their occupations were largely non-industrial, which made Mozambique a service economy and many competed with indigenous peasants in selling farm produce and land. This land crisis, as elsewhere, later contributed to the demands for the end of Portuguese rule.<sup>68</sup> Mozambique was incorporated into the economies of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa as a provider of labour and of transport links through its Indian Ocean harbours.<sup>69</sup>

While the Salazar government's ambitious efforts translated into exploitative rule and wanton cruelty in Mozambique – driving thousands of the natives like Unica Manyika out – Southern Rhodesia exploited the situation to its advantage by actively recruiting labour. The earlier Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) had collapsed due to the depression of the 1930s. It was revived in 1946 under a different name, the Rhodesian Native Labour Supply Commission (RNLSC) because of the

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<sup>68</sup> Penvenne, 'Mozambique' p. 236.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

post-war boom.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, quite apart from the deficiencies in the Portuguese economic management of its colonies, migration was also a result of the attractions of a more vibrant economy in Southern Rhodesia. In 1954, Peter Scott predicted that within a decade Southern Rhodesia would almost certainly become the industrial hub of Central Africa.<sup>71</sup>

On the cultural and religious front, Salazar's government signed the *Concordata* with the Catholic Church in 1940.<sup>72</sup> The first article of the *Concordata* stated that '[t]he Portuguese Republic recognizes the Catholic Church as a juridical person' and then immediately reaffirmed the historic friendly relations between Church and State as demonstrated by the cordial diplomatic missions of the Republic and the Holy See.<sup>73</sup> This *Concordata* between the state of Portugal and the Vatican was based on the doctrine enunciated by Pope Leo XIII in the Encyclical *Immortale Dei*.<sup>74</sup> The preamble to the *Concordata* claimed that God decreed that society be governed by the Church and the State; each respectively in matters to do with religion, *as coisas divinas* and civil affairs, *as coisas humana*.<sup>75</sup> The biblical verse of 'give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God' (Mark 12:17) was interpreted as a guiding principle. It clarified the division of spheres of governance, hence the preoccupation in the agreement with mutual recognition, duties and obligations and legal separation of domains.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Scott, 'Migrant Labor', p. 32

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>72</sup> *Portugal e a Santa Sé, Concordata e Acôrdo Missionário de 7 de Maio de 1940, Edicao do Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional MCMXLIII.*

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, 1 November 1885. In this encyclical on the Christian Constitution of States, Pope Leo XIII enunciated the doctrine of the separation of Church and State and argued for the 'orderly connection' between the two in the service of civil society.

<sup>75</sup> *Concordata*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 5.



While this agreement did not mean the integration of Church and State, it laid the foundations of a new symbiotic relationship.<sup>77</sup> The Catholic Church consolidated its advantaged position in Mozambique and metropolitan Portugal harnessed the Church to its nationalistic and cultural agenda in the ensuing decade. The rapid expansion of Catholic institutions in Mozambique in the 1940s was related to this agreement.<sup>78</sup> Ecclesiastical boundaries were reconstituted. On 4 September 1940, Beira was created as an independent diocese through the Apostolic Constitution *Sollemnibus Conventionibus* with three administrative districts, Tete being one of them. The new Diocese of Beira was initially governed by a Vicar-General, Monsignor Joao Francisco dos Santos, under the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Lourenço Marques. Then, on 21 April 1943, Sebastião Soares de Resende was named the first Bishop of Beira (1943-1967). He was to reign for 24 years, during which an unprecedented number of new missions in Tete and other districts were opened.

Apart from the older Catholic missions at Boroma, Tete town and Zumbo along the Zambezi, and Chishawasha, Salisbury, Kutama, Mutoko and Makumbe in Rhodesia, Christian missions stations in the border areas in the interior of the mid Zambezi remained far between until after 1945. According to Fr Georg Hipler, The first Catholic mission in the Zambezi valley was Marymount Mission.<sup>79</sup> It was started by Fr Kaibach as an outstation of Chishawasha mission in 1923. It was closed down not long after. It reopened in May 1928 to close again in 1932. It was not until 1948 that it became permanently established at its present site. The availability of water was a key consideration in opening up mission stations. Later, St Albert's mission was

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>78</sup> *Anuário Católico do Ultramar Português, 1964 2ª Edição, (Lisboa, 1965).*

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Fr Georg Hipler, Harare, 23 March 2011.

started as an outstation of Marymount. On the Zambezi River, Chapoto was opened as an outstation of Kutama mission in 1953. Later missions were opened at Chitsungo, Muzarabani and Magonde. Around the same time, the Evangelical Alliance established a medical mission at Karanda with a number of satellite centres and clinics. The Seventh Day Adventists also pegged a mission at Chakoma, an earlier site of Marymount mission. The Catholics relocated permanently to Chaparadza the present site of Marymount mission. The sparse distribution of these fledgling mission centres in this vast area left most inhabitants relying on indigenous religious resources.

The period after the Second World War was one of a heightened tempo of economic growth, greater movement of peoples, a heightened sense of expectancy that encouraged the growth of nationalism, as well as a period of mission expansion in both Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. De Resende was despatched directly from Portugal to lead the missions in central Mozambique. A move reflecting the mind of the Church which saw Mozambique as an extension of Portugal overseas – indeed a maritime province of Portugal. De Resende was responsible for much of the work of establishing new pastoral structures. He created the Minor Seminary of S. João de Brito in Zobue which began functioning on 10 September 1949. By 1960 it had 74 seminarians from year 1 to 6. In Beira, the sixteenth century missionary Gonçalo Da Siveira was honoured when the *Colegio Diocesano Instituto Liceal* was named after him at its opening on 9 September 1948. It had 70 students by 1960. All in all, seven higher educational institutions now existed, five of which had been established by De Resende.<sup>80</sup> At the beginning of 1955, when the diocese of

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<sup>80</sup> *Anuario Catolico de Mocambique*, p. 166-171

Quelimane was established, the diocese of Beira remained effectively a combination of three districts, Manica, Sofala and Tete with a total area of 228,631km<sup>2</sup> and a total population of 1,303,000 inhabitants.<sup>81</sup>

Through the work of De Resende, the number of parishes and missions in Tete district sharply rose to 14 by 1964, replete with their own satellite outstations and schools. In the same year, Tete town had 5,292 inhabitants, of whom 2,091 were Catholics, 12 were Protestants and 224 were Muslims. Further away from Tete town at Marara Mission, *Missão da Nossa Senhora da Conceição de Marara* founded in 1947, there were 12,000 inhabitants and 2,000 Catholics, no Protestants and no Muslims. In the northerly *ChiChewa*-speaking areas near Malawi there were more Protestants, as at the *Missão de Imaculada Coracao de Maria da Fonte Boa*, where there were 47,000 inhabitants, of whom 13,343 were Catholics and 4,902 Protestants; there was no mention of Muslims.<sup>82</sup> It seemed that the nearer to Tete town, the higher the number of Catholics relative to the total population. The number of Christians remained a small minority in the region in the 1960s. Many Christian migrants from the Tete region to Rhodesia tended to claim affiliation with the Catholic Church while those from Nyasaland were more mixed. This was the case with people like Arubino Chimkupete and Bairo Dube discussed below.

In Southern Rhodesian towns, urban poverty became a new social phenomenon afflicting both Africans and Europeans. In Southern Rhodesia, Benjamin Burombo, Siphambanisa and Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo began their political careers as labour leaders in protests against unfair practices and low wages. They became founding

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<sup>81</sup> *Anuario Católico de Moçambique*, p. 164.

<sup>82</sup> *Anuário Católico do Ultramar Português, 1964 2ª Edição* (Lisboa, 1965), p. 498.

nationalist leaders as their labour politics merged with nationalist politics, instigating a general strike in 1948.<sup>83</sup> The grievance was for a minimum wage of £5 per month. Sir Hugh Beadle, a member of the Rhodesian Cabinet, was tasked to handle this situation and he addressed about 20,000 Africans while ‘standing on the back of a lorry’ in Bulawayo.<sup>84</sup> Joshua Nkomo was at this time already known to the authorities according to Beadle: ‘Burombo was very much like Nkomo – a very similar type, especially in built and appearance – he was also a business man – had the gift of the gab, I think – that’s the main thing. And he had personality and was a good orator’.<sup>85</sup> Beadle said of Nkomo. ‘I found Nkomo a very reasonable man.’<sup>86</sup> Of the three, only Nkomo was still alive in 1972 when the interview was held with Sir Hugh Beadle. The difficulties of urban Africans pricked the conscience of some in the government such as Harry Davies, Minister of Internal Affairs who agitated for help for the underprivileged. Sir Hugh described him in an interview as ‘very emotional’ with ‘a very, very strong belief in trying to help the underprivileged. But inconsistently enough, while he was a tremendous champion of the underprivileged it was essential that the underprivileged be white, because he hadn’t got quite the same feeling for the African’.<sup>87</sup>

The labour strikes led to the Subversive Activities Bill of 1950 which, however, failed to prevent further disturbances in 1951 and 1952, a clear indication that the Africans had learnt the power of mobilisation and common action. African politics was rising in Rhodesia, based on new forms of networks and solidarities brought about by labour and township life and its novel hardships. The rise of African

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<sup>83</sup> NAZ: Oral /BE 2, p. 17- 35, Interview with Sir Hugh Beadle, at Bulawayo on 23 June 1972.

<sup>84</sup> NAZ: Oral/ BE 2 p. 34.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>87</sup> NAZ: Interview with Sir Hugh Beadle, 23 June 1972, Oral /BE p. 17.

politics was fuelled by policy changes that continued to favour the European settlers.<sup>88</sup> Municipalities had been restricted to Europeans; by the end of the war there was little provision for accommodation for Africans, though a deal was struck whereby companies could lease areas to build accommodation for their African workers as noted above. The Rhodesian railways were prolific in this regard, building townships for workers in nearly every major town connected with the railways. But the problem here was that if an African lost his job, he also lost his accommodation, hence the 1951 and 1952 general strikes were also about accommodation and living conditions.<sup>89</sup> Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead clamped down on African political dissent.<sup>90</sup>

There were money shortages, a restive African population in the urban townships and Sir Hugh Beadle resigned from politics for the bench in 1950.<sup>91</sup> From 1958 onwards, the numbers of labour migrants were in sharp decline, with the Southern Rhodesian government now actively discouraging migrant labour.<sup>92</sup> Population pressures in the towns, a restless African population agitating for change and the availability of surplus local labour all led to anti-immigration legislation which saw the end of state-sanctioned migrant labour followed by a general decline of foreign labour migration. However, the long-established migrants remained in the country and were increasingly considered ‘aliens’.

## **Foreigners and Aliens**

The idea of ‘aliens’ amongst indigenous Southern Rhodesians was sharpened by the increased interaction between locals and labour migrants from neighbouring

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<sup>88</sup> NAZ: Oral /BE 2 p. 36.

<sup>89</sup> Oral/BE 2, p.37. Huggins government.

<sup>90</sup> NAZ: Oral / BE 2, p. 43.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>92</sup> Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 65

countries. Having overcome their earlier reluctance to working for Europeans and reading the opportunities presented by colonial change, more and more Shona and Ndebele speakers now vied for the jobs occupied by the Nyasalanders and Mozambicans. New, and often derogatory, names emerged to describe their competitors. They were variously called *manyasarande* (those from Nyasaland), *mateveranjanji* (those who followed the railway lines), *mabvakure* (those who came from afar), and so on. Literally, these names were neutral but their connotations were loaded with derogatory nuances.<sup>93</sup> The creators of the new kind of wealth, the Europeans, were exempted from these innuendoes. If anything, they were called *varungu* meaning not just European but also ‘employers’ or ‘bosses’. Later, the term was used for anyone with money or an employer regardless of race.

However, name-calling and labelling were more common in the central industrial towns of Southern Rhodesia than in the rural areas of the frontier regions, where longstanding kinship ties precluded the concept of alien. Instead, locals struck up friendly *sahwira* (ritual best friendship) relationships with incoming foreigners. *Sahwira* relationships were both social and religious in nature. Marja J. Spierenburg, looking at more recent times, has described how foreigners in the Dande region of the Zambezi valley were incorporated into the religious system by being given the special ritual roles of *sahwira*.<sup>94</sup> The Nyungwe term it *sabwila*, but it is clearly the same concept and practice. The *sabwila/sahwira* relationship is a socially supportive role that comes to prominence at death and burial where it is the *sahwira*’s duty to prepare, wash and bury the body of their friend. The *sahwira* system was a way of accommodating distant strangers with whom there was no direct kinship. It was

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<sup>93</sup> Interview, Lazarus Dokora, Shamva Mine, Zimbabwe, 17 May 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Spierenburg, *Strangers, Spirits, and Land Reforms*, p. 200.

widely practiced in central Africa but became particularly important in the mid Zambezi in the late colonial period because of the influx of labour migrants. An older concept of non-kin relationship was thus raised to prominence and acquired a new edge in meaning to meet the demands of social change. Spierenburg noted:

I came across many examples of families who, during the periods they were working at commercial farms on the Plateau of Zimbabwe, initiated *sahwira* relations with families from Zambia and Malawi, who belonged to non-Shona speaking groups. In theory the *sahwira* relationships extend to following generations; they are patrilineally inherited. It is impossible to refuse hospitality to a *sahwira*.<sup>95</sup>

The migrants devised forms of relating which mimicked the *sahwira* relationship amongst themselves. They saw themselves as relatives by virtue of having come from the same places of origin in Nyasaland or Mozambique and redefined the relationship of kin called *ubale* (by Malawians and Nyungwe speakers) to apply to fellow migrants who were not necessarily kin by birth. The story of Bairo Dube partly illustrates these reformulations.

### **Bairo Dube**

Bairo Dube, advanced in age, poor, and living in Makhokhoba Township, the oldest township in Bulawayo, reminisced about how he ended up in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>96</sup> Speaking *chiNyungwe* (even though he considered himself Sena), he related how he had migrated from Tete in 1936 to work for the Rhodesia Railways in Bulawayo, first living at the railways before moving to the oldest township of Bulawayo called Makhokhoba. It was in Bulawayo that he met other labour migrants from Tete and they banded together to form a burial society as a social safety net when hardships such as bereavement befell a member, and generally to offer members social support:

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Bairo Dube at Bulawayo on 8 February 2011. I have paraphrased aspects of this interview.

We all met here with the others. We had a big Chikunda here by the name Thika. He was the big man (leader) of the Tete Burial Society. He introduced it from Harare. We had no burial societies here. He brought them. Thika lived in Pumula. He married here, he went back and I hear he died now. His children went back too. The *maChikunda* here we were Joalinh, Nkwebve, Bonifacio, Khenya and him Thika. We all met here. He was the big one of the Tete club.<sup>97</sup>

When asked if there had not been any work in Mozambique he replied, ‘*APotukizi akhanesa kwenekwene* (The Portuguese were very difficult.) They did not get along well with people. There was a war with Makombe and for any little matter you were sent to prison. So it was better for us to come here’. Bairo considered his colleagues as kin because ‘we were all from Tete. I come from Mutarara. But our *carteira ikulu* (big centre) was Tete. I left children and relatives in Mozambique and my father’s family is there.’ He reaffirmed that those with the totem Marunga were real Chikunda and they spoke chiNyungwe and lamented that ‘I am Sena. My totem is Tembo. But our children . . . you can’t even tell that they are Sena, they speak Ndebele, the language of their mothers.’

Interviewer: Are the Chikunda and Nyungwe the same?

Bairo Dube: What is a Chikunda? A Chikunda is a Nyungwe.

Interviewer: Will you go back to Mutarara in Mozambique?

Bairo Dube: At my age? No. I will just die here.

Interviewer: How old are you?

Bairo Dube: I don’t really know. We did not keep records those days.

Interviewer: Which church do you go to?

Bairo Dube: Roma, [Catholic]. I used to go, but now I am too old to walk there.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



Bairo's story gives an insight into some of the dominant preoccupations of migrant workers. In the case of Bairo these revolved around family, work and personal security. The collation of Nyungwe and Chikunda identity is unmistakable and the religious influence of Tete in that identity is evident. Like Bairo, many of his colleagues left behind families, never to return to them. A few did go back in their old age, like Gervasio Protasio Vicente, who was nicknamed *Thika* (*ChiNyungwe*: meaning 'hyena') by his friends. However, Vicente lived in poverty with relatives, first in Beira and then in his native Boroma in Tete. After his death, he was buried at the Boroma mission cemetery, where his parents, Protasio Vicente and Inacia Chasauka, as well as numerous relatives were buried.<sup>99</sup> Bairo's story also illustrates the dispersal of migrants far beyond the border areas with Southern Rhodesia.

## **Monetisation in the Late Colonial era to the 1960s**

Wage labour increased the circulation of money in the towns and rural communities. This heightened its value in popular estimations, compelling many to alternate between the wage labour economy and traditional village based economies as neither met the new needs adequately. In Rhodesia the wage differences between Africans and European settlers was wide across all economic sectors.<sup>100</sup> Money became a key reason to work.

'The white man has taught us not to do work except for money', as I heard it explained. Money seemed here already of great importance, and at the root of the desire for money the passion for clothes which is fast becoming the dominant craving of these people, and the only means by which social status can be gauged. In the old days the chief probably had the monopoly of Arab cloth, which he could trade against ivory or slaves. Nowadays clothes can be got in exchange for work, and there is no doubt that the women urge their husbands on money-making expeditions.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Interview, Maria Gervasio Protasio, Beira, Mozambique, 20 June 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 56.

