# SOUTHERN JOURNAL FOR Contemporary History

VOLUME 45
NUMBER 2
DECEMBER 2020

THE HUMANITIES
UFS

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

# EDITORIAL GROUP

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2

# Southern Journal for Contemporary History (SJCH)

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Vol. 45 No. 2 December 2020

# CONTENTS

## Book Reviews/Profile



## Obituary

# JOURNAL PREFACE

This is another pandemic issue of the *Southern Journal for Contemporary History* (*SJCH*). In the last issue, we carried an editorial essay on the forms that history-writing might take under the shadow of the global Covid-19 pandemic – new questions, new collaborations, new methodologies. In this issue, we have had to contend with the pandemic on another level. Varying regimes of lockdown, re-organising of academic calendars and online learning have imposed fresh demands on professional scholars from across the continent. These have impacted upon their ability to visit archives, undertake fieldwork, think, write, present seminars, edit and revise, some of the components of scholarly production. Accordingly, we are especially grateful to our authors, and also our reviewers, who have given of their time and consideration under trying circumstances.

All too often, histories of major metropolitan institutions (or departments within those institutions) are read as a kind of shorthand for the directions of the academy or the discipline as a whole. This is an error, as it presumes that other institutions or departments are simply lesser versions – less prominent, less successful, less productive – than their metropolitan counterparts. The lead essay in this issue, written by Luvuyo Wotshela takes on this commonsense and in so doing, represents a potent example of Southern history by challenging knowledge and assumptions forged in the metropole – in this case, South Africa's metropole. He shows how the history of the History Department at Fort Hare, a storied historically black university on South Africa's rural periphery, challenges us to think afresh about the discipline, its trajectories and genealogies and what questions these prompt for research, teaching and the notion of public scholarship.

We are publishing what we believe is a full, exciting and diverse issue. In addition to Wotshela's piece, we carry six other research essays and two book reviews. And we profile the accomplishments, achievements and directions of Adewumi Damilola Adebayo, a Cambridge-trained historian with a research interest in histories of infrastructure and technologies in Nigeria.

Sadly we note the demise of three major figures in the field: Bill Freund, Chengetai Zvobgo and Belinda Bozzoli. We publish an obituary to Chengetai Zvobgo. We expected to publish one to Bill Freund, considering aspects of his life in the context of shifting radical politics in Durban during the 1980s and 1990s but our author took ill. We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to publish his tribute as soon as he recovers and is able to complete it. Freund was an economic historian with an interest in labour and development, and over many decades, a prominent voice from the left in Durban and beyond.

https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.preface

He wrote on Nigerian tin mining, on Durban's Indian working class, and on development. His most well-known book, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*, which came out in three editions, was widely prescribed for African Studies courses across the world.[1] And too late to commission an obituary for this issue, we have learned of the passing of Belinda Bozzoli, a South African sociologist. Bozzoli was well-known for her work on Marxism, feminism and African Studies, as well as her account of a "patchwork of patriarchy".[2] She was also a leading figure in the Wits History Workshop which became known for its style of social history: Marxist-inspired, empirically oriented, theoretically iconoclastic and politically urgent. She edited three volumes of essays which came out of the Workshop, and her introductions to these volumes did much to synthesise what the Workshop stood for, and to convey its historiographic and insurgent spirit beyond Wits, beyond South Africa.[3] A proper obituary will follow in the next issue. Rest in Peace, Professors Freund, Zvobgo and Bozzoli, and thank you for what you have all contributed to the African history, the discipline as a whole and idea of Southern history.

Since our last issue, we have commenced an *SJCH*-sponsored seminar series on Southern history. We have hosted four seminars, roughly one a month, and one of the papers is published in this issue of the *Journal*. The seminars have brought together scholars from various parts of the continent, and discussions have been lively. These seminars will soon be posted via a link on the *SJCH* Facebook page, and we hope too to see a blog, which will allow ongoing discussion around issues raised by respective papers. Joyline Kufandirori is the convener for this series, and if you would like to present a paper, please contact her.

Finally, we welcome Professor Samson Ndanyi to our editorial advisory board. Samson has a PhD from Indiana University and presently teaches at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. He is an East Africanist, and we hope that he will be able to advise us on trends in East African history and historiographies more generally.

*Neil Roos*
*Professor of History*
*Editor-in-Chief*

1 The most recent was B Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa): The Development of African Societies since 1800*, 3rd edition (London: Lynne Rienner Publisher 2016).

2 B Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9 (2), 1983, pp.139-171; B Bozzoli and M Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991).

3 See particularly, B Bozzoli (ed.), *Labour, Townships and Protest* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1978) ; B Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* (Johannesburg:Ravan, 1983) ; B Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1994).