<sup>101</sup> Richards, 'Anthropological Problems', p.129

African Christian evangelists, however, were taught to look at money differently. Asked how much he was paid as a teacher-evangelist, the Methodist Rev Jonah Tarwiwa Chitombo, countered, ‘We were not working for money in the real sense, we considered ourselves working for God. The situation was different from the present one where people earn plenty of money. In those days someone earning twenty five shillings was considered to be earning a good salary’.<sup>102</sup>

Nyungwe-speaking migrants often referred to *Rodisha*, (Rhodesia) and *Sozibeli* (Salisbury) interchangeably as places where money was in abundance.<sup>103</sup> By the mid-twentieth century Southern Rhodesia had a long established pricing and wage structure for goods and services. The average price for cattle in 1899 was £3.<sup>104</sup> And they could still be bought for about £3 a head in Goromonzi in 1918.<sup>105</sup> A heifer cost about £5 in the 1920s. This was within reach of a growing number of Africans who earned anything between £75 and £100 per year. According to the figures in the National Archives of Zimbabwe collected by George Kay, in the 1930s the lowest-paid Africans were those in the agricultural sector where they earned about £75 per annum compared with their European counterparts in the same sector who earned about £1,275. After agriculture, the second lowest-paid sector was domestic service at about £100. No Europeans were employed in this sector.<sup>106</sup> Mining was the third lowest-paying sector for Africans and the highest paying sector for Europeans with annual incomes of £150 and £1,750 respectively. Construction was the fourth low-paying sector with an annual income of £175 for Africans and £1,525 for Europeans – the third highest paying sector for Europeans. Transport was the highest paying

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<sup>102</sup> NAZ: AOH/61, Interview held with Rev. Jonah Tarwiwa Chitombo (born c.1898-1904) at Epworth Theological College, by Dawson Munjeri, on 5 September 1979, p. 46).

<sup>103</sup> Interview, Ngirazi, Juru Goromonzi, Zimbabwe, 11 March 2011.

<sup>104</sup> NAZ: NSI 1/1/1, Letter Dated July, 1<sup>st</sup> 1899.

<sup>105</sup> NAZ: NSB1/1/1 Native Commissioner Mazoe, Returns for the quarter ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 1919.

<sup>106</sup> Kay, *Rhodesia*, p.57

sector for Africans at £300 per annum and the second highest paying sector for Europeans after mining at £1,575. So, for Africans, wages ranged from £75 to £300 per annum while for Europeans and non-Africans in general they were from £1,100 to nearly £1,800 per annum.

Reflecting on these figures, later analysts justified the disparities by pointing out that African labour was unskilled and largely part-time in nature and that many more Europeans lost money than made it in Rhodesia.<sup>107</sup> In hindsight, these reasons obscured the reality which had more to do with the maintenance of the privileges of colonial settler society than with profitability. Moreover, with Rhodesia ranked the sixth gold-producing country in the world at the time, and the fourth amongst British possessions in 1915, with revenues of £3,823,167, it was unlikely that money was not made in Rhodesia.<sup>108</sup> By the time of the establishment of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland on 1 August 1953, Barclays Bank had set up 75 offices in the federation.<sup>109</sup>

### **Monetisation of the mid Zambezi valley communities**

G.K. Garbett and Amy Kaler have discussed money in the mid Zambezi region in the late colonial period and in post-colonial Malawi respectively.<sup>110</sup> In the late 1950s, Garbett carried out field research in the Sipolilo (Chipuriro) and Mount Darwin districts of the north-east of Rhodesia with a significant Nyungwe-speaking population. This region was not good cattle country like the high veld to the south,

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 56 -58.

<sup>108</sup> H. Wilson Fox, 'The Development of Rhodesia from a Geographical Standpoint', *The Geographical Journal*, 48, No. 4 (1916), p. 297.

<sup>109</sup> Gyde, 'Historical Notes' p. 29.

<sup>110</sup> Garbett, 'Prestige, Status, and Power'; Amy Kaler, 'When They See Money, They Think it's Life': Money, Modernity and Morality in Two Sites in Rural Malawi, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2, (2006).

so as a rule people tended to have fewer animals and depended on game, fishing and cultivation to sustain a healthy diet. Their social systems developed around their dependence on cultivation and as a result power, prestige and wealth were connected more to large granaries and somewhat less to cattle.<sup>111</sup> Thus, the control of manual labour, especially of the young men, was a significant factor in maintaining traditional social structures. In 1967, Garbett observed:

With the establishment of the European administration in Rhodesia, and the involvement of the region in a cash economy, widespread changes were induced in Valley Korekore society, although, because of its isolation, these were less rapid than elsewhere. A mission, for example, was only established in 1940, while in some areas schools have been opened only very recently.<sup>112</sup>

Garbett's observation suggested that money was one of the factors that directly 'induced' social changes in the region, but that change was mitigated by the slow penetration of the new dominant forces into the region. Nonetheless, by the time of Garbett's research, the Korekore, Zezuru and Nyungwe speakers of even the most remote regions of the Zambezi valley had found access to money through labour migrations. Garbett showed how ambitious and enterprising men in the Dande region of the mid Zambezi used money as an alternative means for upward social mobility, power and prestige in a society in which such access was still predominantly only accessible to local 'royals' and their 'agnates'.<sup>113</sup>

Much later, Amy Kaler carried out a study of money and its social impact at Machinga and Mchinji in Malawi to the north-east of the Nyungwe-speaking region. Religion was not factored into her research which focused, rather, on the social impact of monetization. She concluded:

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<sup>111</sup> Garbett, 'Prestige, Status and Power', p. 310.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>113</sup> Garbett, 'Prestige, Status, and Power', p. 307.

While social theorists in the classical Euro-American tradition have until now associated money with rationality, calculability and the draining of affect and emotion from daily life, Malawian elders looking back on the monetisation of their community see it as an agent of chaos, discord and irrational behaviour.<sup>114</sup>

Kaler's research further underlined the power of money in shaping social attitudes and relationships in the region. Money was seen by Malawian elders as the root cause of all evils in the communities she studied. This appears to contradict the spirit of adventure which money had inspired amongst some contemporaries of these elders in the first half of the century, who had flocked in large numbers to Southern Rhodesia as migrant workers for the money they now appeared to despise. Money was a necessary evil, inspiring contradictory sentiments. These two pieces of research on the western and eastern fronts of the region suggest that money was a factor in shaping social life, even for the Nyungwe. It generated new conceptualizations of social relationships. Cash had now found a notch alongside, even sometimes eclipsed, the more traditional forms of exchange such as cattle, goats, chickens, calico, grain, beads, bangles and gold dust filled quills.

An incident in the case of the encounter of the Salvation Army in the Mazoe area with traditional religion illustrates the use of money for traditional religious purposes.<sup>115</sup> In an article on 'Christianity and the Mhondoro Cult', E. K. Mashingaidze gives the story of a certain Ben Gwindi whom he interviewed. According to this article, Ben Gwindi had converted to Protestantism through the Salvation Army sometime between 1906 and 1908 and later became an evangelist

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<sup>114</sup> Kaler, 'When They See Money' p. 335.

<sup>115</sup> Mazoe has received much attention in scholarship because it was the area of the *mhondoro* spirit medium of Nehanda associated with the Shona rebellions against settler rule, 1896-97.

and a major.<sup>116</sup> Gwindi had begun his career working for a European family looking after chickens and selling eggs. According to Gwindi, when the Salvation Army chapel at Nzvimbo was opened, the *mhondoro* medium of Gwangwadza approached Colonel Bradley, the Salvation Army missionary, and in a trance asked 'I see you have built a church; but did you notify me that you were going to build here?' Bradley had bypassed local protocols and had to appease the local ancestral spirits. Ben Gwindi claimed to have advised him to buy four yards of cloth at a cost of six pence per yard to appease the *vadzimu* – ancestral spirits, and was sent to buy the cloth. Gwindi may have been attempting to carve out a central role for himself in the story and may have exaggerated his role in it. The significance lies in the encounter which underlined the existence of another religious tradition that valued its space.

In the interview, Gwindi recounted how, after receiving the cloth, the medium went to sit by the altar and listened to the whole sermon. After this, the medium assured the missionary that he was most welcome to stay in his domain 'if what you have been saying is what will be done always' and assured him that there was a lot of common ground between the church's ten commandments and *chiVanhu* - ancestral teachings.<sup>117</sup> Writing in 1976 when African nationalist consciousness was pervasive, it is quite likely that Mashingaidze was using this story to undergird his pro-African stance and downplaying the increasing missionary sway. Colonel Bradley left the district in 1921 after two decades and was succeeded by Major Baker.<sup>118</sup> Ben Gwindi went on to spread the Christian message to the villages of Chiweshe, Mukombachoto, Nyachuru, Mandoza, Nzvimbo and others – all in the mid Zambezi.

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<sup>116</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze 'Christianity and the Mhondoro Cult' *Mohlomi, Journal of Southern African Historical Studies*, 1, (1976).

<sup>117</sup> Mashingaidze, *Mohlomi*, p. 81.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

This encounter of missionary, medium and money to resolve a dispute may not have been commonplace. More common were the uses of money in place of traditional modes of ritual payments such as cattle for *lobola*, bride price. Charges were always made in the traditional value of goats and cattle, but in reality these were converted to their prevailing monetary equivalent.

## **Marriage and Lobola**

The flight of young men from their villages in search of employment reduced the elders' control over them, be they parents, in-laws or chiefs. This empowered them to survive in the new economy. Since the traditional practice in much of the mid Zambezi regarding marriage, for instance, was that the young men had to spend as long as ten years at his father-in-law's compound working for the bride price – *lobola* – and sometimes double that if he was given another wife as an incentive to keep him in labour bondage, the advent of money meant that this was no longer a necessity. The practice of bonded labour, which was quite widespread then in Central Africa, was weakened as it could now be replaced with money. Writing in 1935 with reference to Northern Rhodesia in the same region, Audrey I. Richards observed, 'Fathers could no longer require two or three years of labour from their sons-in-law, as in the old days, but received a money payment of some ten shillings or so instead - money immediately spent on clothes, and thus not providing food for the household as formerly, nor necessitating residence in the village.'<sup>119</sup> She described the influence of wage-earning as 'all-powerful', even in determining the practice of ancestral religion: 'Money seems to the urban native his only asset in this insecure world. By it he can in effect exchange a belief in a system of ancestral spirits who demand respect, the performance of exacting ceremonial, and the keeping of tribal

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<sup>119</sup> Richards, 'Anthropological Problems' p.128.

morality for safety bought on a hard cash basis open to all who have money, whatever their position in the society.’<sup>120</sup> This analysis could, in fact, suggest that money was undermining ancestral religion and its morality. This would have been more so in urban settings that lacked the traditional support structures found in rural mid Zambezi. African religion was more diffuse, based on family homesteads and shrines in which the most common place ceremonials had a religious significance. Such effects therefore would have been varied. The adoption of money to fulfil ritual requirements suggested conscious adaptations rather than destruction.

### **Money, men and women**

The use of money altered relations between men and women. As the cash economy expanded, fewer households could survive on their indigenous rural-based incomes of livestock and the sale of agricultural produce. The increasing numbers of African men trekking to the mining, farming and manufacturing towns to join migrant labourers left the rural economies in the hands of women.<sup>121</sup> This initially empowered women as they remained in charge of the home economy and the income realised while the husbands were away at work. But that was not to last, as Elizabeth Schmidt observed of the region to the north east of Salisbury:

By the 1930s male wage earnings had far surpassed the sale of agricultural produce as the most important factor in household survival. While the sale of produce accounted for some 70 per cent of Africans' total cash earnings in 1903, such sales brought in less than 20 per cent of total cash income in 1932. This reversal severely weakened women's economic standing within the household.<sup>122</sup>

This was compounded by the fact that it was men who paid *lobola* for the women, giving them a sense of entitlement and possession. The depression of the 1930s

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<sup>120</sup> Richards, ‘A Modern Movement of Witch-Finders’, p. 459.

<sup>121</sup> Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 66.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



which saw an international collapse of commodity prices further strengthened the dependence of women on male wages and the continued economic dependence of women on men.

But, as noted above, by the 1940s a growing number of women struck out independently to the towns in search for work. In 1951 the ratio of women to men in employment was about 1 to 14. Most women at this stage would have been employed as domestics, teachers or nurses. In 1951 there were only 3,638 African women in domestic service in Southern Rhodesia compared to 47,705 African males.<sup>123</sup> This was a significant increase from the 1930s and reflected the change in the attitudes of employers and African society towards working women. They would still have generally earned less than their male counterparts and most men still considered it inappropriate for women to be employed outside of their homes. There was also a general distrust of enterprising women who came to the mines and farms unattached. This led to some migrant workers going back to their homelands to find wives and bringing them to their work compounds. Others married locally, their children becoming naturalised and adopting the dominant local language and culture.<sup>124</sup> Naturalisation and the severance of effective ties with places of origin was commonplace. Second generation family members often identified with their new locations, while third generations became nearly completely localised, with only distant sentimental memories of their grandfathers' origins. This process led to most Nyungwe people in the mid Zambezi identifying as Shona, which was further cemented by the school system. When the author asked an interviewee, Fredrick Bzvingwe Chimkupete, whether he could speak Nyungwe or Portuguese, his answer

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<sup>123</sup> Scot, 'Migrant Labor', p. 44.

<sup>124</sup> Interview, Bairo Dube, Bulawayo Zimbabwe, 8 February 2011.

was 'no'. Nor did he have any recollections about his ancestral home of Boroma as he had never been there.

Fredrick Bzvingwe Chimkupete was born in Rhodesia in 1929, the son of Arubino Chimkupete who had come from Boroma in Mozambique. He started work in 1946 at the age of seventeen as a cook and washer at a police camp.<sup>125</sup> When the *Mujoni mukuru* (senior member in charge of the police camp) was transferred, first to Hwedza and then to Salisbury, he accompanied him. Fredrick's wife, Bessie, was a domestic worker who amongst other duties escorted her European employer's children to and from David Livingstone School in Salisbury. In 1950 Fredrick acquired a driver's license and travelled across much of the country working for a number of companies before joining the Rhodesia Railways where he worked until retirement. Frederick never lived in his ancestral Tete and was naturalised in Rhodesia. His wife's parents had also come to Rhodesia as labour immigrants. They adopted language was the local Shona. Only their totems gave a hint of their origins outside the borders of Rhodesia. The Chimkupetes' totem was *marunga* while *chimkupete* was the Nyungwe word for lion. Their religion was the Catholicism they must have grown up in at Boroma mission.

Under a system in which survival now depended on the ability to work for money, wherever that money was to be found, it became increasingly difficult to abide by traditional taboos and expectations. Often the death of significant relatives, such as parents, siblings and other close relatives drew some migrants back to their rural homes out of duty and fear of supernatural sanctions. But other economic constraints capped the capacity to frequent the rural homes. The overall effect was a weakening

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<sup>125</sup> Interview, Prisca Mupfumira, Harare, Zimbabwe, 28 April 2011.

of traditional taboos. Christian migrants such as the Chimkupetes and Bairo Dube were even less obliged to adhere to African religious considerations. The chiefs and mediums who would usually enforce observances at village level increasingly become powerless as their own institutions were changed under the colonial impact. This was the case in both Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique).

The Portuguese government policy of appointing chiefs weakened their traditional role by making them state officials rather than custodians of local traditions and customs. There were material benefits to the position of state-appointed chief. The chiefs or *regulo* were exempted from the burdensome labour and tax requirements and were provided with uniforms, shoes and, most importantly, were paid an annual salary as government agents. The salary was based on the number of taxpayers in their jurisdiction and the gazetted tax rate. In the 1940s the stipends for chiefs were quite modest, particularly in the not so densely populated provinces such as Tete and taxes were relatively less than elsewhere in Mozambique. For instance, in 1944 it was estimated that chiefs in the north earned about 1,200 *escudos* (about \$50) which was more than ten times what their subjects earned from cotton labour for which the chief were responsible for labour recruitment.<sup>126</sup> In other regions of Mozambique *regulos* earned several times that amount and by 1960 some chiefs in the south earned in excess of \$250.<sup>127</sup> Apart from government money, indigenous authorities received payments and kickbacks from local administrators, labour recruiters and European settlers for the help received in the recruitment of workers for plantations and European farms, not only in Mozambique but in Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia

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<sup>126</sup> Allen Isaacman, 'Chiefs, Rural Differentiation and Peasant Protest: The Mozambican Forced Cotton Regime 1938-1961', *African Economic History*, 14 (1985), pp. 15-56.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

and even São Tomé.<sup>128</sup> Allen Isaacman has shown how destructive the cotton labour regime was. It created a 'crisis of reproduction' with widespread neglect of the production of food crops throughout the entire colony.<sup>129</sup> The reforms to the cotton regime attempted in the 1940s and 1950s designed to alleviate food shortages did not resolve the problem of rural food hunger. Even as late as 1959 there were reports confirming that the majority of the Mozambican population was underfed as a result of the forced cotton cultivation, even though this varied from region to region.<sup>130</sup> The large influx of Mozambicans from Tete into the northern and eastern districts of Southern Rhodesia may be understood partly in the light of the hardships resulting from the exploitative economic policies in Portuguese Mozambique and the pull of a buoyant Southern Rhodesian economy.

The Nyasaland and Tete labourers who landed in Rhodesia faced a set of challenges that included the insignificant wages which made it impossible to repatriate their money to their original homes. So many Nyasalanders and Nyungwe Mozambicans had to '*tshona*' in the mining compounds, farms and the townships of Rhodesia. This was the case with Bairo Dube and Arubino Chimkupete. In popular usage the term *tshona* literally meaning 'going down' or sinking, and denoted the widespread phenomenon of migrants getting stuck at their places of work. *Kutshona* means to work across the borders and not return home. The term was used first with reference to South African and Rhodesian migrant workers. Those who wished to visit their homes regularly did so, but only infrequently. The inability to go back to the land of origin due to financial poverty led many migrant workers to remain in Rhodesia.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>129</sup> Isaacman, 'Chiefs, Rural Differentiation and Peasant Protest', p. 260.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

They tended to marry local women, who very often felt superior to them because of being indigenous, and their children often identified with the culture and language of their mothers. They often changed their surnames to hide their true identity as foreigners or adopted local variants of the same totems.

### **Labour migrant practices and the decline of migrant labour**

The decline in recruitment and numbers of labour migrants to Southern Rhodesia did not mean a return to homelands in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, but rather a corresponding increase of indigenous Southern Rhodesians in the labour force reducing the dominance of the 'aliens'. Even though the Tete Agreement had provided for the repatriation of spent forces back to Tete, the reality was that many stayed for various reasons. Tete people remained concentrated in the north-east of Southern Rhodesia in the middle Zambezi, as most Mozambique migrants chose the tobacco farms there from which they could return to their kraals in winter. As domestics, Mozambique migrants were not noticeably common, and few were employed in industry.<sup>131</sup> Movement through the porous border was impossible to control even in the 1950s. Scott reports that the truckers who carried travellers easily avoided checkpoints by driving through thick bush routes. Even half a century after the border was drawn, people still passed through it oblivious of where the limits were, often following unofficial tracks and pursuing long established links of kith and kin. Proximity to the homeland as well as long established presences led to a concentration of Nyungwe-speaking people in the north-east of Rhodesia. The percentage of so-called Mozambican migrants documented in the border regions in Southern Rhodesia is disproportionately large when compared to other regions.

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<sup>131</sup> Scott, 'Migrant Labor', p. 45.

Zimbabwean Nyungwe-speakers were labelled Mozambicans because the border had created the new identities of being either Mozambican or Southern Rhodesian with the Nyungwe and Shona languages arrogated to the two countries respectively.<sup>132</sup>

The dominant religious belief remained that of the territorial *mhondoro* which transcended the boundary. Gabriel Avelino, speaking in a mixture of Nyungwe and Portuguese, a common practice for educated Nyungwes observed that:

Those who went to missions and became Catholics were not allowed to use mediums or diviners [*'kuombeza'*] or to practice witchcraft [*'bzvaufiti'*]. *Mphondolo* was a religious tradition [*tradição*] of defence so nothing can happen to you. If you want to be *mphondolo*, you had to drink special medicines before you died. *Mphondolo* was strong throughout the Tete region and beyond. Even when the Portuguese came people still practiced this religious tradition. The *mhondoro* means that if you die *ukadzafa ukadzamuka mphondolo* [if you become a *mhondoro*] your spirit can travel as far as Zimbabwe [to possess someone there]. *E religião de todo continente* [it's a religion of the whole continent]. The moment the spirit quits the possessed, [*'Ikadzanyaula mphondolo imweyile'*] he comes back to his senses and can't speak the spirits language anymore. The spirit will declare: 'I am not of here'.<sup>133</sup>

Gabriel Avelino's notion of *mhondoro* as a defence fits in well with the characterization of the Chikunda who prided themselves on their past invincibility. Yet the same had already been exposed to Christian ideas from the longstanding Tete connection. While the border Mozambicans made frequent visits to their homelands ensuring continuity of their traditional obligations, those settled further into Southern Rhodesia made fewer or no visits to their homelands.<sup>134</sup> This led to second and third generations who severed ties with their lands of origin. They also tended to adopt the local language as their first language. This is illustrated in the case of Arubino

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<sup>132</sup> Group interviews, St Albert's Mission Centenary, 14 October 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Interview, Gabriel Avelino, Beira, Mozambique, 21 June 2011.

<sup>134</sup> Interviews, Bairo Dube, Bulawayo, 8 February 2011 and Sabado Lunga, Bulawayo, 7 February 2011.

Chimkupete's son, Fredrick Bzvingwe, discussed above, who became naturalized into Korekore and Zezuru culture.

Foreign migrants in sufficient numbers on a farm or in a mine revived the religious traditions dominant in their places of origin. They even chose their own chiefs in the compounds. The prevalence of *chinamwali* practices and *nyau* religious dances (called *gure* dances by Shona speakers) bear testimony to the migratory nature of some religious beliefs. The beliefs not only migrated but had adapted to the new environment. The African dances such as the *gure* (associated mainly with Malawians), *ngororombe* (associated mainly with the Nyungwe of Mozambique and Zimbabwe) and the *muchongovoyo* and *jakwara* dances were sources of entertainment in farming and mining towns but they were also incorporated into the Shona ancestral *biras* and the *kurova guva* (bringing back the dead) ceremonies.<sup>135</sup> This underlined the adaptability of African religious belief and practice and, perhaps, was the reason that the Catholic, Methodist, Dutch Reformed and the African Apostolic and Zionist churches discouraged their members' participation at such ceremonies and dances.<sup>136</sup>

### **New formulations of traditional beliefs**

Since traditional religion was dependent on rural social structures, it could not be sustained intact in the urban areas where such structures were absent. In urban centres there were no traditional functionaries to mobilise resources and people for communal ceremonies: the population was too ethnically diverse. The powers of chiefs and *masvikiro* were therefore absent. Moreover the cosmopolitan character of

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<sup>135</sup> Interview, Lazarus Dokora, Shamva Mine, 17 May 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

the town made it difficult for strangers to readily follow the instructions of any one group. There were instances, however, of known territorial functionaries of farming and mining areas receiving cooperation from the foreigners in their lands including colonial officials. Initially, as Richards noted with reference to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia),

The mine compound, or the European settlement, is at present a more or less fantastic world into which the native makes excursions to get clothes, to acquire status, or sometimes just in order to 'see life'. It is a world in which tribal codes and taboos do not hold; a form of experience quite detached from the ordinary course of life, and which very few natives regard as lasting'.<sup>137</sup>

In mining settlements, new ideas and taboos were created ostensibly to regulate the moral excesses associated with being away from traditional homes for life at the mines and to reinforce the traditional religious order. For instance, it was taboo for women to cover the pots containing food for their husbands who had gone to work underground. The symbolism of covering the pot containing food with a plate was that the miner would be unable to come out from the mine or the mine would collapse and 'cover' the husband. In Shona this was called *kukwidibira murume mumughodi*, literally 'covering the husband in the mine'. It was also believed that if the woman had an extramarital sexual affair (*chifeve*) while the husband was underground, the husband would die. The belief in the deadly effects of adultery was quite widespread in the traditional religious morality of Central Africa in general. Karen Fields, who studied the Jehovah's Witnesses preachers in the Lala region of Northern Rhodesia and the Southern Belgian Congo of the 1920s and 1930s, wrote that a chief, Shaiwila 'had committed the unpardonable sin of sleeping with one of his uncle's wives before the old chief's death . . . the Lala believed that he would die

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<sup>137</sup> Richards, 'Anthropological Problems' p.125.



because of his breach of the taboo. . . . lived in fear that untimely death would overtake him.’<sup>138</sup>

It was also believed that there were many ghosts called *zvipoko* (Shona) of Europeans who had died in the mines who roamed around the mine compounds. Smoking was believed to save one from meeting them. The thinking was that because Europeans did not partake in the ‘bringing back of their dead’ ceremonies called *Kurova guva* in Shona or *bona* in Nyungwe as in Cewa, their spirits were tormented with no homes to go to or protect. So they wandered around the mines and forests as ghosts. Related to this, was the ever pervasive belief in witches, who also operated at night. Witches, like ghosts, were believed not to like cigarette smoke. Many underground miners therefore adopted the habit of smoking on their way to or from work during night shifts. The appearance of a snake near a mine was considered a bad omen.<sup>139</sup> In one such incident, a python was seen and the Europeans working at the mine attempted to kill it: according to the miners they failed to kill it and the miners refused to help though at the end it died ‘by itself’ - a natural death. The chief of the area where Indarama mine was located was called and he collected the remains and buried them in a human-like grave. The explanation given was that the ancestors were angry with the Europeans for opening the mine at the site and the snake appeared to demonstrate ancestral anger. It was believed that a disastrous mining accident would usually follow the appearance of a snake. There were also fantastic stories of animals such as baboons working mine shifts and elephants pumping out water in the mines. The Acturus, Empress, Dalny, Indarama,

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<sup>138</sup> Karen E. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (Princeton, 1985), p. 178.

<sup>139</sup> Interview, Lazarus Dokora, Shamva Mine, Zimbabwe, 17 May 2011.

Trojan and Shamva mines which were dominated by migrant workers were home to these beliefs.<sup>140</sup>

Paradoxically the ancestors, despite their usual frustration with European activities, were also believed to have the power to enhance the productivity of European mines. In order for the mine to operate well, safely and profitably, a *bira* ceremony to the ancestors was performed annually. In such a ritual, a brown or black cow (*mombe tsvuku/nhema*) was slaughtered and the chief and village elders would make an offering to the ancestors' *vadzimu* to curb mining accidents and viability problems. As part of the *bira* ceremony carried out in the mining compound, an undisclosed amount of money was wrapped in a white cloth and placed underground in the mine shaft itself as an offering to the ancestors. After a while the cloth and the money 'disappeared' which was taken to be a sign of ancestral acceptance of the offering.<sup>141</sup> Chitsungo interviews also showed how Europeans, whether genuinely or strategically, gave in to the demands of traditional religious commensality.<sup>142</sup>

African religious functionaries like the *nyabezi* (Nyungwe) or *n'ganga* (Shona) – who could be men or women – presided over these offerings which did not necessarily require the *mhondoro* mediums, who even in the 1950s were still consulted for major concerns affecting the wider population. Their presence was often felt through their attire at public functions. *Mhondoro* mediums normally wore black cloth and black and white beads as their standard ritual costume. These colours were traditionally associated with ancestors, but red was the antithetical colour hated

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Interview, Tom Mbewe, Acturus Mine, Zimbabwe, 17 May 2011.

<sup>142</sup> Interview, Eric Jemera Mhazi, St. Raphael's Chitsungo Mission, 11 October 2014.

by ancestors because it symbolized blood, evil and death. A persistent belief (still widespread today) was that when it rained; people should not wear red clothes as this attracted lightning, sometimes interpreted as ancestral anger. The use of coins and their placement in the mine shafts was an innovation in response to changing circumstances.

It appears therefore that the mining compound situation and its new physical and moral hazards demanded innovations in ritual rooted in the established ways of thinking found in indigenous religion. The religious functionaries demonstrated adaptability to new circumstances. This creativity was captured much later by Pamela Reynolds:

It is a mistake to see healers as the stalwart upholders of tradition or the last bulwark of ancient values. They are more like earthworms, turning the soil, enriching that which is already given. Healers are privy to people's secrets. . . Their relations with others are sensitive, nuanced and mutable. They reflect belief that is both current and vital.<sup>143</sup>

African religion therefore was transforming itself through the creativity of its ritual leaders to meet changing circumstances. The large corpus of literature on African Initiated Churches demonstrated eclecticism and the adaptations of African religious notions and symbols to a largely Christian framework. But it was not only Christian concepts and methods that were adapted; the examples given above were outside the ambit of a Christian paradigm. Changes were made within the traditional framework of ancestral religion in response to a little understood system of calculated exploitation imposed by the European mine owners.

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<sup>143</sup> Pamela Reynolds, *Traditional Healers and Childhood in Zimbabwe* (Athens Ohio, 1996).

Charles van Onselen has noted how the mining compound system was a technique of labour control and retention copied from the more industrialised South Africa and designed to maximise labour exploitation. Apart from reducing direct wages, mine managers went further to cut their costs on food, accommodation and compensation for injury to maximise profits. This reduced workers in mining and farming compounds into servants who had little power over their circumstances. The provision of alcohol, dances and sex for which the compounds became well known, as well as the offer of religion, education and sports, were manipulated by the managers to induce patterns of dependence, obedience, service and habituation to the otherwise dangerous working conditions in Rhodesian mines. One of the results of the system was a very high disease and mortality rate in the compounds.<sup>144</sup>

The rather high death rates at mines were believed to be related to the breach of taboos and spiritual protocols. Poor working and sanitary conditions coupled with long working hours were seldom considered causal even though they occasionally caused the downing of tools. Most deaths in the working native population were due to pneumonia in mineworkers: for instance in Mazoe District, 70 of 178 deaths were from pneumonia and 59 of these were mineworkers. Mineworkers actually accounted for 107 of the 178 recorded deaths in the district, with only one dying in a rail accident and another being struck by lightning.<sup>145</sup> The high infant mortality at Tiger Reef Mine, for instance, was not attributed to poor living conditions but rather to witchcraft. Since the ancestors, *vadzimu* are always well intentioned they could not be responsible for the deaths except in the exceptional cases where they had to remind their living progeny of neglected ancestral obligations. It was reasoned,

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<sup>144</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933* (London, 1976), p. 128.

<sup>145</sup> NAZ: NSH/3/1/1, Mazoe District, Report for the year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1914.

therefore, that it must be other malicious spirits or persons. Blame was often cast on the foreign migrant workers because of the jealousies generated by job promotions given to them at the expense of the local Shona. The foremen, called *vanaforomane* (Shona), were often foreign workers, especially Nyasalanders who were described by Scott as ‘the more intelligent’.<sup>146</sup> They were probably chosen mainly for their loyalty born of the insecurity of being foreigners, rather than for any exceptional intelligence. The Malawians in the interior of Southern Rhodesia, labelled *manyasarandi* by indigenous Southern Rhodesians, were not distinguished from the Mozambicans. This labelling was not glaring in the border regions nearer Tete because, as already noted, kinship ties across the border remained vital. The *Manyasarandi*, migrant workers from Nyasaland were also perceived as great witches, users of bad magic called *juju* and also as great healers.<sup>147</sup>

This perception illustrates yet another layer of traditional belief surviving and reasserting itself in new circumstances. The healer from far away who had crossed a boundary or several boundaries was perceived as of greater authenticity and potency than the local healers. Traditional folklore and idioms valorised what was procured from far away. These may have been methods of raising the profile of the trade by mystifying otherwise locally available cures. The healers themselves were aware of this perceptual dynamic and exploited it. Healers have been described as ‘brokers of the unfamiliar’; they engaged in constant innovation as the knowledge they possessed was often ambiguous and unwieldy. They themselves usually claimed not to fully understand the workings of that knowledge, yet it worked; they introduced objects, substances, practices and ideas that were unfamiliar, thereby controlling the

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<sup>146</sup> Scott, ‘Migrant Labor’, p. 31.

<sup>147</sup> Interview, Tom Mbewe, Acturus Mine, 17 May 2011.

process of healing and its reception by their patients. They had to establish a delicate balance since what is too unfamiliar may also alienate the patient in the same way as what is too familiar may diminish the sense of awe and therefore the effect on the patients. Luedke and West observed, ‘So fundamental to the profile of the healer are transgressions of boundaries that one might conclude that the power of healing is in some profound way bound up with the act of crossing borders’<sup>148</sup> and is ‘necessarily, bound up with the construction and maintenance of these borders’.<sup>149</sup> Some of the healers who operated through organizations ‘position themselves as leaders by regulating practices and cultivating constituencies’ accordingly.<sup>150</sup>

Yet amidst these changes mission Christianity had also taken root and was growing. A potent symbol of this was the admission of Africans into the ranks of the clergy in the Catholic Church. Archbishop Aston Chichester had opened a seminary at Chishawasha for the training of African clergy in 1936 and the first to be ordained were Frs Simon Tsuro and Isidore Chikore. On May 11 and 12, 1948 a Catholic congress was held at Kutama mission. Present were the Fr Superior of the Jesuits, Fr Enright, and Frs Collings and Fr Swift were amongst the more than a hundred delegates from the different missions. Notably, the two native priests Frs Simon Tsuro and Isidore Chikore presided over the ‘high mass’ on two successive days.<sup>151</sup> It was recorded that the conferences ‘were followed with interest by the Africans.

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<sup>148</sup> Luedke T. J. & West H.G., (eds.) *Borders and Healers, Brokering Therapeutic Resources in Southeast Africa* (Bloomington, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> Jesuit Archives Harare, *Historia Domus Kutama* 1940-68.

The evening at the close of the congress was celebrated by a candle lit procession, which was attended by more than 500 people, mostly from the nearby villages'.<sup>152</sup>

## Conclusion

Migration across frontiers in the middle Zambezi accentuated change in both the religious landscape and social domains. Ritual practices were modified and reinvented to suit the new environment. New identities emerged. The movement of significant numbers of people across colonial frontiers reconfigured ethnic spatial distributions and modified their religious practices in adaptation to their new circumstances. While mobility, movement and the permeability of borders was a key feature of Central African history, as David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin observed, in the case of the middle Zambezi, the boundary did have a constraining effect – particularly on those who lived furthest from it.<sup>153</sup> For those who lived on the frontier, the frontier was their homeland and its impact on their activities was often blurred. Martin wrote: 'The transparent nature of frontiers is also evident in the boundaries of Central Africa, both in the experience of those who live there and in the minds of scholars.'<sup>154</sup>

The adaptation of older beliefs and practices to new environments and lifestyle changes were induced within a wider cultural transformation. African religious beliefs and practices were therefore not static, timeless or 'traditional', neither were they 'in decline' in the sense of moving towards extinction – at least not by the 1950s. Overall, the religious landscape became more complex with the introduction of Christianity, variations of traditional religion imported by migrant workers and

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<sup>152</sup> Jesuit Archives Harare, *Historia Domus Kutama* 1940-68, May 11 and 12, 1948.