AUTHOR:
Luvuyo Wotshela[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Professor and Head at National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS), University of Fort Hare

EMAIL:
LWotshela@ufh.ac.za

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.1

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History

2020 45(2):1-32

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch




# UNFULFILLED POTENTIAL: CONFINED DESTINY OF HISTORICAL STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE, 1960 –2015

## ABSTRACT

*Recently, there are growing countrywide dialogues within several universities, and certainly at the University of Fort Hare about curricula review and realignment of academic departments. History is central to such discussions, and in this institution, it is not simply as a scholarly discipline, linked to teaching and research. Indeed, the identity of Fort Hare, as the first African institution of higher learning in the sub-Sahara makes its legacy even gripping. Almost every epoch of the evolution of Fort Hare had generational imprint: from the first half of the twentieth century whereby it surpassed its mission origin, to an institution with several individuals entwined to continental developments, and national political movements in the later decades. When it became a conventional case of National Party (NP) government control and influence, albeit with resistance from 1960, it forged another character, reflected by Afrikaner domination of academia and the rerouting thereof, for social and political control, whilst being aligned to apartheid policy. The remodelling of the institution in the era of democratic South Africa, germinated other facets, on various fronts as the institution had to reposition itself to new realities that continue to test centres of higher education, whilst still demanding clearer academic vision. That inclusive history of Fort Hare remains significant, but, an equally essential one for this paper is how this institution grasped its rich bequest, and endeavour to constitute its history department? Relying on empirical records from 1960 to 2015, this paper outlines distinct fortunes of Fort Hare's history department. Whilst the paper also stresses the significance of this discipline, particularly within fields of social sciences and humanities, it also cautions how overriding plans can also be dire for the subject.*

**Keywords***: history, African Studies, University, government control, curricula review*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Many of those who have been involved in or have an interest in the history of education in the African continent, will be aware of the standing of the University of Fort Hare. Historians from parts of the world have often referred to this institution as one of the seed-beds of modern African nationalism.[1] It was founded in 1916, on the Tyhume River Valley hamlet of Alice, within the heartlands of the nineteenth-century eastern frontier, now inland of South Africa's Eastern Cape. The university expanded around a British fort – to which it still retains its current name, Fort Hare. From that date of 1916, as the first-ever university started for Africans in Southern Africa, it buttressed growing social networks of mission schools that drove western education for Africans, especially in the Ciskei and Transkei areas of the Cape, and, to some extent in Natal. Despite the establishment of Makerere University in Uganda during the early 1920s, Fort Hare remained the main institution offering higher education to Africans from eastern, central and southern Africa during the mid-twentieth century.[2]

In the administrative phases of Fort Hare, which were shaped by key events that influenced the history of this institution, prominent roles of individuals are yet to be accentuated. During the initial period of 1916 to 1950, whilst Fort Hare was known as the South African Native College linked to the University of South Africa (UNISA), and in the epoch of 1951 to 1959 when it was renamed the University College of Fort Hare and placed under the administration of Rhodes University, it educated several individuals

1 D Massey, *Under Protest: The Rise of Student Resistance at the University of Fort Hare* (Johannesburg: UNISA Press, 2010), pp. 27-88; L Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 193-230; L Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Claremont: David Philip, 2004), pp. 95-119; R Chapman, *Student Resistance to Apartheid at the University of Fort Hare: Freedom Now, a Degree Tomorrow* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), pp. 2-49; J Grobler, *A Decisive Clash*: *A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa, 1875-1976* (Pretoria: Acacia Press, 1988), pp. 160, 167-188; C Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of DDT Jabavu of South Africa, 1885 -1959* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997), pp.47-49, 199-200; R Southhall, "The African Middle Class in South Africa 1910-1994", *Economic History of Developing Regions* 29 (2), 2014, pp.287- 310; D Williams, "African Nationalism in South Africa: Origins and Problems", *Journal of African History* 11 (3), 1970, pp.371 -383; D Williams, *A History of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa, the 1950s: The Waiting Years* (Lewiston: Edward Mellen, 2001), pp. 3-10.

2 S Morrow and K Gxabalashe, "Records of the University of Fort Hare", *History in Africa* 27, 2000, pp. 481-497; P Johnson, Control, Compliance and Conformity at the University of Fort Hare 1916-2000: A Gramscian Approach (PhD, Rhodes University, 2013); pp.107-131; HR Burrows and ZK Matthews, *A Short Pictorial History of the University College of Fort Hare, 1916-1959* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1961), pp. 27-49; L Wotshela, *Fort Hare: From Garrison to bastion of Learning* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, 2017), pp. 5-29.

within the field of politics and leadership. Some of these participated within their respective countries, and also generally shaped African history.[3] There were additionally several folks who were part of that earlier Fort Hare-trained generation who also made their contributions within and beyond the field of politics. One Zachariah Keodirelang Matthews, the first to be awarded a UNISA degree from Fort Hare, in the 1920s became a renowned scholar and participant in the growth of African Studies at Fort Hare from the 1940s. Matthews was guided by the London trained Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu - the first hired academic staff member in 1916. Jabavu was also the son of Tengo Jabavu, a key figure in the Cape African politics of the late 1800s to early 1900s, key author of the local newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* and also one of the founders of Fort Hare. [4]

Matthews would also be accredited for his contributions in the African National Congress (ANC) draft of the Freedom Charter during the early 1950s, but the African Studies that he and Jabavu championed from the 1940s, became one of the core disciplines of humanities at Fort Hare for several decades and is discussed at length below. By the same token, during the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, Fort Hare also educated individuals who participated incisively in other fields of education and literature, the art, sports and administration. In that very same epoch, the institution became credited for producing the first generation of African women graduates, who, among others included; Gertrude Ntlabathi, Jane Gool, Ellen Pumla Ngozwana and Gaositwe Chiepe who also ventured onto fields of education, community services and diplomacy.[5]