<sup>153</sup> Phyllis M. Martin, 'Beyond Independence', in D. Birmingham and P. M. Martin (eds.) *History of Central Africa, : The Contemporary Years Since 1960* (London, New York, 1998). p. 18.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

adaptations in the *mhondoro* ancestral religion of the mid Zambezi. Religious identities and practices were transported from homelands by migrants and religious practices adopted elsewhere were brought back to the homelands. The absence of house heads and the shattering of the full complement of ritual role players in family and clan structures forced adaptations.

Adaptations brought about by monetisation were not uniform but there were general patterns noticeable in the mid Zambezi and elsewhere. While money was critical for the establishment and maintenance of missionary institutions, it loosened the social structures of the people of the mid Zambezi and modified some traditional religious practices. Payments and transactions of a religious nature across a whole spectrum of social interactions now accepted money as an alternative. Social honour was no longer solely dependent on age, position in the extended family network or royalty. For a society in which respect for adults was predicated on age and its presumed experience and proximity to the final end of being an ancestral spirit, the power of money presented a new challenge. The social abeyance to elders was rooted in ancestral religion and the new power that money gave to youngsters eroded this automatic respect for elders. The limitations of securing enough of it meant that the nuclear family rather than the extended family was increasingly becoming the focus of attention. This was supported by the Christian missionary ethos which emphasised individual salvation, thus undermining the extended family structure, its promotion of polygamy and its insistence on periodic ancestral ministrations. However, the fact that by the 1950s, Christian missions were only just beginning to build permanent institutions in the region meant that local religious traditions still had the greater following.



## Chapter 5

### **Continuity and change: The persistence of *mizimu*, *mhondoro* and aspects of ancestral religion in the 1970s**

Notwithstanding the broad social and economic changes that were taking place under colonial rule and missionary expansion, *Mhondoro* mediums remained active in the mid Zambezi in the 1970s. Other agents of ancestral religion such as the healers, called *anyabezi* or *n'ganga*, reformulated ancestral beliefs and practices using new material symbols borrowed from the colonial consumer economy as well as ideas and terms borrowed from ascendant Christianity. This generated a variegated spectrum of religious expression framed between the poles of traditional ancestral religion and Christianity. Earlier descriptions of the changing religious landscape were based on the then prevalent generalised fears of cultural disintegration of the 1930s, predicated on the sociology of the time. They viewed ancestral religion as fizzling out as the 'economic and administrative changes' introduced by colonial rule were 'affecting native society profoundly'.<sup>1</sup> In some quarters this interpretation persisted to the 1970s where some Zambezi Valley people, such as those of Choma, were reportedly lamenting that they did not 'think that their senior spirits will come out [possess mediums] again on account of the power of the Europeans'.<sup>2</sup> More analytical observers such as John Iliffe, thought that there was resistance to wholesale change, observing that 'indigenous religions did not merely resist. They

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<sup>1</sup> Richards, 'Anthropological Problems' p.125.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdillon M.F.C., 'The Cults of Dzivaguru and Karuva amongst the North-Eastern Shona Peoples' in J. Matthew Schoffeleers, *Guardians of the Land, Essays on Central African Territorial Cults* (Gweru, 1978) p. 251.

had long been among the most adaptable elements in African cultures'.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite this creative vitality 'indigenous religions were generally in retreat'.<sup>4</sup>

There was a limit to the depth of such 'retreat' even as other observers had pointed out; 'just because changes had taken place so rapidly, apparently great differences in the native way of living had not yet made correspondingly deep alterations in their beliefs and habits of thought. The wearing of European clothing, the use of bicycles and other manufactured articles and the adoption of a series of English phrases in everyday talk' were 'apt to be deceptive'.<sup>5</sup> Old ways, beliefs and practices persisted alongside the external changes. John Iliffe recognised this when he remarked at a later time that, 'Most people in Africa before 1950 probably relied on indigenous religious resources'.<sup>6</sup> And Michael Gelfand, while having predicted the demise of Shona religion in the 1950s, maintained in the 1970s, that in spite of accepting education and succumbing to the wage labour regime, the Shona still preferred 'their own way of life'.<sup>7</sup> Randles claimed, 'the many centuries of contact with Islam and with Christianity have not had any profound accumulative impact on religion'.<sup>8</sup> These observations and the testimony of new interviews in the mid Zambezi, point to the now generally accepted position amongst scholars of religion that African religion or aspects of it are living realities.<sup>9</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s when Christian institutions began to proliferate in the mid Zambezi, independent agents of evangelisation and migrant labourers had long made inroads into the area

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<sup>3</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p.228.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>5</sup> Richards, 'Anthropological Problems' p.125).

<sup>6</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of an African Culture* (Gweru, 1973), p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> Randles, *Monomotapa*, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, and Michael Gelfand, 'The Mhondoro Cult of the Shona,' in M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen (eds.), *African Systems of Thought: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Third International African Seminar in Salisbury, December 1960* (London, 1965), p. 345.

introducing bicycles, the odd car, European clothing and manufactured articles as well as Christian ideas. Yet these imports were seized on by the locals for their practical utility and convenience, leaving the domain of religion generally intact.

Anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey, in his study of Kimbanguism in the Congo observed that new local religious movements remained rooted in Kongo popular religion whose structure, cosmological and moral assumptions were not peculiar to the BaKongo of Lower Zaire but were, to use his words, ‘common *grosso modo* to the peoples of Zaire, Zambia, Angola and much of Central Africa’.<sup>10</sup> The basis of this commonality lay in the Bantu roots of the people of the region who shared a similar religious outlook. This observation accords well with Igor Kopytoff’s frontier model of the formation of African societies<sup>11</sup> which sees the frontier as a fertile ground where new communities were formed as offshoots of more established earlier communities rather than growths of wandering disparate tribes.<sup>12</sup> As well as sharing common linguistic features, the Bantu shared a common cultural idiom which was identifiable in their religious expressions. This explains the religious commonalities found in the *mahamba*, *malombo* and *mhondoro* which were all rooted in Bantu ancestral religion. For MacGaffey, understanding Kimbanguism and other Christian movements in the Kongo meant understanding Kongo ancestral religion first and the Christian churches that inspired the movement second.

David Maxwell’s study of Pentecostalism in north-eastern Zimbabwe disaggregates the relationships of the new, largely Pentecostal, Christian movements with traditional religion. While the new Pentecostal movements sought to supplant

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<sup>10</sup> MacGaffey, *Religion and Society*, p. ix.

<sup>11</sup> Kopytoff, *The African Frontier*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

traditional religion in meeting the religious needs and fears of the locals, traditional religion is presented as a stand-alone, clearly distinct from the Churches. The new Christian movements and the '*mhondoro* cult' centres are identified as separate institutional entities.<sup>13</sup> In this way traditional religion is shown to be alive and functional alongside the Christian Churches and renewal Pentecostal movements. *Mhondoro* mediums were still active at the time Maxwell carried out his research, some three decades after the establishment of the Elim mission in the north-eastern corner of Southern Rhodesia in 1951.

While the present study concludes around 1970, the fact that research carried out after this date has uncovered in even greater detail the workings of indigenous religious functionaries (as in Maxwell's study in the post-colonial era) forcefully demonstrates the continuities of traditional ancestral religion. This is generally true, at least in the less accessible areas such as the central regions of the mid Zambezi that were more removed from the larger cities and towns. The following incident illustrates these chequered realities and the persisting African traditional religious idiom.

An *msasa* tree (*Brachystegia spiciformis*), at one of Harare's busiest road intersections, not far from the official residence of the head of state, was knocked down by a city council road works tipper on 7 December 2011.<sup>14</sup> This tree was considered sacred because of its association, imagined or real, with the medium of an important national spirit called Nehanda. It was reported that 'crowds gathered at the

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<sup>13</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> *The Herald*, 8 December 2011, 'Mbuya Nehanda tree knocked down by truck', p.1.

felled tree to take pieces of its billowing green leaves, splinters and bark'.<sup>15</sup> Several street vendors who patronized the area saw the accident and described what they witnessed:

“We are shocked . . . the workers were repairing the road and suddenly we heard a sound which later turned out to be from the tree,” said Timothy Muchina, a street vendor. “One of the workers tried to cut the tree and we told him the story behind it. That was when he stopped and decided to run away. Drivers of the other two council vehicles fled the scene with their vehicles as people started to gather.” Another vendor, Luckmore Katsende said: “They ran away probably after knowing the myth associated with this tree. For the five years that I have been selling my wares at this place, I have witnessed a lot. I have witnessed two occasions when cars crushed onto the tree with the vehicles getting damaged, but the tree being left intact as if nothing happened.”<sup>16</sup>

The following day, the solitary figure of a woman clad in white religious garments in a conspicuously prayerful pose at the stump of the fallen tree was pictured in *The Herald* newspaper, but without any information regarding her intentions or religious affiliation.<sup>17</sup> However a journalist from a different newspaper reported that a traditional healer called *n'anga* in the local Shona language had ‘performed rites over the split trunk and gnarled branches on Thursday demanding homage be paid and forgiveness sought at Nehanda's grave site north of Harare for the destruction of the tree’.<sup>18</sup> It was not established whether or not the woman in white was the *n'anga* (she was not dressed in traditional *n'anga* clothing). She was probably either a medium, *svikiro*, of a senior spirit of Korekore origin, or a member of one of the African Initiated Churches (AIC), called *vaPostori* (apostles), who usually wore

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<sup>15</sup> Roy Moyo, ‘MDC-T Harare Council ordered the felling of Mbuya Nehanda tree’ in Bulawayo24News, 9 December 2011. [www.bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-9993.html](http://www.bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-9993.html)

<sup>16</sup> *The Herald*, 8 December 2011, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Roy Moyo, ‘MDC-T Harare Council ordered the felling of Mbuya Nehanda tree’ in Bulawayo24News, 9 December 2011. [www.bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-9993.html](http://www.bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-9993.html)

distinctive white garments at their prayer meetings.<sup>19</sup> Journalist Beven Takunda questioned why: ‘. . . if the tree was so special in the first place, why was it not protected? If it was so special, why was it not guarded or touted as a tourist attraction? The lack of care to preserve the tree, simply leaving it in the middle of the road, does not equate with the role that Mbuya Nehanda played during the first Chimurenga’.<sup>20</sup>

The initial media reports about the accident triggered numerous comments, explanations, conspiracy theories, opinions and analyses in both mainstream newspapers and social networking sites in the electronic media. The ensuing commentary was invariably couched in a political and religious idiom. ‘It’s got to be a sign something big is going to happen,’ a street vendor named Mathias Vinyu was quoted as saying.<sup>21</sup> Some claimed the event portended the ‘death of a big person’ or ‘bad luck for the nation.’<sup>22</sup> Some saw it as a symbolic spiritual battle between Christianity and traditional ancestral religion: ‘This shows victory in the spiritual realm to the believers. Harare for Jesus. Amen.’<sup>23</sup> Others surmised it was a politically motivated act of sabotage by the then relatively new political party on the Zimbabwean political landscape, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> According to Michael Gelfand, among the Zezuru a completely black shawl was worn by the important *mhondoro* whereas among the Korekore the more important Mhondoro favoured white. Gelfand, ‘The Mhondoro Cult’, p. 345.

<sup>20</sup> Takunda, *Sokwanele*, 12 January 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Anonymous correspondent, ‘Nehanda’s tree falls as Mugabe is re-elected president of ZANU’, in *ZimEye*, 8 December 2011. [www.zimeye.org/?p=41409](http://www.zimeye.org/?p=41409)

<sup>22</sup> Beven Takunda, ‘The unintended felling of the Mbuya Nehanda tree’ in *Sokwanele* an e-magazine of a civic action support organisation, 12 January 2012. A veiled reference to President Robert Mugabe. [www.sokwanele.com/thisiszimbabwe/archives/7303](http://www.sokwanele.com/thisiszimbabwe/archives/7303).

<sup>23</sup> *ZimEye*, 8 December 2011. Comment by Philo on Thursday 15 December 2011 at 7.55pm. [obertwww.zimeye.org/?p=41409](http://www.zimeye.org/?p=41409)

<sup>24</sup> The MDC was founded in 1999 out of the Labour Movement and an assortment of intellectuals and civil rights activists who had become disenchanted with the rule of ZANU-PF and its founding leader Robert Gabriel Mugabe. The founding president of the MDC was Morgan Tsvangirai, former secretary general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).

The context of this commentary was the economic and socio-political crises that characterised Zimbabwe at this time. In 2009 the erstwhile opposition MDC party led by Morgan Tsvangirai and the erstwhile ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party led by Robert Mugabe had signed an historic agreement to form a coalition government following a bitterly contested election in 2008 in which there was purportedly no clear winner. This agreement was dubbed the Global Political Agreement (GPA).<sup>25</sup> The new and more popular MDC, despite being the weaker partner in government, dominated the Harare City Council, which was responsible for running the affairs of the city. It was thought that elements in the council were sending a message of displeasure at the appropriation of national symbols by their then increasingly unpopular yet more established political opponents who had ruled the country since independence in 1980.

Independence was the culmination of the struggle spearheaded by ZANU-PF and the Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU) and their respective military wings, Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). During the war of liberation, begun in the late 1960s, ZANLA combatants had embraced the spirit mediums of the Zambezi valley as part of their mass mobilisation strategy and claimed the guidance of ancestral spirits including that of Nehanda.<sup>26</sup> The felling of this tree, therefore, dubbed by the media the 'Mbuya Nehanda tree' was interpreted by some as a deliberate attack on ZANU-PF claims. The spirit medium of Nehanda, a woman named Charwe, was purportedly hanged on this tree on 27 April 1898 by the

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<sup>25</sup> Brian Raftopoulos, and Alois Mlambo, (eds.) *Becoming Zimbabwe* (Harare, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Lan, *Guns and Rain*, p. 218.

Rhodesian colonial authorities, along with other ‘rebel’ leaders for murder and treason.<sup>27</sup>

While it became widely believed that Charwe was hanged on the *msasa* tree, the Jesuit Fr Richartz’s eyewitness account does not appear to support this hypothesis.<sup>28</sup> Rather, his description of what transpired suggests that serial executions took place inside a jail equipped with special facilities and within earshot of other prisoners in their cells.<sup>29</sup> That discrepancy notwithstanding, Nehanda has arguably received much attention from some writers, political commentators and scholars, as a brave woman, religious leader, activist, political prisoner and heroine. While David Beach has meticulously argued that Nehanda Charwe was an innocent victim of gender bias, unjustly accused and executed to restore a sense of things being under control in the colonial administration, Ruramisai Charumbira has recently challenged this portrayal.<sup>30</sup> She revisited the same evidence to uncover what she considered a hole in Beach’s account which failed to consider the ‘larger canvas of women’s and gender history before and during the uprisings to articulate Nehanda Charwe’s actions better’.<sup>31</sup> For Charumbira, Nehanda Charwe was more than simply a victim, she was neither feminist nor an anti-colonial heroine but a woman locked in the power struggles of her time.<sup>32</sup> Dwelling on this debate is peripheral to this study, yet clearly

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<sup>27</sup> Fr Francis J. Richartz SJ, ‘The end of Kakubi and the other Condemned Murderers’ in *Zambezi Mission Record [ZMR]* Vol. 1, p. 54. Richartz gives an eyewitness account of the execution and set the date of the execution as ‘Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of Blessed Peter Canisius, I said an early Mass and drove to the goal, where I found the officials ready and everything prepared.’

<sup>28</sup> Fr Richartz was a Jesuit missionary who founded the Catholic mission at Chishawasha about twenty-one kilometres to the north-east of the new colonial capital Salisbury in 1892. He was prison chaplain and gave the last rites to the prisoners before they were executed. The medium of Nehanda is said to have refused to partake of these rites.

<sup>29</sup> Richartz, ‘The end of Kakubi’, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> Charumbira, Ruramisai, ‘Nehanda and Gender victimhood in the Central Mashonaland 1896-97 rebellions: Revisiting the evidence’ in *History in Africa*, Vol 35 (2008), pp. 103-131.

<sup>31</sup> Charumbira, ‘Nehanda’, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 131.



hosting a major *mhondoro* spirit would have marked Nehanda Charwe out from the pack. It was she who purportedly ‘prophesied’ *mapfupa angu achazomuka*, meaning ‘my bones will arise’—presumably to continue the struggle against the colonists.<sup>33</sup> According to David Lan, the last Nehanda medium, *svikiro*, before 1980 was taken across the border by guerrillas to Tete province in Mozambique where she died.<sup>34</sup>

While the felling of this tree was an isolated incident, the reactions it triggered pointed to an enduring presence in popular consciousness of an indigenous African religious idiom underlying much of what passes for modern city life and the Christianity it espouses. That the *msasa* tree accident attracted a crowd of passers-by and onlookers was to be expected, and therefore offers nothing of religious significance in itself. The subsequent stripping of the fallen tree of its branches and leaves, presumably for medicinal or religious purposes, underlined widespread beliefs in their efficacy. That the commentary on the incident multiplied so quickly, shows a predisposition to historic knowledge woven in religious symbols and beliefs amongst ordinary people. The fact that the centre of this episode was Mbuya Nehanda who had been executed more than a century earlier and was believed to host the spirit of a princess, who according to local traditions, lived approximately six centuries earlier, lends weight to the historic nature and continuity of local religious traditions. The Christian interpolations into the incident and the intriguing presence of the woman clad in white point to an intersection of Christianity and traditional religion. While this incident took place far from the original Nehanda’s location in the Zambezi valley, it draws attention to the continuities of traditional religion historically and beyond the geographical limits of the mid Zambezi.

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Nehanda’s tree falls as Mugabe is re-elected president of ZANU’, in *ZimEye*, 8 December 2011. [www.zimeye.org/?p=41409](http://www.zimeye.org/?p=41409).

<sup>34</sup> Lan, *Guns and Rain*.

## A Persisting Religious Idiom

There was an influx of new settlers in the mid Zambezi during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of them brought in a variety of Christian traditions making the region more heterogeneous. An informant claimed,

Now there are more foreigners than Korekore people. From here [St Albert's Mission in Concession district] to Harare were all European farms, the Rhodesian government did not allow people from other countries to go and settle in the reserves. So at independence [1980] when some European farmers fled the country, they left their foreign workers at the farms and many farms became resettlement areas. So in 1981 there were many people from other countries, such as Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa and these are more than the Korekore in this region.<sup>35</sup>

Another informant observed that 'real Zimbabweans' were overwhelmed by foreigners in the region, but pointed out that people from as far away as Masvingo were also moved in the 1950s and 1960s to make way for European settlements and some ended up in Gokwe and Muzarabani.<sup>36</sup> The eradication of tsetse flies in Dande was also viewed as having attracted people to move to the area in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>37</sup> One informant had relocated precisely for this reason; the abundance of grazing land and the absence of diseases caused by the tsetse fly.<sup>38</sup>

Religious discourses in the mid Zambezi at the time of the interviews for this study were couched in an idiom of contest between traditional religion, *Chivanhu*, and Christianity. This was a result of the influx of Christian churches soon after

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Raymond Mupanyama, at St Albert's mission in Centenary, 14 October 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Martin Poshai, at St Albert's Mission in Centenary on 14 October 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Stan Mutyambizi, Mutpo: Moyo, Age 62, from Madzima, former District Nursing Officer retired on medical grounds, Church: ZAOGA.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Eric Jemera Mhazi, St Raphael's Chitsungo Mission, 12 of October 2014. Jemera claimed, 'There are very many of us Karanga from Masvingo. You see, I know this area very well now because I worked everywhere in the Zambezi valley. Chitsungo area is Korekore land, but many Karanga people came here because it was open land with dense forests, good soils but had very few people'.

independence meeting with an established traditional religion. The colonial marginalisation of the region and the buffer to Christian expansion during the liberation war years had meant that traditional religion remained pervasive. In Mozambique the mutation of the liberation war into a civil war following independence from Portugal in 1975 continued to make the mid Zambezi inaccessible, while in Rhodesia after independence in 1980 there was an upsurge of Christian Churches coming into the region. The *mhondoro* mediums of the 1960s and 1970s were described in glowing terms, while the new ones were cast in disparaging terms as lovers of money and crooks. There were equally acerbic criticisms of Christians. One informant agitated, ‘No one is following the rules, *vekunamata varikutadza, vemasvikiro varikutadza*, those who pray are failing as much as those who follow mediums’.<sup>39</sup> Another cautioned that ‘no one should judge the other as evil. There are different lines to these things. *Mudzimu unokumbira mvura kuMusikavanhu, vaKristu vanokumbira kunaMwari* (the ancestral spirit asks for rain from the maker of humans, God, just as Christians ask from God)’.<sup>40</sup> The informants generally explained the persistence of traditional religion in terms borrowed from the bible and Christianity. This betrayed an attempt at making sense of the position of traditional religion in the face of an advancing and confident Christianity. An interviewee in the mid Zambezi (an Anglican deacon and shop owner who was a well-known elder and preacher in the area around St Albert’s mission), for instance, said of African traditional religion, which he called *Chivanhu*;

*Chivanhu* is like the Old Testament of the Bible and Christianity is the New Testament. *Chivanhu* means how to live with others; no killing, no adultery, no stealing. *Masvikiro* [spirit mediums] said the same. *Svikiro* is like a priest or pastor. *Dendemaro* where he performs his rituals is like a chapel,

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, Mrs Netsai Antonio, (Mutupo: Marunga-Shiri-Hungwe; Church: Methodist) St Albert’s Mission, Centenary, 14 October 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Raymond Mupanenyama, St Albert’s Mission, 14 October 2014.

*dendemaro* is also called, *zumba* or *imba yemhondoro* where *kupira* [offering] is done – it's the place of *svikiro*, *mhondoro* and *makombwe*. But now Jesus has fulfilled everything, Jesus now speaks for himself – *iye Jesu pachake ave kutaura oga*. But all are agreed that these things are there, witches are there, and *n'angas* [traditional healers or diviners] are there.<sup>41</sup>

His remarks collapse the boundaries between religion and culture, revealing the embeddedness of traditional religion in local culture. Unlike Christianity, where the idea of conversion applied; there was no notion of conversion to traditional religion. One was born into it. The lines of disaggregation were limited with leaders finding no inconsistency in adding Christian elements to their repertoire of beliefs and practices. Thus J. Matthew Schoffeleers would observe in the case of Southern Malawi, 'a prominent teacher and church elder making rounds of the local shops to collect contributions for the annual rain ceremony' organised by 'Mbona cult' officials.<sup>42</sup> The idea of conversion which entails religious exclusiveness was introduced by Christianity and a culture high in differentiation introduced by colonial settlement. The cultural embeddedness of traditional religion finds better representation in the more inclusive term *Chiwanthu* or *Chivanhu* which the interviewees used. An interviewee claimed 'There are places in Zimbabwe that were Europeanised more than others such as the Midlands where I grew up. In such places traditional religious practices became less and less while Christianity took root. *Chivanhu* flourished in the outskirts such as here at St Albert's. But St Albert's Mission is an island, just outside the mission traditional religious practices are strong'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Interview, Martin Poshai, St Albert's Mission Centenary, 14 October 2014.

## **Late expansion of Christian missions towards the Zambezi**

The building of Catholic mission institutions away from the main towns, towards the Zambezi valley only began after the Second World War when Marymount Mission was opened by Fr Hannan in 1948 as noted in the last chapter.<sup>44</sup> This was followed by further exploratory visits towards the Zambezi River. The *Historia Domus* – Kutama Mission entry of 21 June 1953 noted:

2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Chapoto together with Br Ephraem and the Nat. Com. George from Sipolilo secures the school in the Zambezi valley. It was a very strenuous trip; 4 days on the boat up and down the Zambezi, walking and very little food made us remind [remember] that we are not for pleasure to do such a trip. Chapoto is in the district of the old Jesuit father's Missions at the Zambezi, mentioned by Livingstone in his writings –.<sup>45</sup>

The Second World War had exposed the nationalistic rifts between the English and the German Jesuits. This resulted in the Archdiocese of Salisbury, created in 1955, being divided between the two groups of missionaries. The English Jesuits remained in Salisbury and to its south and east, while an enclave of German Jesuits was created to the west and north of Salisbury which eventually became the Sinoia Mission in 1959 with its own German superiors. The German Jesuits took over the whole undeveloped area of the Zambezi Valley and, as a result, the valley peoples were to a larger extent effectively Christianized by German missionaries in the post-Second World War period. Alongside the Jesuits, there were other missions who operated on the Zimbabwean side of the Mid-Zambezi, among them the American Methodists, Anglicans and Pentecostals. When the region was finally established as a separate Catholic ecclesiastical jurisdiction, independent of Salisbury on 22 February 1974, 20 of the 23 mission stations had been established in the post-World

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<sup>44</sup> Interview, Fr Georg Hipler, Harare, 23 March 2011; ZCBC: *Catholic Directory of Zimbabwe 2008 – 2010*, (Harare, 2008) p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> JAH: *Historia Domus* – Kutama Mission entry of 21 June 1953.

War Two years between 1949 and 1969.<sup>46</sup> Prior to 1945, therefore, the mid Zambezi valley was largely 'pagan' territory. Serious missionary outreach was the work of the late colonial era in this region. Informal channels of Christian expansion through migrations, resettlements and increased travel in search of jobs had created a crop of Christian converts who carried their faith to their rural homes from the towns. The absence of formal schools, at least until the 1940s when a school was established from the German Jesuit Mission of Kutama, meant that much of the thinking in the Zambezi valley was still predominantly premised on ancestral and extended family imperatives.

## **Rural and Urban Links**

The increased mobility of people between their rural homes and work places spread new ideas but at the same time also ensured the persistence of African traditional religion as its ideas were imported into the towns. The *msasa* tree incident shows that such ideas were not the preserve of rural settings only, but of the towns even to the twenty first century. In the 1940s there was no possibility of workers cutting links completely with their rural homes because the government in Southern Rhodesia did not give social security to Africans. There was no pension and even the accommodation was temporary as the Africans were not expected to stay permanently in the then so called 'European' areas. It was only social inconveniences in the domestic lives of Europeans that led to workers now being allowed to bring their wives to the towns. But, by and large, workers were required to return to their rural homes when they lost their jobs or fell seriously sick or when they retired and so the Zambezi valley people considered it important to maintain

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<sup>46</sup> This section has been constructed from primary archival documents from the Jesuit Archives at Garnet House, Harare, Zimbabwe. Box 205/1: Sinoia Historia Domus 1960-1963; Box 99/1, Lit. An. Chishawasha *Litterae Annuae* 1912; Box 135/2, Kutama.Kutama Mission Golden Jubilee.

links with their rural homes. The links maintained with the rural home ensured continued participation in some aspects of traditional religion. It also meant that alongside the new ideas that were imported, traditional rituals such as *kurova guva*, the bringing back of the dead as protector ancestors, family succession and the ritual transfer of family names continued. The people who practiced this traditional commensality were the same people who returned to their work places in the towns, guaranteeing a two-way flow of religious ideas.

For instance, the practice of the ritual transfer of the name of a family head among the Mid-Zambezi Korekore Shona subgroup served to keep alive the memory of an ancestor who, it was believed, might permit bad fortune if forgotten. Succession ensured that every family had a head responsible for its welfare. In their general form the rules of succession to family titles were simple. When a man died, each of his sons in turn was to succeed to his position as family head. But no one in the third generation succeeds to this position when the last of his sons died. The extended family then ceased to exist as an entity with a living head. The main exception to the general rule occurred if a man's sons were still minors at his death. In this case, one of his younger brothers would succeed to his position. If a man should succeed to his elder brother's position and then later succeed to his father's position, he had to transfer his elder brother's name, either to another brother or to one of his elder brother's sons, if one of them is an adult. This resulted from the logic of the situation whereby a man could not occupy both the positions of *mukoma* (elder brother) and of *baba* ('father') within the same family. The transfer of both names was accomplished ritually at the same succession ceremony.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Garbett, 'Prestige, Status, and Power', p. 313.

Therefore, migrant workers visited their rural homes, not only to remit their earnings but to attend family functions which often had a religious component. This had the effect of reinforcing the ideas and beliefs associated with traditional religion. Christian ideas picked up in the centres of economic activity, the mines, farms, missions and towns, found their way into the villages as much as traditional patterns of belief and thought found their way to the towns. But such diffuse Christian ideas did not sustain a palpable presence of Christianity in the mid Zambezi; it was the building of institutions that did. And the Catholics were the first to do so in the northernmost reaches of the mid Zambezi when centres were established along the Zambezi River.

According to Fr Georg Hipler SJ, the parish of St Raphael's Chitsungo, started with excursions to the Zambezi River in the Dande reserve. The idea was to reach the people of Chapoto. As noted earlier the Chapoto people were Nyungwe Chikunda. In September 1952 the Jesuit Father Kotzki and three Marist brothers went to Chapoto on an exploratory visit which led to the establishment of Chapoto School with the help of Fr Pirog SJ. This was the first foothold in the mission area that was later to fall under Chitsungo Mission. Safe drinking water was scarce and further explorations for a possible site for a mission ended with the decision to settle near the Nyamoto pool on the Hunyani River. In 1963, Fr Kotzki began work on a second school, St Cecilia's, but due to failing health, it was Fr Joaquim von Kerksenbrock (who had arrived at Chitsungo in May 1964) who completed the mission buildings



and named the whole complex St Raphael.<sup>48</sup> The interviewees who grew up in this area remembered these first missionaries fairly well. According to one of the first pupils at the school, Headman Staira Makuwatsine:

The mission was started by Fr Kotzki. I am not sure which was built first, the church or the school. The school was called St Cecilia. I was a big boy when I started going to school. I was 14 years old. That must have been around 1962-3. Fr Kotzki was succeeded by Fr Kerssenbrock. There were no other churches in this area at that time. There were no Europeans either. The only other European known in the area apart from the missionaries was a hunter called Job Fraser, nicknamed Kamuto by the locals. He was a heavy drinker. He died in this area and his grave is here across the [Hunyani] river.<sup>49</sup>

The mission was built on what used to be the homestead of the medium of the *mhondoro* Chitsungo. According to Expense Masiyambiri Gwaze:

In the 1950s we had powerful *masvikiro* – mediums. We had an old woman who lived on these mission premises, her name was Dzairo. She would insult the *mhondoro* for not heeding the calls for rain from the people and very often the *mhondoro* (spirit) would respond generously and make it rain. The last real *svikiro* was Maxwell Mabhande who died in 1983. After him we did not have any serious mediums. The ones that came after them were rather dubious.<sup>50</sup>

Asked how many mediums there were presently, Gwaze claimed there could be as many as fourteen and that the *mhondoro* of Musuma had chosen a host across the border in Mozambique, a man called Gavião.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time that new ground was being broken for Christian expansion, Christian churches consolidated themselves. The old area of the Catholic Zambezi Mission within Rhodesia was now divided into three dioceses: Salisbury, Bulawayo and Gweru, with two prefectures, Umtali (Mutare) (1953) and Wankie (Hwange)

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<sup>48</sup> Fr Georg Hipler, *The Diocese of Chinhoyi: The Contribution of the German Jesuits* (Harare, 2006), p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, Headman Staira Makuwatsine, St. Raphael's Chitsungo Mission, 11 October 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Headman Masiyambiri Gwaze, St Raphael's Chitsungo Mission, 11 October 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

(1953). Prior to the Anglo/German Jesuit split, all the Catholic missions of the middle Zambezi valley fell under the diocese of Salisbury. These were in the districts of Lomagundi, Mazoe, Mount Darwin, Murewa and Mutoko. With the establishment of official ecclesiastical structures indigenous religion remained a factor of the private sphere, perceived as 'native' culture and custom, whereas in the new public discourse on religion, Christianity began to dominate as the public definition of religion. Yet the evident persistence of traditional religion became the subject of intense academic interest leading, amongst other initiatives, to a conference on 'African Systems of Thought' held in Salisbury in December 1960.<sup>52</sup>

While the Catholics and other Christian churches were establishing themselves, a new variety of indigenised Christianity appeared in the mid-Zambezi, the Apostles of Johane Masowe. This was an indigenous variation of Christianity that illustrated how quickly Christianity had woven itself into the local thought systems, was adopted and then redeployed from an African perspective.

### **Johane Masowe**

In 1952 the African Initiated Church called *vaPostori VaJohane Masowe* (the Apostles of Johane Masowe), reached remote areas in the Zambezi valley. Johane Masowe was born as Shonhiwa in 1915, in Musaringa village in the Gandanzara area of Makoni Tribal Trust Land.<sup>53</sup> He came into contact with Christian ideas through the Methodist missionaries who operated in that area. In his youth Shonhiwa went to work in Salisbury and Norton where he was exposed to more new ideas and experiences. At some point he fell very ill and returned to his rural home where he

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<sup>52</sup> M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen (eds.), *African Systems of Thought: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Third International African Seminar in Salisbury, December 1960* (London, 1965).

<sup>53</sup> Kileff and Kileff, 'The Masowe Vapostori of Seki, p. 153.

‘died’ and awoke to a new identity. He then spent three days in the Marimba Mountains where he underwent a religious experience in which he was given a staff, white garments, a new name ‘Johane’ and a bible; by some mystical figure in a vision. And so his preaching began. In traditional spirituality, the colour white is associated with the spirit world. In the mid Zambezi, mediums wore black or white with white being favoured by Korekore mediums. White as a colour of the spirit realm was common knowledge in central Africa, embraced not only by the Korekore mediums but also by Mbona mediums in the Shire valley of Nyasaland (Malawi).<sup>54</sup> Those who died were draped in white cloth prior to burial to symbolise they were destined for the spirit world. The adoption of this colour therefore by a Christian group represents an intersection of religious ideas. Traditional tenets of belief were carried forward under the banner of Christianity.

Johane Masowe’s version of religion was innovative and independent of both mainstream Christianity and traditional ancestral religion. While it was a genuine local variation of Christianity, it was laced with political and economic resistance to colonial control. Johane taught his followers not to build churches but to worship in open spaces called *masowe* in the Shona language.<sup>55</sup> They were not to work for Europeans. They were to destroy government-issued certificates and reject witchcraft and sorcery. His preaching in the 1940s gathered a large following which in 1943 migrated to as far as Port Elizabeth in South Africa where they established a squatter settlement at Korsten and were called the ‘Korsten Basket makers’.<sup>56</sup> He travelled widely across the region and by the time of his death on 18 September 1973, his

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<sup>54</sup> Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> B.G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London, 1961) and M. W. Murphree, *Christianity and the Shona* (London, 1969).