Fort Hare's phase of 1960 and onwards, when the NP government's venture to control and ethnically divide Bantu Education, equally threw students and some employees to different fronts of either resisters who either endured torture or fled the country. As Fort Hare fell right under the Department of Bantu Education (DBE) in that era, some were absorbed into the fledgeling Bantu self-governance system, as the institution ostensibly also became autonomous from 1970 – a gloom period under the NP government, and in the late 1980s, under a Ciskei homeland rule.[6] That epoch ushered Fort Hare into the mould of ethnic colleges to concretise the homeland policy, but the institution still redefined itself from apartheid shards during the early 1990s, coinciding with the advent of elective democracy in the country. In that

3 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-39; Morrow and Gxabalashe, "Records of Fort Hare", pp. 481-497.

4 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 1-7.

5 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 7-27.

6 Massey, *Under Protest*, pp. 159-195; P Johnson, "Dissidents and Dissenters: Student Responses to Apartheid at the University of Fort Hare", *Journal for Contemporary History* 44 (1), 2019 pp. 1-25.

epoch of the early 1990s, Fort Hare also became the receiver of archives of main African political parties, especially those of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which sustained the liberation movement even during banishment years of 1960 to 1990. It has been debated, those political parties' deposit of such vital records marked their recognition of the profound role Fort Hare played in shaping African politics, as much as the motivations to augment the institution's historical studies programs.[7]

Moreover, the new ANC government in its realignment of higher learning institutions in the early 2000s envisaged greater prospects and duly thrust Fort Hare into a converted spatial character - out of the Alice scabbard, to a multi-campus university.[8] Not unexpectedly, dispersion of academic resources within that shifting university's social geography conceded its chromosome, and, as it is argued in the paper, challenged the survival of humanities' disciplines such as history. Essentially, the academic enterprise was equally stymied by permeating structural alterations. Given such contemporary developments, on the one hand, the richness of Fort Hare's origin enhanced by partially documented contributions and actions of its illustrious alumni on the other, there is a compelling case for this institution to have a robust and inimitable historical studies program. Yet, a puzzle remains on such prospect, notwithstanding potential interest, curricula and organisational challenges, which shaped long-term rendition of historical studies in the institution after the NP government takeover in 1960.

This paper thus scrutinises a 55-year existence (1960 -2015) of the history department at Fort Hare whereby it constituted itself organisationally, whilst defining its identity analogous with modelling its syllabi. In examining those aspects, the paper underscores the conforming vision of the history department with analogous Fort Hare management, backed by the government's Ministry of Bantu Education, which became Department of Education and Training (DET) by the 1980s. There are two arguments underpinning this paper's narrative: firstly, whilst the rich historical basis of Fort Hare suggests that this institution cannot be typically branded a Historical Black University (HBU), the NP government's direct control from 1960 merely tainted it with such status. As in most of the HBUs, Fort Hare's historical studies undergraduate syllabi conformed to the enduring charge of serving and legitimising white power. In that period from 1960 to the late 1980s, its syllabi was inclined towards European history - mostly facets of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, and experiences of whites in parts of the African

7 M Maamoe, The Role of the Liberation Movements Archives in Shaping the History Writing in a post-apartheid South Africa (DPhil, University of Fort Hare, 2019); B Maaba, The History and Politics of Liberation Archives at Fort Hare (DPhil, University of Cape Town, 2013).

8 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 65-69.

continent. Secondly, the syllabi also included snippets of African nationalism. Nevertheless, despite Fort Hare having individuals who were in the forefront of apartheid resistance especially from the mid-1960s to the 1980s, it was only during the mid-late 1990s that the institution's history department curriculum prioritised certain module(s) on African liberation processes, which were pertinent to studying South African history. That adaptation, as it will be illustrated, was still undone by structural trials that arose with the institution's realignment of its academic faculties and other units that had the remit to drive academic research during the early 2000s.

## 2. RATIONALISING THE WRITING AND STUDY OF HISTORY – CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA, AND THE EARLY FORT HARE EXPERIMENT

It certainly made sense to develop historical studies from the onset in a university such as Fort Hare, which grew in a backdrop of, and amidst networks of human activities. Indeed, factors surrounding the origin of the institution manifested themselves to elicit and contribute to critical historiography of the country, and that of the African continent. Such historiography had to be honoured for its own sake, for several perceptions it could contribute within equivalent humanities and social studies. Peculiarly, there was no history department created for Fort Hare when boards of faculties for senate were formed for the drafting of regulations, courses and syllabuses for the very first time in 1923 whilst the institution was still referred to as the South African Native College.[9] As is illustrated below, the history department would only be nominally created a decade later, during the late 1930s, and would still remain under-resourced for a lengthy time and thus was incapable of making many contributions even by the late twentieth century. By that period the writing of history in South Africa and worldwide, as well as the philosophy underlining such practice had transcended mere anecdotal of selected past events. History as a discipline already drew strength from other fields of the social, political, linguistic, environmental and even the natural sciences.

Such diversification in the writing of history recognised that aspects of the past can hardly be solely illuminated by analysis of their roots or origins. It is an appreciation that follows Edward Carr's insight from the early 1960s, coincidently the starting point of the examination of the Fort Hare History Department for this paper. At that time, Carr had already noted that history was inexorably subjected to a whole range of questions since the subject

9 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial history of Fort Hare*, pp. 20-46; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-12.

provides critical antimony between reality and discourse. Of course, in outlining the term history, one always has to differentiate between the actual events of the past (history as a reality), and the account of such events (history as a narrative). Since historians deal mainly with the latter process, they are invariably conscious that it generates dialogue. The exercise of reconstructing history does not merely include identification, selection and placements of crucial events in the context of time and space. Rather, there are several questions that mainly surround interpretation, representation and many forms of narratives.[10]

Those were and are still most of the questions that gripped both the historiography and the teaching of South African history in the country's academic institutions. Indeed, the criticism that history served or legitimised white power for much of twentieth-century South Africa was not groundless. Both school and higher education syllabi usurped aspects of the past and claimed to speak on behalf of diverse South African groupings in imbalanced narratives.[11] Nevertheless, as Sean Morrow points out, even if such kind of history existed in the country, it was not essentially hegemonic, or unchallenged. The challenge itself could be accredited to the unfettering and the critical nature of historical approaches, and ironically the interference of the apartheid state, which often strove hard to influence the discipline. The fact that certain authorities felt obliged to associate with chroniclers, or, at worst apologists, did not necessarily influence those who had an interest in the discipline to view studying history with distrust.[12]

In a country like South Africa, the writing and the representation of the past, as well as its study, has transcended several epochs. All being well, such exercise can be sustained for posterity. Even with dubious interpretation and representation of the country's history (or its past), contributors to that course during the twentieth century generated dynamic historiography. In fact after sustained dominance of the settler or British imperialism school of thought, and that of the Afrikaner nationalists on South African past, a broadly progressive and radical historiography emerged - from the classic liberal texts of the 1960s, to the Marxists – structuralist focus on South African economy in the 1970s and 1980s.[13] The latter, which expanded historical scholarship in

10 EH Carr, *What is history*? (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 10-43.

11 L Wotshela, "The Discipline of History in Transitional South Africa: Transformation of Social Science in South Africa since 1994 - Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study", *Africa Institute of South Africa*, 74, 2004, pp. 77-82.

12 S Morrow, "An argument for History", *South African Journal of Higher Education* 14 (3), 2000, pp. 32-37.

13 See for instance, H Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap labour power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid", *Economy and Society* 1 (4), 1972, pp. 438-440; S Greenberg, *Race and Class in Capitalist Development: South Africa in Comparative Perspective*

many facets, even saw the emergence of the social history movement, and also coincided with the founding of the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) History Workshop. Conferences of that Workshop advanced the cause for radical school and thus drowned the hitherto existing liberal dominance.[14] All the same, by the early 1990s the structuralist and radical historical framework also faced contest in the wake of postmodernism, as the latter placed weight on the "deconstruction of hegemonic truths". That new articulation raised doubts on the acceptance of a single, or for that matter, a master narrative of the past to constitute history. Further questions continued being asked from that new thinking on the reconstruction of history. There were, and are still more regular, and valid questions; could history be defined as what happened, is it what historians narrate to us to have happened?[15] Moreover, the re-examination of twentieth-century, South Africa continue to pose challenges on the encapsulation of local and social realities of a complex society within a set of hegemonic and persuasive generalisations.[16] There were and are new commitments to rethink African representation in a post-colonial and post-apartheid Africa, where political power was now placed in African hands. Some of the debates are around, whose history really count and how best broad historical representation can be achieved? Thus new histories on previously hidden facets of African heritages, communities' movements, liberation and democracy, as well as authority realignment processes are constantly being explored.[17]

Historical studies at Fort Hare, which as aforesaid was not even created in 1923, the first time boards of faculties for senate were formed for this institution had to continuously catch up with the evolution of the discipline. Ironically the first six drafted key course areas during that year had historical dimensions. They included education first, as the College was envisaged to

(Johannesburg: Yale University Press, 1981); D O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934 -1948* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).

14 E Maloka, "Writing for them: Radical Historiography in South Africa and the Radical Other", Transformation of Social Science in South Africa since 1994 - Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study, *Africa Institute of South Africa*, 74, 2004, pp. 83-89; C Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic history of the Witwatersrand* (New York: Longman, 1982).

15 L Witz *et al*, *Unsettled History: The Making of South African Public Pasts* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017), pp. 2-26; R Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 3-25; P Maylam, "Tensions within the Practice of History", *South African Historical Journal* 33, 1995, pp. 1-12.