<sup>56</sup> Kileff and Kileff, ‘The Masowe Vapostori of Seki’, p. 154.

followers had spread across the central and southern African region as far as the Congo.

The *VaPostori va Johane Masowe* represents a hybrid movement arising from the encounter of Christianity and African religion with a strong dose of the latter. It is a blend of the two, cast in the idiom of progressive religious innovation standing in contrast to African religion which remained largely conservative, yet not replicating mainstream Christianity and, indeed, challenging its assumptions. The *VaPostori* bear witness to the links with the African religion of the *vadzimu* and *mhondoro* which paradoxically they emphatically rejected. The long white costumes, Friday worship, preference for natural places of worship rather than Western-styled churches, use of the vernacular language and style of worship, as well as the underlying ethos, all bear striking similarities with the practise of *chiVanhu*. The *Vapostori* evangelical Christian slant and discipline such as not smoking or drinking, and castigation of ancestral spirits, make for a real conflicted novelty in religion.

The most enterprising groups in the Zambezi valley in the 1960s and 1970s tended to be members of this church, rather than the Catholics and Evangelicals. It was probably their membership of the Masowe Church which enabled them, as a small minority, to sustain attitudes which were so often at variance with those of the rest of the population. The acquisition of personal property and involvement in cash farming resulted in important changes to kinship norms. This church provided an alternative set of beliefs and values in terms of which the new patterns of their behaviour could be justified and enabled those who wished to, to isolate themselves to some extent from their kinsfolk, often militating against the common grain of

traditional beliefs.<sup>57</sup> This was largely because this new source of power was not predicated upon belonging to village royalty but on a new religious ethos that favoured self-determination and financial independence.

### **A new religious landscape**

By the 1960s, the Catholics, the *Vapostori* of Johane Masowe and the Evangelicals based at Karanda mission as well as other Christian groups introduced into the central regions of the mid Zambezi new religious perspectives. But these churches were operating in a region that was predominantly religiously traditionalist. The *mhondoro* mediums throughout the 1960s and 1970s commanded great respect in the general population. Interviewees often referred to this pre-independence period as one in which *mhondoro* were authentic. There was a tendency to see degeneration as starting in the early years of independence in Zimbabwe and independent Mozambique was overshadowed by the disruption of post-independence civil war. Records kept at the National Archives of Zimbabwe attest to active *mhondoro* mediums operating in the mid Zambezi with their territorial divisions still considered intact.

To the west of Guruve were *mhondoro* Chimombe and Mubaiwa. In 1982 the medium of both these *mhondoro* was William Mahodzekwa who described himself as ‘the messenger of Chimombe who is the Guardian spirit of Mubaiwa’ to Dawson

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<sup>57</sup> Garbett, ‘Prestige, Status and Power’, p. 321)

Munjeri who interviewed him.<sup>58</sup> According to Chief Noah Chundu, in a separate interview, the Chundu people of the Mukwechi region of the Zambezi valley considered Chimombe as their chief ancestral spirit, one of the original group of sibling brothers and sisters who settled in the area. Chimombe was portrayed as a valiant warrior who fell under the spell of a Korekore girl called Semwa who then beheaded him on behalf of her people. This was a set-up by the Korekore. The death of Chimombe was considered miraculous. Upon being beheaded by Semwa, the myth goes, his blood kept flowing from his hut like a rivulet into the Chiwore River and his head, which was also now flowing in his blood, continued to speak to his children.<sup>59</sup> The Korekore had to make reparations for their purported crime of murder.

According to Chief Chundu:

Now Mubayiwa's spirit is the one which communicates all Chimombe's messages. Every year Mubayiwa demands a wife and some ivory from these people [Korekore]. So he acts as a medium. . . . they are still paying the fine even today. . . but with the coming of the English customs, they no more pay their fine in the form of people. They now bring ivory, but it's scarce these days. Sometimes they bring bundles of tobacco. We then hand it over to the *dunzvi* who performs the ritual of acceptance to Chimombe. So it continues yearly.<sup>60</sup>

During the time of the Ndebele raids, Chimombe's medium had ordered people not to use salt. Those who did were killed. Chimombe's spirit, like other spirits in the region, always possessed strangers, *vatorwa*, not descendents.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> NAZ: AOH/95, Interview on 25 June 1983 at Manyenyedzi in Chundu with Mr William Mahodzekwa the Messenger of Chimombe who is the Guardian spirit of Mubaiwa, by Mr Dawson Munjeri.

<sup>59</sup> NAZ: AOH/77, Interview on 25 June 1982 with Chief Noah Chundu in Mukwichi Communal Land-Hurungwe, by Dawson Munjeri, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

The myth of Chimombe as told by Munjeri's interviewees displays striking similarities with that of Mbona in southern Nyasaland.<sup>62</sup> Both have the focal character of the cult murdered in cold blood. Blood flows profusely. A river forms or is part of the mythical landscape. A cult develops around the person of the dead hero and mediums emerge. Commemorative rituals, usually annual, are introduced. A 'theology' develops around the cult figure and a shrine is built or reconstituted. In the case of Mbona it was in the Shire valley whereas, for Chimombe it was in the Zambezi valley. Mana (the Mana Pools), the place of Chimombe's grave was considered sacred as are burial places of chiefs. According to Chief Chundu, Chimombe's grave used to be heavily guarded.<sup>63</sup> There is no dating given for Chimombe's death but it would have been after the settlement of the Korekore people whom he found in the area, possibly in the seventeenth century.

The mediums of the mid Zambezi from Urungwe (Hurungwe) to the west through Sipolilo (Chipuriro), Mazoe (Mazowe), Darwin and the districts toward Salisbury (Harare) regard Mutota as the highest spirit ancestor, *mudzimu mukuru*, whose medium sees to it that Chimombe is ritually honoured, on behalf of all the Korekore of the region. Other versions place Mutota and Chingowo as founder ancestors called *makombwe* (plural), *gombwe* (singular), with Mutota to the east and his friend Chingowo to the west. Chimombe would, therefore, have been junior to Mutota and must have lived after the founding of the Mwene Mutapa state by Mutota.<sup>64</sup> This places Chimombe's origins around the same time as Mbona. So the parallels in the myths associated with these two suggest possible religious linkages across the

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<sup>62</sup> Schoffeleers, J. Matthew, *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi c. A.D. 1600* (Wisconsin, 1992), p.4.

<sup>63</sup> NAZ: AOH/77, Interview on 25 June 1982 with Chief Noah Chundu in Mukwichi Communal Land-Hurungwe, by Dawson Munjeri, p. 28.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Zambezi region. Chimombe has also been called Chikan'gombe, which could be a variation of the name of the same figure. Schoffeleers has hinted at these possibilities when he spoke about 'cult affinities' stretching across the region from 'the northern tip of Malawi, through Mozambique, well into Rhodesian territory'<sup>65</sup> and he has located the origins of Mbona around the time of the emergence of the Lundu state established by Zimba warriors stretching from eastern Tete to the Indian Ocean coast. The Zimba army reportedly destroyed an important rain shrine in the Shire region of what became Nyasaland (Malawi) which was reconstituted after the defeat of the Lundu in 1622. But the reconstituted Shrine, instead of being dedicated to Chiuta the High God and his python manifestation like the other rain shrines in the area, was now dedicated to a human martyr, Mbona.<sup>66</sup> So the genesis of the Mbona martyr cult would have been around 1600 AD according to Schoffeleers' reckoning.

More intriguing is the fact that Chimombe was also considered not to have been a human being, but a piece of cross shaped metal planted by the Portuguese.<sup>67</sup> This seals the early seventeenth century origins of Chimombe and raises new questions which can only be the subject of other studies. It is not within the scope of this study to examine in detail the origins, functions and internal organisations of the 'cults' found in the mid Zambezi. What is significant is that they all belonged to the same ancestral religion whose religious officials were the spirit mediums *masvikiro* of the *mhondoro*. There were other *mhondoro* ancestral spirits mentioned in interviews and records. The point of their mention in this chapter is to demonstrate their ongoing activities at least up to the end of this study in 1970 where they now faced increasing Christian presence. And according to the interviews, they remained functional

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<sup>65</sup> Schoffeleers, *Guardians of the Land*, p.19.

<sup>66</sup> Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> NAZ: AOH/77, Interview on 25 June 1982 with Chief Noah Chundu in Mukwichi Communal Land-Hurungwe, by Dawson Munjeri, p. 24.



beyond this date as a common feature in the mid Zambezi religious landscape, alongside the Christian churches. Kaschula's report of November 1967 noted that various religious groups had established themselves in Headman Chimusimbe's area in Chief Mujinga's area. They included the 'Chitawa (that is Jehova's witnesses); Amapostori; some Roman Catholics; Ma-Zion (Zion Apostolic Church); the majority are followers of the Evangelical Mission, whose headquarters are situated at Kapfundi'.<sup>68</sup>

There were also schools built by various Christian and non-Christian bodies such as Gwiwa and Tengwe, as well as Kavaya Evangelical Mission and Chineri Salvation Army schools.<sup>69</sup> It was not just missions that were opening schools, locals also took initiatives. According to a 1965 report, Headman Chindenga in Chief Mutoko's area initiated the construction of a school and clinic with his people, each set of parents contributing £1. They raised £149 and the government provided a grant of £1500. At the clinic they charged 2/6d and 7/6d with the non-contributors paying the higher rate.<sup>70</sup> The school-cum-clinic board comprised ten people including the headman himself. Of the ten, seven of the names were Christian – beneficiaries of the school system provided by the Methodist Nyadiri mission established in the district.<sup>71</sup> This proliferation of schools and churches in the 1960s formed a trajectory defining the mid Zambezi landscape which led to people like Expense Masiyambiri Gwaze remarking during an interview that:

There are far too many churches operating in our area. Apart from the big ones like the Catholics, the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Methodists, we have also the Zaoga, Mwazha, Mutendi and many others. All together there are 42 Churches registered with the councillor in this area alone. The popular

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<sup>68</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/9, p. 54 Kaschula Report, November 1967.

<sup>69</sup> NAZ: S2929/2/9, p. 54 Kaschula Report, November 1967.

<sup>70</sup> NAZ: S2929/3/7, p. 24.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

ones are Roma, Mapostori and Jehova's Witnesses which were there in the 1970s. Most of the churches came after independence, between 1980 and 2000.<sup>72</sup>

Seven decades of Christian evangelisation under the umbrella of colonial rule had: produced a crop of Christianised and educated Africans; brought exposure to a wider world; more locals travelled more widely across more frontiers in search of economic opportunities; public infrastructure had expanded; there was a greater interaction between rural and town domains; and there was a greater homogenisation of social existence with similar choices of food, clothing, use of money, ideas and habits. This state of affairs was a result of the colonial experience. Inevitably, religious development was to depend on this socio-economic environment. African traditional religion thrived more in the mid Zambezi because this environment was less pronounced, but the strains on ritual practices were to begin to show when the wars of liberation caused disruptions.

In 1982, when Dawson Munjeri asked William Mahodzekwa, the medium of Mubaiwa and Chimombe, what the people were doing for their *mhondoro*, he replied that, '[t]he[y] brew beer for them, beer for Dakara and the beer for Mbudzirume and they also brew beer for Mubaiwa, called *chokwa*. But these recent years, they have not been doing it, the coming of the war [war of independence] made people stop doing it, you now say the ancestral spirits should be below you, why?'<sup>73</sup> William Mahodzekwa's testimony was limited by his personality – which was given to complaining. Throughout the interview his responses, while offering useful insights, were premised on a deep-seated resentment of the way things were. He complained about people being moved from their original areas, he complained about the new

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<sup>72</sup> Interview, Headman Expense Masiyambiri Gwaze, St Raphael's Mission Chitsungo, 11 October 2014.

<sup>73</sup> NAZ: AOH/95, Interview 25 June 1983 William Mahodzekwa, p. 19.

African-led government, he complained about people not keeping their traditions and so on. This contrasted with Chief Chundu who claimed that the 1977-80 war was won because of the help of *mhondoro* Chimombe.<sup>74</sup> In his chieftaincy at the time of the interview, beer was being brewed for the thanksgiving ceremony scheduled for the following Saturday. In the past the Chimombe's ritual hut called *zumba* or *dendemaro* (Shona) had to be built or renovated annually for the ceremony. Chief Chundu explained;

We brew the beer in winter which we offer to him. We then brew another in November after the first rains offering it to him and his brothers. We brew the beer near the river. Each one of them will have a pot of beer for him. It includes Chimombe himself, his brothers, Mbavara, Takarirara, Ndutire and the sisters Tisa and Chiomberi. This also includes all those who are in line of the chiefship, we clap hands in worshipping them . . . . We do this to get rains so that we can have good harvests.<sup>75</sup>

The medium William Mahodzekwa and Chief Chundu were in the western fringes of the Zambezi valley, but their scheduling of the religious festivals in winter and the beginning of summer coincided with the practice higher up the Zambezi escarpment, in Chief Chiweshe's area near Mt Darwin. This illustrates a common annual calendar of traditional religious events across the mid Zambezi and possibly in the wider region. The reconstruction of this calendar below is based on the interviews carried out in the areas of Chiefs Chitsungo and Chiweshe by the author of this study. This calendar and the current practices illustrate further the innovations, continuities and disjuncture in certain dimensions of ancestral traditional religion. As noted in the general introduction to this study, unlike Christianity and other scripture-based religions, *Chiwanthu* or African traditional religion in the mid Zambezi was more amorphous, effervescent and culturally embedded, making it difficult to separate

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<sup>74</sup> NAZ: AOH/77, Interview on 25 June 1982 with Chief Noah Chundu in Mukwichi Communal Land-Hurungwe, by Dawson Munjeri, p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 37-38.

what was considered religious and non-religious or secular. This calendar therefore was as much religious as it was secular. The main public religious ceremonies consisted of between three and five annual events rooted in the agricultural seasons depending on where one lived in the mid Zambezi. There was no complete uniformity on dates or in the performance of the ceremonies as early or late rains could alter the times when public annual religious functions were held.

### **Ritual Calendar in African traditional religion**

The weekly *Chisi* was a day of rest which varied but usually fell on a Thursday or Friday. As with the colour white and the use of the vernacular as the official language, the African Initiated Churches of Johane Masowe and Johane Marange and other *vapostori* groups adopted the traditional *chisi* days for their days of formal worship to distinguish themselves from the Sunday of missionary Christianity. Johane Masowe claimed that the colour white was revealed to him in a vision as noted earlier.<sup>76</sup>

The traditional religious cycle in the mid Zambezi had five important occurrences based on the dominant economic activity of seasonal agriculture. The months of the year were named according to some feature of that period and the most common preoccupations of that month<sup>77</sup> and religious functions were grouped around the corresponding months.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Kileff and Kileff, 'The Masowe Vapostori of Seki', p. 153.

<sup>77</sup> The months were listed as follows: *Ndira* – January; *Kukadzi* – February; *Kurume* – March; *Kubvumbi* – April; *Chivabvu* – May; *Chikumi* – June; *Chikunguru* – July; *Nyamavhuvhu* – August; *Gunyana* – September; *Gumiguru* – October; *Mbudzi* – November; *Zvita* – December.

<sup>78</sup> Constructed from the group interviews at St Albert's on 14 October 2014.

In the mid Zambezi, according to the informants at St Albert's, there were five yearly religious occurrences in the calendar which were still practiced at the time of the interviews. The *hwahwa hwehuruva* – literally 'the beer of dust' signified the beginning of the religious calendar in August, a month characterised by winds and dust before the onset of the rains. This ceremony, also called *rukoto* in other areas, was a rain-making ceremony where adequate rains were requested for a good cropping season. This was generally the biggest and most important ceremony held just before the rains and was marked by the 'blessing' of seed for the fields. The ceremony began at dawn and was held at the *rushanga* – a village shrine consisting of a tree fenced with wood or a beehive shaped hut constructed for the occasion. The Korekore of the valley called it the *dendemaro*. Beer drinking, dancing and overnight vigils took place here, which may obscure the seriousness of the ceremony to the eyes of an outsider. The ceremony could also be performed in September or October at the convenience of the respective regions and their mediums. After the rain ceremonies the month of November, *Mbudzi*, meaning 'goat', was left clear of rituals of any kind as the spirits were believed to be resting.

In December the *Gombe* ceremony was held. In both Nyungwe and Shona the word *gombe* is associated with water<sup>79</sup> meaning seashore or river bank. The *Gombe* ceremony was to thank Musikavanhu – God and *vadzimu* – ancestors for rains received. The ritual was performed at the *dendemaro*, the specially made ritual hut. The day selected for the ritual was deemed a *chisi*, a sacred day, not for work in the fields. The third annual ritual was the *Kutenda* – to thank. *Kutenda* took place on any selected day in January, February or March. Here the *masabhuku* – headmen pass word around that people should start to collect *chimera*, grain for the ceremony. In

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<sup>79</sup> Martins, *Elementos da Lingua Nyungwe*, p. 187.