16 Witz *et al*, *Unsettled History: The Making of South African Public Pasts,* pp. 2-26.

17 For instance, South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) Project on :The Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1960 to the 1990s. On the review of pre-colonial and colonial historiography, see also, J Bam *et al* (eds.), *Whose History Counts? Decolonising African Pre-Colonial Historiography* (Stellenbosch : Stellenbosch Press, 2018).

continue on an already opulent practice of teacher training for the Union of South Africa and thus consolidate what mission schools had already started. Secondly, the College opted to offer a course in agriculture to nurture existing methods of crop and animal husbandry. That emphasis had its touchy context, especially after the 1913 Land Act which set aside specific land portions for African occupation, and thus became the legislative framework for territorial segregation. From the 1920s and going forward, there was a realisation from the Union Government of the need to intensify ecological reclamation and agricultural intervention as a token strategy to sustain African reserve land. Fort Hare, as a South African Native College located mainly in an African area, was envisioned to be central in such role. Thirdly, the College also developed and offered a course on Physics and Chemistry - as part of a new pre-medical programme that was accepted by some universities for the pre-medical year or the first examination leading to a medical degree.[18]

The closest impression of historical studies, or a course that captured such a discipline from those created in 1923, included a Bachelor of Arts or Humanities degree, with one or several courses in law and history of African administration. At that stage, students in the field of humanities and law still followed careers in teaching or law profession. Others, however, were drawn into specialised practices as either clerks or interpreters in the Departments of Native Affairs or Justice. About ten years later, and from 1933 onwards, humanities introduced African Studies, and as aforesaid, that was initiated by Jabavu. On its inception, African Studies included Ethnic History of Africa, combined with Social Anthropology and African languages as part of a Bachelor of Arts degree. The fifth of the created courses had commercial focus, leading to business diplomas, with a less historical focus. Nevertheless, the sixth and the last one that entailed religious and later theological studies, was however similar to humanities with grounding in history. Given the long involvement of missionaries in the region and their involvement in the formation of the institution, a Theological qualification was introduced from the mid-1930s. From that point, Fort Hare trained ministers of diverse denominations. Crucially despite the emergence of independent African churches, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Fort Hare remained the exemplary product of mission and civilisation enterprise by the early to mid-twentieth century.[19]

That set of six different courses steered the institution forward, but, the demand emerged from below, particularly from some students to pursue subjects of their interests outside the designated courses, even without

18 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial history of Fort Hare,* pp.20-46; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-12.

19 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 11-12.

adequate teaching staff to support them. As the institution became a crucible of continental interaction from the mid-1930s and onwards, there were clear moves by the students to expand or even radicalise the initially circumscribed curricular. For instance, students like Govan Mbeki and McLeod Mabude became the first to study Political Science despite having no teachers for their final year in 1936, and they went on to qualify for Bachelour of Arts (BA) degrees from UNISA. Likewise, Wycliffe Tsotsi, and his contemporary, Victor Mbombo, desired to study history and thus requested an appointment of a history lecturer, without succeeding. Ironically the then university rector, Alexander Kerr advised that they should consider studying Psychology instead. Tsotsi and Mbombo did not compromise, and that led to their self-study with the support of the Rhodes University History Department, and ultimate qualification in that discipline with UNISA.[20] Tsotsi's affinity with historical studies had partly to do with his original home of Glen Grey district, which was in the previous century affected by regulatory land laws. By mid-1930s, as government's new land bills and the obliteration of Cape African franchise loomed largely, he became associated to the All African Congress (AAC) that was also formed in the mid-1930s - as contesting African voice that essentially hatched the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). Tsotsi would later become an active barrister and a defender of rural rights after completion of his studies during the 1940s.[21]

Meanwhile, student demand finally led to Fort Hare's creation of its History Department in 1938, a date that paradoxically coincided with centenary celebrations of the Great Trek. The timing may have been only coincidental or was indicative of the UNISA influence in the creation of academic departments. Nevertheless, the new Fort Hare history department couldn't even help students who aspired to study African history, epitomised in the case of Sipho Makalima who was refused permission in 1940 to research the infamous 1856/7 cattle-killing.[22] After the war, the department still remained under-resourced, with only one staff person, Hugh Chapman, formerly a war officer, whom Fort Hare had appointed Professor, and the only lecturer. From 1946 to 1952, Chapman ran the department on his own, and its syllabus during that time was slanted towards classical and modern European history.[23] With no African interest, it remained surpassed by the African Studies department, which sustained ongoing lessons on the Ethnic History of Africa. Matthews headed the latter since the retirement of Jabavu in 1944. Together

20 Massey, *Under Protest*, pp. 32-33.
21 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 19-20; L Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2006), pp. 194-198.
22 Massey, *Under Protest*, p. 33.
23 Williams, *The University College*, pp. 9-11.

with Social Anthropology, Ethnic History of Africa was active in soliciting the interest of African students to the department of African Studies. Monica Wilson (nee Hunter), who lectured Social Anthropology at Fort Hare for two and a half years, whilst conducting field and ethnographical research during the years 1944 to 1946 made eternal sway. Her desires for the African Studies department to be a centre for research, accruing and processing knowledge were however discordant with Fort Hare, which at the time prioritised teaching to research. Equally, Wilson's anthropological work had by this period added vital contribution to liberal South African historiographical writing, especially her book: *Reaction to Conquest*.[24] Yet it remained unnoticed by Chapman's Fort Hare History department, at least in its first six years in office as it hardly taught South African history.

Change came with the addition of Donovan Williams to a lectureship position in the History department at the start of 1952. Williams had earlier studied History honours at Wits. He knew little on the Eastern Cape, but, was enticed by Robert Shepherd, one of the vanguards of Lovedale to research on the Scottish missions in the Ciskei and Transkei. In fact, such research exposed Williams into key historical routes that not only shaped his insights on contemporary Eastern Cape politics but, certainly also on aspects of African nationalism and general South African history. He also got backing from his counterpart Rhodes University History department, crucially during the aforesaid period when Fort Hare was under Rhodes's wing. In the eight years (1952-60), in which he accessed copious papers of the Glasgow Missionary Society that were largely held by the Lovedale Press, and scripts on some missionaries, which were held either at Fort Hare, or at Cory Library at Rhodes, he set about working on his doctoral research. Notably, he translated some of that research into teaching material, resulting in fresh syllabus on the study of the (eastern) frontier history, and the making of modern South Africa. Whilst the history department retained the theme on classical and modern Europe, Williams encouraged his students also to undertake African studies to gain familiarity on facets of African history. Yet the department remained poorly staffed, for much of his stay, since after Chapman's departure in 1954, Williams took over as Professor and Head of Department while singlehandedly providing lectures.[25]

24 M Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936); S Morrow, "Your intellectual Son": "Monica Wilson and her Students at Fort Hare, 1944 – 1946". In: A Bank and L Bank (eds.), *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and her Interpreters* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 193 -223.

25 Williams, *The University College*, pp. 10-11.

The relevance of history and African Studies at the time was much aligned to the politics that were also steered by the NP government's racial discrimination legislation. The multi-racial nature of teaching staff and more so multi-ethnic composition of Fort Hare' student body during the 1950s decried the NP government policy. Both the ANC and the NEUM, which formed its Society of Young Africans (SOYA) during 1951, provided networks for active student political participation through branches of their youth leagues on campus. There were yet absurdities in these formations' politics, yet students were still drawn to African studies, and numbers were steadily growing for history. Students and the staff unity against the NP racial discrimination policy, however, meant the Fort Hare senate had to contend with an increase of political activity on campus in the course of the mid-1950s.[26] Crucially, that was also at the time the NP government was circling with its 1959 Extension of the University Act, and that would have major ramifications for Fort Hare as much as it would have for black institutions of higher learning countrywide.

## 3. GOVERNMENT CLOUT, CONCEDED HUMANITIES AND EMERGENT HISTORICAL STUDIES, 1960 -1990

The 1959 Extension of the University Act, the NP government legislation that launched its direct control and ethnical division of black institutions of higher learning is central for those who study segregated higher education in South Africa. With that piece of legislation, the NP government created four ethnic colleges, at Bellville in the Western Cape, Ngoye in Northern Zululand, one in Durban Westville, and fourthly in Turfloop in the Northern Transvaal. The four were correspondingly for students of official ethnic classification: Coloured, Zulu, Indian, and Sotho-Tswana.[27] Significantly for Fort Hare, a special 1959 Transfer Act was promulgated to approve the handover of that University College to the reigns of the NP government. That basically gave the DBE minister, Willem Adriaan Maree unlimited powers to control the employment of staff, council, senate and even advisory body members. In essence, the NP government was thrust in the overall administration and the daily running of the Fort Hare's affairs. The transfer act also clarified the overall intentions of the NP government to channel Fort Hare for Xhosa

26 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History of Fort Hare*, pp. 39-56.

27 Extension of the University Act (No 45 of 1959), this Act also made it criminal for non-white student to register outside such institutions, without the written permission of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

speaking groups within its ethnic university strategy, and long-term Bantu self-governance policy.[28]

In the year shortly leading to that fateful 1959 Transfer act, fault lines for commitments - by those who were for or against the impending NP government were delineated, and that enabled the DBE to decide on fortunes of staff amidst ongoing protest during September 1959. There are writings on the purge of those who clung to the old University College of Fort Hare and opposed the government takeover. Amongst many unsuccessful protesters were the then principal, Harry Raymond Burrows, and his staunch supporter Zacharia Keodirelang Matthews.[29] Their departure from Fort Hare in 1959 and 1960 constitutes some of the poignant writings on the transition history of the institution. Ultimately, the transfer act and changeover enabled Maree's DBE to control further hires, who mainly were Afrikaners, and more so, supporters of the NP government. Johannes Jurgen Ross, previously a law professor at the University of the Orange Free State became first government-appointed rector in 1960. Supervisory powers of UNISA were restored as that institution's principal, Simon Pauw, was made the first chairperson of an all-white Fort Hare council from 1960 onwards. The 1959 Transfer Act still retained UNISA to act as an examiner for all internally offered syllabi, as well as confer and award degrees. Conforming to segregation, the DBE separated the Fort Hare senate, into two units: one made strictly of white staff, and the other constituted of black staff, who served merely as an advisory arm.[30]

The racial shift resulting from measured enlisting of white staff became clear, regardless of Fort Hare students being chiefly black, and the institution being located within what was delineated a Bantustan area. Indeed, this was a twisted paradox since the NP government's specious Bantu self-governance scheme hypothesised and emphasised the deployment of Africans within "ethnic black institutions". Instead, in the newly government-controlled Fort Hare, the proportion of black lecturing staff dropped visibly - from just under 45 per cent before 1960, to under 20 per cent during the mid-1960s. Clearly, the imperatives of political and ideological control took priority, as the NP government wrapped its tentacles around this University College, which it

28 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1960-69; Subsection (1) of section 35 of the 1959 Fort Hare Transfer Act (No 64 of 1959) vested power to the Minister of Bantu Education to provide Regulations in Connection with the Admission of Students to, with Control of Students at and the Discharge of Students from the University College of Fort Hare.