Chief Nembire's area it was done on Fridays – *Chishanu*, and the *mhondoro* there was Nyabapa. But at St Albert's, in Chief Chiweshe's area the *mhondoro* was Chinengebere and the *chisi* was Sunday. Nyabapa used to keep *chisi* on Saturday but through Christian influence decided to choose Sunday to combine it with the Sunday of Christians. Thus the area and the whole of Dotito and other areas in the region began to keep Sunday as their *chisi*. But during the war (of independence) in the 1970s many resorted to keeping Fridays as *chisi*.<sup>80</sup>

The final ceremony of the cycle was the *matatenda* – many thanks, also called *matendo*. *Matatenda* took place in May, June or July. *Chibage chapurwa chinoitwa mudememudeme choendeswa kumhondoro kacup kacup like chegumi chemaKristu. Ndicho chibage chokudya paungana vanhu*, (Cups of maize grain are taken to the medium like the tithes of Christians). This grain was to be used to prepare food for the people gathered for the ceremony. After the *matatenda* the cycle begins again. From this perspective it could be said that the religious cycle began in the month of August – *Nyamavhuvhu* and ended in July – *Chikunguru*. In earlier times the mid Zambezi people had thirteen months which were realigned to twelve during the colonial period. The thirteenth month was very short and was called *Bandwe*.<sup>81</sup>

In all these ceremonies the chief mobilised the people while the *mhondoro* directed the proceedings after announcing the ceremony – *bira*. The clothes for officiating at public ceremonies by *mhondoro* were roughly the same across the whole Zambezi valley region, black, white and blue garments and shawls. Among the Zezuru a completely black shawl was worn by the important *mhondoro* whereas among the Korekore the more important *mhondoro* favoured white. Often the half black and

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<sup>80</sup> Interviews, St Albert's Mission Centenary group interview, 14 October 2014.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

half white or blue and white shawls and garments were worn by lesser *mhondoro*. Shoes were not worn but hats trimmed with ostrich feathers or black cords were.

These observances and public symbolisms fostered a common worldview to which society was subject, creating a sense of community, but also as Emile Durkheim's functionalist view of religion would say; provided, social cohesion, control and a sense of meaning and purpose to life.<sup>82</sup>

Whereas traditional religion in the Zambezi Valley, as elsewhere, provided a common philosophy of life a shared consciousness of what constituted correct behaviour for all, and served the cohesive, control and purposeful living functions of religion, Christianity began to compete for this space by creating new social solidarities and corporate identities. The *Ruwadzano* women's groups and guilds attest to this, as well as the membership to the Christian church itself. However membership to these groups was based more on personal choice and individual conversion rather than socialisation as was the case with *Chivanhu*. The contestation of religious space in terms of its social function introduced amongst many Christian believers a conflict of allegiances between meeting traditional communal obligations and the exclusive Christian demands on converts.

The colonial economy which was not bound by the seasons of the year, but on which more and more people relied for a livelihood, forced changes in both the timing, attendance and contributions towards these traditional functions. The public holidays declared by colonial government took precedence as far as the timing of the

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<sup>82</sup> John J. Macionis and Ken Plummer, *Sociology: A global Introduction*, (London, 1998), p. 505.

ceremonies was concerned. It was only those dependent on the natural cycle of seasons who could afford to attend in the months prescribed. A recent survey in the Herald newspaper to measure the popularity of abstention from any ceremonial in November showed that the majority of respondents who lived in the cities of Zimbabwe today preferred to keep the traditional November ban.<sup>83</sup> Christians, however, condemned the November ban as irrelevant often deliberately choosing to hold weddings in that month to prove their point.

### **Death, marriage and traditional religious regalia**

Alongside the public ceremonies were the less conspicuous family-centred ceremonies related to the common occurrences of death, marriage and dealing with daily fortune and misfortune.<sup>84</sup> The death ceremonies usually had five stages which, when followed, ensured the successful conclusion of the loss, the happy departure of the deceased and averted ancestral displeasure.<sup>85</sup> From the interviews conducted in the mid Zambezi, five major ceremonies were identified that successfully concluded the bereavement process following the death of a family member. These related to a full grown adult. There was variation when it came to minors and children. The first ceremony was *Kuviga* or *kutaya* meaning to bury the deceased. Burial was conducted as soon as possible when key people had arrived. This was followed by the second set of rituals called *Hwahwa hwemasadza* meaning literally, the beer of meals. This ceremony was performed seven days after burial to establish that all was done properly as per tradition. And then within 40 days of the burial when the body was believed to have burst *mutumbi waputika* and worms, *honye*, were coming out, the ceremony called *Hwahwa hwehonye* (literally beer of worms) and *Gata* (a

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<sup>83</sup> *The Herald*, Zimbabwe, Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Constructed from the Group discussions held at St Albert's mission in Centenary on 14 October 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



traditional autopsy by divination to establish what killed the deceased) were held. The fourth and usually more important ceremony was called *Guva*, *kurova guva* or *magadziro* which also had its *Gata*, divination, to establish that everything was done properly. This was usually done about a year after the burial. And finally *Kuyeuka mufi*, remembering the deceased was done as regularly as the family wished, usually around the time of the death anniversary.

At burial, the utensil that is placed on top of the grave symbolised the state of the rituals. Before the *Kurova guva* ceremony the utensil is placed upside down, *kukwidibirwa*; when *kurova guva* was not finished, it was laid on its side; when *guva* was finished it was placed top side up, signifying that all was well. If *guva* was not done properly, bad fortune might follow. A similar protocol existed for marriage, at least theoretically, and was followed to a degree.<sup>86</sup> The weight of tradition meant that most Africans, including those that had converted, were still obliged to fulfil these requirements in recent times, and more so in the 1970s.

## Spirit possession rituals

That after the 1970s and 1980s these practices continued to be widespread attests to the persistence of the ancestral religious idiom, including the more spectacular *mashave* (Shona) or *malombo* (Nyungwe) which were held in the evenings, often when the moon was full. As late as 1970 at Boroma Mission, such ceremonies were

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<sup>86</sup> Group reconstruction of the marriage process: Interviews, St Albert's Mission Centenary group interview, 14 October 2014.

- 1) *Kupfimba*- dating
- 2) *Chivimbiso nokuenda kunavaTete*- engagement and meeting with aunt of the girl
- 3) *Kudaidzwa natete vomukadzi kuzobvunza kuti mukwasha arikuda kuroora rini*- setting the date for the marriage.
- 4) *Kuombera pa huva* - Groom informs own people who then make a domestic ancestral offering.
- 5) *Kuroora*, - the marriage ceremony  
*Kunotora muroora* – fetching the bride

common.<sup>87</sup> As elsewhere in central Africa, the mid Zambezi *malombo* usually stemmed from an illness which was interpreted by the *Nyabezi* (healer) as a sign that a spirit wanted to possess the sick person. The spirit could be that of a lion, hyena, snake, monkey or baboon, animals believed to be the abodes of a human ancestral spirit who chose to dwell in them after death, having taken the requisite medicines. The moment of possession was described as *kugwa malombo* – (Nyungwe), literally meaning ‘falling *malombo*’; the patient literally fell to the ground upon possession.<sup>88</sup> The patient would then be covered with a black or white cloth and helped to sit up by the assistants of the *nyabezi*.

The author observed several *malombo* ceremonies at Boroma. Sometimes several patients were made to sit in a row. Spectators would usually gather around and drummers and singers would begin to sing and drum. The tempo of the drums shifted according to the ‘nearness’ of the spirit to taking possession of the patient. When possession approached, the patient began first to sway sideways, slowly at first and as the tempo of the drums increased, more violently sideways and back and forth until finally, defying all weakness of body, the patient would spring up to howl like the possessing animal and make for the outskirts of the village. The healing team followed, sometimes struggling to keep pace with the possessed. The rest of the spectators were ordered to remain behind. The possessing spirit then spoke in the voice of the ancestor, giving counsel, instruction or warning as the case might be. In some cases, patients did not respond to the rhythm and were not possessed and the ceremony was abandoned in an anti-climax. A new diagnosis would be awaited.<sup>89</sup> Ancestor spirit possession by the agency of singing and drumming with the

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with João Jordão, Tete, 12 June 2011.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Interviews with Adelino Protasio Vicente and group of his neighbours at Boroma, 6 June 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Interview, João Jordão, Tete, 12 June 2011.

facilitation of a *n'anga* or *nyabezi* was common in the whole of the Zambezi valley from the Zimbabwean plateau to Tete and beyond into Malawi.<sup>90</sup> Continuities of African traditional practices were also found in the towns where new forms of organising African traditional religion emerged.

### **New forms of organising**

In the early 1950s Mr M. C. Chakari, a founder member of the African N'ganga Association (ANA) gathered a group of practicing *n'angas* F. Gombera, G. Kaunda, K.G. Ntopa and P. Mhlanga and petitioned the Southern Rhodesian government seeking recognition as a doctors' association, claiming that their traditional medicines could cure diseases just as well as European ones.<sup>91</sup> The petition was dismissed on the grounds that their claim could not be proved. In 1955, Dr Michael Gelfand, who while researching African medicine, convened a meeting at Harare Hospital for a week. He was convinced of the effectiveness of the herbal cures. His influence led to the recognition of the association and the compilation of a local encyclopaedia of African medicines. Mozambique's equivalent association, AMETRAMO, only came into existence nearly forty years later in 1992., Dona Banũ Idrisse Abdul served as founding president until 2000.<sup>92</sup> Infighting led to the overthrow of Dona Banũ who then formed and became president of a new organization, the Association of Herbalists of Mozambique (AERMO) in 2001.<sup>93</sup> The formation of organisations that rationalised tenets of traditional religion such as healing, shows adaptations to the demands of survival in a modernising society.

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<sup>90</sup> Harry G. West, 'Working the Borders to Beneficial Effect: The Not-So-Indigenous Knowledge of Not-So-Traditional Healers in Northern Mozambique', in T.J. Luedke and H.G. West, *Borders and Healers Brokering Therapeutic Resources in Southeast Africa* (Bloomington, 2006) p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> *Moto Magazine*, 18 May 1973 in Chavhunduka p. 81.

<sup>92</sup> Tracy J. Luedke, 'Presidents, Bishops, and Mothers: The Construction of Authority in Mozambican Healing' in Luedke and West, *Borders and Healers, Brokering Therapeutic Resources in Southeast Africa* (Bloomington, 2006). p. 55.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

The adoption of recordkeeping, subscription payments, making of constitutions and establishing powers of censure by the executive of the ANA in Southern Rhodesia was an adaptation to the demands of modernity. ANA even established a journal called 'Mukafrika' whose literal meaning of 'Wake up, Africa!' clearly expressed the pervasive enlightened ethos of the era of the 1960s. Many had woken up to the power of organizing as an instrument of achieving goals. However, it was distinctly different in Mozambique where change in this direction was much slower.

So, when sociologist G.L. Chavunduka in 1978 profiled a sample of 145 urban-based African traditional healers (*n'anga*) in Rhodesia, he was also providing insight into the degree to which Christianity and the new socio economic changes had impacted on traditional religion. Of the 145 traditional healers, some 113 of them had joined the True African *n'angas* Herbalists Association (TANHA), 7 belonged to the Central African Chiremba Association (CACA) and 6 to the African Chiremba Council (ACC) while 19 had no affiliation.<sup>94</sup> All of them had between one to eight years of formal schooling, six having had more than eight years of formal education. Eighty-one professed not to belong to any church, which implied they subscribed to *Chivanhu* by virtue of their trade. Some 64 claimed to be members of 8 different Christian churches, of which 38 were Methodist, Catholic or Anglican. None belonged to the African Initiated Churches. The *n'anga* served the urban population. The rural to urban migrations carried practices and beliefs to urban centres where they continued to flourish because they met needs related to health, rites of passage and traditional marriage customs. The town traditional healers met these needs to

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<sup>94</sup> Chavunduka, *Traditional Healers*, p. 85.

varying degrees and often charged money for their services. Chavunduka's overall conclusion was that 'Membership of a church does not prevent an individual from participating in traditional religion'.<sup>95</sup> This conclusion supports the contention that there were Africans who converted to Christianity for instrumental reasons while still continuing with their traditional religious practices. But this did not mean that the converts made no contribution to the Christian faith. African Christians advanced the Christian ethos through their social influence.

For instance David Simmons asked an informant, Lynde, about the apparent antipathy between the government of Zimbabwe and the *n'anga* in recent times. The answer he got from Lynde was instructive,

I think it's very difficult to say . . . . A lot of it has to do with the fact that most of the top people in the government were Catholic educated. They're the product of mission schools. They were taught that traditional healing was witchcraft and to undervalue it. But I still don't think that explains it enough. In this day, they should be aware of it. You know there is more to things than just Western practices. They should have a much more open mind to their own tradition and culture. So I can't say that that's the whole answer, but it's obviously part of the answer.<sup>96</sup>

And, in 2000, a report on religious freedom in Zimbabwe noted that 'a law that reportedly criminalizes both purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions'.<sup>97</sup> This law, the Witchcraft Suppression Act, was originally passed in 1898 and survived through colonial and post-colonial times. The continued maintenance of such laws may demonstrate Christian influence, but also the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>96</sup> David Simmons, 'Of Markets and Medicine: The Changing Significance of Zimbabwean Muti in the Age of Intensified Globalisation', in T.J. Luedke and H.G. West (eds.), *Borders and Healers, Brokering Therapeutic Resources in Southeast Africa*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis, 2006) p. 74.

<sup>97</sup> US State Department, 'Zimbabwe, Religious Freedom Report,' 2000.

continued, pervasive hold of traditional explanations of evil and misfortune in terms of witchcraft in wider society.

Informants of the present study had mixed thoughts about the fate of traditional ancestral religion. Often their observations were simplified and lacked nuance and disaggregation, failing to distinguish between belief and practice. They tended to see things in the easier black and white terms. A catechist at St Raphael's Catholic Mission at Chitsungu in the Dande claimed *Zvechivanhu izvi zvirikuenda zvichipera* - ancestral religious practices are progressively getting finished.<sup>98</sup> Being a church worker, and fairly young man, this catechist would have been more inclined to see the triumph of Christianity over traditional beliefs. An older catechist with years of working at the same mission, interviewed separately, spoke of the practices of the 1960s and 1970s when he was a younger man as if they were current. Asked when the changes began, he, like other interviewees, pointed to the 1980s as the time of new things, when new churches began to flood the area.<sup>99</sup>

The war of liberation that began with sporadic acts of violence in 1964 and again in 1966 in Sinoia (Chinhoyi) intensified in the 1970s particularly in 1976 where it spread around the country. It had rendered the mid Zambezi too dangerous for missionaries to reach. Missionary outreach programmes had to be stopped and some nascent missions were closed. But after the war, when the danger had subsided, missions were reopened. New Christian groups seized the opportunity to move into the mid Zambezi *en masse*. Another informer pointed out that 'In the past *Chivanhu changa chakakwirira* (traditional religion was on the ascendancy) and *chiKristu chakadzikira* (Christianity was on the low side) but now it seems *chiKristu*

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Stephen Sita at St Cecilia Chitsungu Mission on 9 October 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Eric Jemera Mhazi at St Cecilia Chitsungu Mission on 9 October 2014.

*chirikukwirira* (Christianity is on the ascendency) and *chivanhu chirikudzikira* (traditional religion is declining).<sup>100</sup> He did not consider the fact that in that region ATR was the longer established ‘religion’ and Christianity was introduced later. These responses were in line with what the scholars named at the beginning of this study had believed half a century earlier. If the question regarding the state of traditional religion vis-à-vis Christianity were asked in 1970, the answers may have been quite different. The intervening three and a half decades of African nationalist rule had presided over a different trajectory of religious change in the region.

Asked why people no longer practiced their traditional beliefs as much as they used to, Chief Chitsungo replied:

Education – *ndiyo irikuita kuti Chitendero chive pamusoro Chivanhu chive pasi* – is what is making the Christian faith on top and traditional religion down. *Masvikiro arikuenda achiita mashoma* – mediums are becoming fewer. And *aripo acho ave matsotsi, avekuda zvemari* – the current ones have become crooks, they are after money. *Mhondoro chaiyo inopira pachena* – A true medium makes ritual offerings for free. *Dzimwe dzinozviti mhondoro dzavekutengesa zvikwambo* – some self-styled mediums are now selling ‘goblins’, what kind of *mhondoro* is that? Mhondoros should not dabble in witchcraft, but those of these days threaten people with witchcraft.<sup>101</sup>

While this statement was meant to emphasise the point that things were no longer as they were, the implication was that traditional religion had lost its earlier integrity; the same statement could equally point to the continuance of traditional religion, albeit in need of purification. The same need to return to a purer traditional religion is reflected in sentiments such as those expressed by some interviewees at St Albert’s Mission in the Centenary district.

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<sup>100</sup> Sabhuku Mandombe and Spokesman of the Headmen, Expense Masiyambiri Gwaze, 10 October 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Chief Chitsungo, Richman Madyirapanze, 35, (succeeded father who died in September 2012), Mutupo: Moyo Ndizvo

Eric Musere, echoing a common sentiment, claimed ‘*Asi maitirwo azvo arikuenda achiita mashoma, zvadzikira. Mitemo yacho haichachengetwa* (the performances of the rituals are becoming less and less, it has gone down. The rules are no longer being kept). You see young women with babies at their breast preparing the beer for the ancestors when it should be women beyond child-bearing age.’<sup>102</sup> This comment attracted a counter-comment from a woman informant in the group who interjected: ‘No one is following the rules, *vekunamata varikutadza, vemasvikiro varikutadza*, those who pray [Christians] are failing, those who follow [*mhondoro*] mediums are failing’.<sup>103</sup> It would appear that the interjection was intended to show that failure was as much amongst Christians as it was amongst followers of traditional religion. These interviewees did not distinguish between the relaxation of rules, adaptations and human oversights from the actual survival of the traditional religious system itself. The paradox was that during the week of this session of interviews, collections of grain were underway for the ancestral rain-asking ceremony in the St Albert’s area under Chief Chiweshe.