29 See for instance, Williams, *The University College*, pp. 511-560; Massey, *Under Protest*, pp. 159-168; Chapman, *Student Resistance*, pp.14-18; Johnson, "Dissidents and Dissenters", pp. 1-25.

30 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 40-41.

deemed was still beset with a long history of liberalism. The upshot of racial staff composition became crucial in ensuing years for academic profile and positions. There was only one African or black academic head from 23 departments of the five faculties: arts, science, law, commerce and education by 1965. They increased to only two after 1966, following the institution's golden jubilee in 1966. By that time faculties had grown to seven and departments almost double to 40 with the elevation of divinity and agriculture to faculty statuses.[31]

Equally, the openly-political NP government and now the DBE controlled Fort Hare were epitomised by the grip Afrikaner academics wielded across the seven faculties. The analysis of that occurrence across academic departments and their respective faculties remains valuable, but, for the limits of this paper emphasis is on humanities, and, especially African and Historical Studies. Humanities reorganised under Arts - one of the five faculties of the Ross administration after 1960 - encompassed most of the subjects that made the identity and institutional history of the institution. In fact, most of the names of student luminaries mentioned in the introductory section of the paper had in their course of stay at Fort Hare gravitated towards humanities. That academic strand was however hit hard by the purge and resignations of 1959 and 1960. For instance, African Studies lost all its staff members, Mathews, Sibusiso Nyembezi, Cecil Ntloko, and Don Mathews Mtimkulu, as they opted to resign in protest shortly before the government takeover in 1960. Donovan Williams, who developed and run the history department, solitarily, throughout the 1950s, was rusticated for his loyalty to the same group that rejected the government takeover. He too left Fort Hare and South Africa dejectedly for the United Kingdom in 1960.[32]

Those resignations aided the new management to control politically-orientated humanities meticulously, as 12 of the 14 departments of the faculty of arts fell under the leadership of Afrikaner academics, who were trained in prominent Afrikaans medium universities. Only one of the 14 departments remained staffed by blacks in that faculty of arts, and it was the Bantu languages (retitled from African languages), which hitherto was part of African Studies. Obviously, Fort Hare being planned as a Xhosa ethnic university had to parallel the government policy and adopt Bantu languages to engender beliefs of separate cultures.[33] Predictably, the restored African Studies programme towed the NP government's line. Encapsulating the fundamental

31 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969.

32 Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History of Fort Hare*, pp. 39-56; Williams, *The University College*, pp. 571-576.

33 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp.12-40.

disciplines of Anthropology and Archeology, it also offered a course on "Native Administration". The latter ensured a broad introduction to the study of African affairs linked to South African population structure and administration. Added to that program was curatorship of African collections, presented haughtily, whilst also portraying the obligation to preserve the "material culture of the Bantu".[34] The syllabi of the department was harshly criticised by the only black internal teaching staff member, Curnick Ndamse in 1965, who, being in possession of senior degrees from Hartford and Trinity College felt estranged. Following his open remarks that "the white man controlled the education affairs of Africans", Ndamse was immediately expelled by the Fort Hare senate. His appeal to the DBE Minister Maree was in vain, and predictably the course continued unchanged for the following two-and-a-half decades.[35]

In the meantime, a restored history department, under the headship of Stellenbosch University-trained Professor, Colin Coetzee, who replaced Williams from 1960 until retirement in 1983, took a predisposition towards European history. There was however scope for adjustment of the history graduate program, from the earlier periodisation that encompassed classical history, in lieu of the existence of a separate, but, linked department of Classical (or Greek) Studies. Thus, the European history syllabi offered by Coetzee's department started from the era of Mediaeval Europe to the immediate aftermaths of World War II. Continental African focus remained narrow, but snippets of early-European contacts with coastal and especially Southern African reaches, ranging from foci of Portuguese contacts with African groups and their infiltration of the region were offered. Syllabi also looked at the Dutch and British maritime epochs, as well as their processes of conquests, including polygonal roles of agencies and philanthropies like traders and missionaries. That Southern African study culminated with the divisive position of South Africa within the Commonwealth at the third-year level, essentially a contemporary theme at the time. Whilst endorsed reading texts for well over a decade on aspects of European history were general, such as those of Grant and Temperley, which offered a longitudinal study of Europe, Coetzee's department relied mainly on the early liberal historians on South African themes. Mostly recommended reading included the volumes of the *Cambridge History of the Empire*, Walker's *History of Southern Africa*,

34 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969.