Other informers had a different perspective, with one saying:

*Zvechivanhu izvi hazvidzime izvi. Chivanhu practices will not go away. Zvose zvinenguva yazvo – everything has its time. It is up to Musikavanhu (God) to see what to do, things change; even Christianity the way it is will be finished. Some things will die by themselves but tsika (culture) does not die dzinongovandudzwa (it is changed).*<sup>104</sup>

This informer perceived traditional religion as a ‘culture’, a notion that is widely associated with *Chivanhu*. Another informant advised that the place of the interview was an island of Christianity and did not represent a true picture of religion in the whole region:

<sup>102</sup> Group interview, Mr Eric Musere, bhuku rekwaJogo, at St Albert’s mission on 14 October 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Group interview, Mrs Netsai Antonio, St Albert’s Mission on 14 October 2014.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Mr Raymond Mupanenyama, St Albert’s Mission, 14 October 2014.



There are places in Zimbabwe that were Europeanised more than others such as the Midlands where I grew up. In such places traditional religious practices became less and less while Christianity took root. *Chivanhu* (ancestral religion), flourished in the outskirts such as here at [in the region of] St Albert's. St Albert's Mission is an island, but just outside the mission traditional religious practices are strong.<sup>105</sup>

'Strong' was ambiguous. It could have meant that the right protocols were being adhered to in the practice of the old religion or that such practices were much more widely practiced than at the mission where these interviews were carried out. Notwithstanding the differences of viewpoints in the sentiments expressed by the informants above, collectively they underlined the persistence of ancestral religion, even though the frequency, regularity and mode of its related practices had changed.

The *msasa* tree episode cited above illustrates the persistence of beliefs associated with traditional religion in an urban setting. While in the mid Zambezi there was a symbiotic relationship between traditional religion and rural 'commensality', the survival of these beliefs in a twenty-first century capital city with all the trappings of modernity, cosmopolitanism and urban individualism, challenges the confinement of ancestral religion to convivial rural settings and suggests not only resilience but its adaptability, and indeed a collapsing of the rural-urban dichotomy as far as the diffusion of religion was concerned. Yet there is no doubt that the colonial economy centred in the towns was to a greater extent responsible for the emergence of the rural versus urban divide and the marginalisation of the former, including its historic past. The marginalisation of the mid Zambezi mitigated the advance of Christianity. In both Rhodesia and Mozambique, underdevelopment and remoteness sustained the conditions for older forms of traditional religion to flourish. There was a difference of context between Salisbury city and Chitsungu for instance, and the Mazoe commercial farming area and Chief N'kota's remote area. These different settings

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<sup>105</sup> Interview, Mr Martin Poshai, St Albert's Mission, 14 October 2014.

could justify the use of the simplified terms ‘urban and rural’. David Maxwell has aptly warned against the prevalent dichotomies and trichotomies of rural and urban; town and country; pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, saying such constructs can obscure the reality, because people crossed these boundaries with considerable frequency.<sup>106</sup> Even the dichotomies of collaboration and resistance, traditional and modern, should be revised. Rather, the connections between the rural and urban and the ‘imbrications’ in politics and religion explain the changes on the ground better.

On the whole, it appears that despite the exposure to assertive evangelisation by Christian agents, most mid Zambezi Africans continued to hold onto beliefs in ancestral religion and practiced it alongside Christianity at least until 1970. The Christianity practiced was laced with an African religious idiom that had never died out. The remoteness and late penetration of formal structures of state and missions perpetuated this situation. For instance, in 1900 there were only five Catholic missions, at Tete town, Boroma, Zumbo, Salisbury and Chishawasha. In 1960, the number had increased to 14, but of these, only Marymount Mission (1949) and Mukumbura (1960) were established in the heartlands of the mid Zambezi with the other missions clustering nearer Salisbury and Tete town. This is not to say that Christianity was tied to the mission station itself – individuals crossed frontiers with Christian ideas, as already noted above. Moreover, the mission station was often only a mother-centre for the many outstations. The various identities and social categories that were emerging because of the religious and colonial encounter required differentiation and disaggregation.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, 1999, p. 222.

<sup>107</sup> Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs*, 1999, p. 222.

By the 1970s the survival of African traditional beliefs depended largely on practical benefits accruing to those who upheld them. Inasmuch as conversion to Christianity was sustained by emerging political, economic and social structures, Garbett concluded that:

those who are well placed to compete for positions of prestige and authority within Valley Korekore institutions, tend to use only those aspects of modern circumstances which are compatible with maintaining the institutions and the system in which they are competing. On the other hand, those who, because of particular circumstances, find it difficult and less attractive to attain positions of prestige and authority within Valley Korekore institutions, tend to seize upon opportunities to achieve status in modern political, economic, and religious institutions.<sup>108</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that traditional religion persisted because it was rooted in popular culture and was, indeed, part of that culture. The decade leading to 1970, when this study ends, was a time of general optimism and revival which saw traditional religion taking a significant social role in supporting the guerrilla movement across the Nyungwe speaking mid-Zambezi region in both Rhodesia and Tete in Mozambique. Yet there were differences in the degree and nature of change depending on place as there were differences in the intensities of encounter with state and church institutions.

In rural settings the calendars of events continued to follow the agricultural cycle which was no longer possible in the towns held to the demands of industrial and commercial productivity. In the deep mid Zambezi, traditional religion remained pervasive and was practiced in forms more akin to earlier ones, whereas in the towns, the new organisational patterns employed by churches and state were copied and used to organise aspects of traditional religion, especially those that had to do

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<sup>108</sup> Garbett, 'Prestige, Status and Power', p. 307.

with healing. The birth of healers' organisations were meeting the needs of urban Africans still bound by the belief in the efficacy of their older means of maintaining health and warding off evil and witchcraft.

The proliferation of churches that played traditional roles in dealing with the old *shave* spirits who were baptised with the new name 'demons', suggest the continuing hold of an African religious idiom that had not died out. While further research would be required to ascertain the direction of religious change from the 1970s to present times, indications such as the rehabilitation and promotion of the chieftaincy system and its appropriation for state-centred political ends precludes the impossibility of different forms of revival for traditional religion for new needs related to identity and persisting existential questions in the African cultural context.

## Conclusion

The mid Zambezi, as elsewhere in Africa, suffered from constructions of its religious landscape in terms of disparate cults such as the Dzivaguru, Karuva, Chidzere, Chimombe, Mutota, Chingowo, Chaminuka, Nehanda and Mubayiwa which were studied as individual separate entities in specific cult centres or areas.<sup>1</sup> This was driven by individual research interests, of course, but it resulted in a fragmented view of the state of African traditional religion in the region. This was in spite of the awareness amongst some scholars such as J. Matthew Schoffeleers of the trans-regional character of the 'cults' at the time. It was later scholars such as Richard Werbner who pursued studies in recognition of the fact that African religious systems covered much larger swathes of territory and crossed many frontiers and ethnic groups. He also found that no 'cult' was homogenous.<sup>2</sup> The *Mwali* system, for example, stretched from the deserts of Botswana across southern Zimbabwe through South Africa to Mozambique. Different groups, speaking a variety of dialects from these regions, all made pilgrimages to the shrines. As far as the movement of peoples was concerned, the colonial boundaries, while increasingly becoming a significant factor, did not inhibit travel as Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju observed.<sup>3</sup> These borders covered too many kilometres to be effectively policed and very often in colonial times the frontier populations knew the areas through which the imaginary border lines were drawn much better than the officials and, in fact, used them to meet their own economic, social and religious pursuits.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard P. Werbner, *Ritual Passage, Sacred Journey: The Process and Organisation of Religious Movement*, (Manchester, 1989) p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Werbner, *Ritual Passage*.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju, 'Introduction: The paradox of African boundaries' in Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju (eds.) *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London, 1996) pp. 1-14

So, when in 1959 Michael Gelfand concluded that with the growth of urbanisation, the Shona would find it increasingly difficult to practice their ancestral religion and that 'if the religious authorities of the Shona had been organized they might have been able to alter, modify or relax some of the ritual in order to suit the town dweller', he was writing from a narrow view of both the nature and the expanse of Shona religion.<sup>4</sup> He further lamented that the Shona had 'missed their opportunity, and their town brethren are consequently unable to continue the practices intended for a rural population'.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, in the same vein J. Matthew Schoffeleers in the 1970s thought that 'the modern period sounded the death knell for territorial cults' which at the time were construed as summing up what indigenous religions were about.<sup>6</sup> He cited three factors for this death, namely: 'world religions' taking over the functions that were once the preserve of indigenous cults; the 'bureaucratic government' and its secularizing tendencies that separated chiefs from cults thereby starving the latter of political support; and 'land alienation' which, by relocating people, permanently disrupted land-tied communal and religious practices.<sup>7</sup> Clearly scholars are entitled to revise their views under the weight of criticism or in light of new information or better research methods. But these scholars, as pioneers in the field, cast a pattern in this field of study, difficult to shake off. Another oversight informing their assessment was the lingering idea of the fragility of African systems and institutions in contrast to the strong ones imposed by colonial rule. This was bolstered by the prevalent sociology of disintegration that was in vogue at the time. African religions, with their integrative, all-embracing and adaptive character were

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<sup>4</sup> Gelfand, *Shona Ritual*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Schoffeleers, *Guardians of the Land*, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

reduced to 'cults' which were then further reduced to specific locales or shrines. While these were indeed important centres of religious authority, the African religious idiom was all-pervasive, spreading beyond the ritual centres and their officials, to clan settlements, villages and individual homes, over wide areas.

The discourse on religious change needs to be broader and inclusive. A religious landscape is defined by the religions in it rather than by a single 'cult' or 'church'. Thus the mid Zambezi was as much a religious realm in the nineteenth century as it was in the 1960s when Christian churches had made deep inroads into it. The resultant encounter diversified the religious landscape as it changed with various factors internal and external to the religions themselves complicit in this change.

The imposition of an overarching political system over the loosely linked and semi-autonomous polities of chiefdoms and kingdoms had the effect of generating forms of resistance to the new colonial demands such as the taxes, curtailment of movements, loss of cattle and control over the land. The grievances led to civil strife in the early decades of colonial rule, pitting the new rulers and the more indigenous groups against each other. In these conflicts religious resources such as the *mhondoro* networks were often deployed, though not as Terence Ranger had initially believed in the case of the *Mwari* system to the south of the mid Zambezi.<sup>8</sup> But the presence of a religious component in such unrest was a familiar response across much of Africa. Jim Freedman, for instance, documented how the followers of the 'goddess' Nyabingi used that name and resource as a rallying point against the British in an area that straddled the border of Northern Rwanda and Southern

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<sup>8</sup> Julian Cobbing, 'The Absent Priesthood: Another Look at the Rhodesian Risings of 1896-1897' in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1977), pp. 61-84.

Rwanda.<sup>9</sup> For these people the border was inconsequential. Their grievances were similar to those of Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa, revolving around having to pay taxes, appropriation of land and resources and a general sense of loss of power. In both cases, colonial rule was eventually imposed with frontiers being drawn.

In the case of the mid Zambezi, the frontier gained currency as slowly as the penetration of state and church institutions into the 'new' regions that had been brought into existence. This left traditional behaviour patterns of the locals in place as people on either side of the border transgressed it in pursuit of their interests. Nyungwe 'boys', as they were often called in Rhodesian colonial parlance, from Tete continued to cross the border in search of economic opportunities in Southern Rhodesia and beyond. The control of labour migration became a major operation when the Southern Rhodesian Government rose to the challenge by actively recruiting and controlling labour flows across their region of influence which included Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi). Meanwhile, this human traffic expanded the conceptualisations of the 'natives' as they encountered and opened up to new experiences. They had to conceptually reconfigure their religion which, many scholars agree, was central to their conceptualisation of their place in the universe. Many came into contact with Christianity, converted and became its agents. It was only towards the close of the period of this study that the border began to generate differentials in the people of the mid Zambezi owing to the different colonial policies in Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese Mozambique.

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<sup>9</sup> Jim Freedman, *Nyabingi: The Social History of an African Divinity* (Ontario, 1984).



Chief amongst the drivers of these differentials was the education provided in the two colonies. Apart from instilling the values specific to each side of the border, education, which was largely provided by missionaries, challenged the traditional system of education and by and large had replaced it by the 1960s. But at a deeper level it challenged and sought to uproot the traditional religious assumptions of the locals. The local leaders were quick to read the value of education for practical conveniences and distinguished it from its accompaniment, the Christian religion. The growing number of educated Africans in Rhodesia were on a better socio-economic footing than their counterparts across the border in Portuguese Mozambique generating differentials between the two countries.

In the towns the colonial economy provided templates for reorganising aspects of traditional religion. Africans who came to the towns carried with them their traditional religious beliefs in witchcraft, possession and interpretations of affliction. The needs arising from these beliefs were at first not readily met by urban Christianity or by the city social economy. As a result, traditional medical associations and societies were formed to meet the new demands – a continuation of the older traditional religious idiom even in the town settings. The flow of ideas was therefore both ways as the growing influence of churches in the towns spread to the mid Zambezi in the same process.

Amidst this exchange the descent of churches on the mid Zambezi in the 1950s proved to be a significant factor in reshaping the religious landscape. Catholics, Pentecostals, *vaPostori* and other Christian churches established themselves around

this time after the end of the Second World War. A prolific church-building project started in Mozambique because of a similar enabling international political environment. But the mid Zambezi region, south of the river, did not receive much attention with only one new mission being built in 1947 at Marara and, the development of Mukumbura, a crossing point on the border with Rhodesia into a small outstation. In Southern Rhodesia, Marymount Mission was established in 1949 with missionary teams prospecting the valley areas near the Zambezi River in 1952. The gains made in the 1950s were scuppered when in the 1960s the nationalist guerrillas began their war against settler rule. The mid Zambezi was the key frontier in this war, harbouring bases for ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas from Southern Rhodesia and FRELIMO fighters in Mozambique. The significant growth of Christianity in the mid Zambezi, therefore, was the result of the efforts of the late colonial and the post-colonial era. Interviewees in the region consistently located the advance of the many new Christian churches in their areas in a recent post-independence past.

This then refutes the claims that make essential links between colonial rule and the spread of Christianity, at least in the case of the mid Zambezi. It demonstrates the independence of the Christian movement from political patronage. But Christianity, while challenging traditional religion, did not destroy it, and even less so in the mid Zambezi where its presence had always been thin on the ground in any case. As Werbner pointed out 'New religious movements do not simply rise and fall; nor do they always make indigenous cults disappear. Instead they are often carried forward alongside established religious bodies including indigenous cults as well as churches,

with which they compete'.<sup>10</sup> There were convergences, crosspollinations of ideas and parasitical tendencies in the encounter of religious traditions.

Therefore, on the basis of a broader understanding of the nature of African traditional religion, one that recognises its integrative character and cultural embeddedness, its diversity within the same idiom, its rootedness in local historical political developments as well as its adaptive character, the evidence of the foregoing chapters point to innovative changes that underpinned its survival to the 1970s, and beyond. The changing political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s even saw a growing popularity of traditional religion, facilitated by the guerrillas who were fighting colonial rule in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Mediums gained greater respectability than chiefs. The latter were thought to have been co-opted into the colonial project while the former were perceived to be the vanguard of ancestral values. More recent scholarship appears to have largely embraced this perspective and moved on to recognise the historical evolution of traditional religion in the general direction, not of extinction, but of mutation and adaptation.

That periodic socio-religious renewal took (and takes) place in African societies is established. Social crises and stresses often trigger such attempts at renewal. This renewal has been characterised by periodic social cleansing movements such as those advocating the burning of charms, objects perceived to relate to sorcery and witchcraft, magical substances and the exposure of real or imaginary social misfits. Karen Fields in *Revival and Rebellion in colonial Central Africa* observed the same phenomenon in Zambia. Renewal and cleansing movements tended to be transnational, cutting across boundaries, regions and jurisdictions. This was quite in

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<sup>10</sup> Werbner, *Ritual Passage, Sacred Journey*, p. 7.

keeping with the transnational nature of southern African religions. The fact that strangers with a religious mission were tolerated, some of whom may have been money-seeking charlatans, pointed to the fact that they were speaking to a social psyche informed by deep-seated strands of needs, beliefs, anxieties, fears and interests that resonated with the ritual social acts. They provided explanations for social distresses and crises, offering a sense of relief to the partaking communities. Describing the case of the Hwesa to the south of the Zambezi Valley, Maxwell concluded that '[w]here the destruction of charms and other magical substances was carried out by Mchape acolytes in the 1930s, it was performed by church leaders and Christian prophets in the 1950s and late 1980s'.<sup>11</sup> Maxwell attributed this social process not just to the resurgence of sorcery and witchcraft but, in the case of the Pentecostal churches of Hwesa, to the tendency by erstwhile young founders to become less enthusiastic over time and gravitate to the easier, self-serving, dry fossilised bureaucracies. Ageing and the loss of zest in some church leaders, often led to a settled gerontocracy and the loss of the ever attractive egalitarianism that had earlier attracted the youth, thereby driving the younger generation to seek alternative sources of power and recognition in new renewal movements.<sup>12</sup>

Thus to a great extent, man-made structures remain critical in determining the direction that religion takes in the course of history. While religions generally claim supernatural origins and influence for their survival and growth, the evidence of this study is that they are dependent on the dominant social systems and structures created by humans, both within the religions themselves and outside of them. In the case of the colonial middle Zambezi, these structures included colonial legislation,

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<sup>11</sup> Maxwell, 'Witches, Prophets and Avenging Spirits' p. 334.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

education and the economic exigencies of migration and money which generated a social environment that was supportive of conversions to Christianity as well as adaptations in African traditional religion.

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