35 Archives of the University of Fort Hare, held in the Alice Campus Registry Division (UFH, Alice, Registry): *Minutes of Senate Meeting* held 5 march 1965. Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969, and those of University of Fort Hare, 1970s to 1994. Coincidently the latter year was the last African Studies appeared encompassing Anthropology and Archeology in this institution.

and also the earlier works of de Kiewiet on South Africa.[36] Over time, the department also developed intensive optional papers from the same themes and scope, as well as readings for a largely taught history honours level in addition to a paper on history method and historiography. Gradually the honours program also introduced optional papers on struggles for parliamentary sovereignty in England during the seventeenth to eighteenth-century England, coinciding to what was taught for Rhodes history honours at that same time. Additionally, there were options on the American Revolution, and a focus on influences of British imperialism, by comparative study of constitutions of Canada, Australia and South Africa.[37]

That syllabi hardly changed for much of the first two decades of Coetzee's tenure. His own interest being mainly on the militarisation and the fortification of South Africa's "Eastern frontier", he mainly embraced the conventional interpretation of frontier historiography.[38] His department hardly improvised to include teachings on the then emerging new history that entailed revision of writings on South Africa's past, particularly from the 1970s and onwards. Predictably the Fort Hare history department by the 1970s was deplored by some of its students to provide a Eurocentric view of African and especially South African history. Such view was in spite of Fort Hare being granted autonomy from UNISA at the beginning of that decade. Inside the lecture rooms, lessons continued to echo lingering traces of epochs of profound European domination. They stirred a persistent culture that created an illusory sense of the intrinsic supremacy of European-derived values and peoples. Some students felt Africa was largely presented as a European history, or candidly, the experiences of Europeans in Africa.[39]

Of course, as in the earlier decades, Coetzee was still afflicted by inadequate human resource. In fact, throughout the first 13 years of his headship, he was allowed only one additional colleague in the history department. Meanwhile, Ross, the first government-appointed rector was succeeded by Johannes Marthinus De Wet (1968-1980), another staunch NP government devotee from Potchefstroom University. Taking forward a deemed autonomous Fort Hare, albeit, still under the coffers of the DBE, De

36 A Grant and H Temperley, *Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries 1789 to 1950* (London: Longmans, 1952); E Walker, *A History of Southern Africa* (London: Longmans, 1957); CW de Kiewet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

37 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969.

38 See, C Coetzee, *Forts of the Eastern Cape: Securing a Frontier 1799 -1878* (Grahamstown: Self Published, 1995).

39 Interview: Author with M Vazi, King Williams's Town, 5 November 2019; Interview: Author with V Mona, Fort Hare, 22 January 2020. Both were respectively undergraduate students in the History Department during the mid-and the 1970s under the headship of Colin Coetzee.

Wet's tenure in the 1970s became even more delicate, not least because it was the era of fruition of the homeland policy, but, also student numbers were on the rise. Indeed the flipside corollaries of Bantu education were increasing percentages of secondary level pupils, despite diminishing quality that stemmed from underfunding and substandard teacher training.[40] Such numbers also impacted on ethnicised universities like Fort Hare, where student population topped a thousand for the first time from 1973. That also threw an upward curve for Coetzee's history department as the combined history undergraduates also exceeded 100 from that same year. Continuing being one of the school subjects, and being also taken by those who were either in the Arts or in teacher training programs, the study of history maintained some level of demand.[41]

Increasing numbers of undergraduates and lecturing demands coincided with the hatchling of the NP government's homeland policy. Transkei, which had fallen under the control of one Fort Hare alumnus of the 1930s, Kaiser Matanzima, had already accepted "self-governance" in the previous decade and was followed by Ciskei in 1972. Ciskei encompassed the area where Alice and Fort Hare were located. Earlier in 1968, Fort Hare had also decisively taken steps to increase its council members to include Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the Ciskei and the Regional Director of Bantu Education of that hatchling Ciskei Bantustan. It was clear that in the long-run the University would be remoulded to serve these Bantustans.[42] That obligation and the added necessity to expand on the teaching scope of South African history, also reflected in the modifications Coetzee's department made on the syllabi from 1973 onwards. Additionally to what was already taught since the 1960s for the third-year course, two papers were developed: one on the study of forces for anti-colonialism in selected African countries. Another was on the historical method, the philosophy of history and historiography, which hitherto was offered at honours level only. Three additional, but, yet optional honours papers were also developed; one on population migration of the southern Bantu, the other on historical relationship and contact between the Bantu and the Khoisan, and thirdly on aspects of the history of either the Transkei or the Ciskei.[43]

40 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, pp. 160-161; L Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage and Captive Land: A Socio-political History of Resettlement and Change in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1960 to 2005* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2018), pp. 36 -47.

41 Calendars of the University College of Fort Hare for the years 1961 to 1969; UFH, Alice, Registry, *Special Meeting of the Senate Executive Committee,* 24 August 1973; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 49-51.

42 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 49-51.

43 Calendars of the University of Fort Hare for the years 1974 to 1980.

Those reforms allowed Coetzee to recruit additional services of fresh colleagues at lectureship level in 1973 and in 1977. In the interim period of 1975 to 1976, Fort Hare had also started a branch in Umtata (renamed Mthatha after 1995), which became the forerunner of the University of Transkei (UNITRA) from 1977 after that homeland accepted "independence" in 1976. The advent of UNITRA compelled Fort Hare to withdraw from the Transkei, but from 1979 it opted to open another division in Zwelitsha, largely for Ciskei civil servants. The latter external division obliged a further expansion of Coetzee's history department as it also began to offer lectures in Zwelitsha. As it turned out, the new rector, John Lamprecht and another Afrikaner who succeeded De Wet in 1981, was even more sophisticated than his predecessor on the role Fort Hare was to play in augmenting the services of the Ciskei. Academic departments were grown to carry out the added tasks of expanding the vision of the university closer to the hub and activities of the new homeland (i.e. Ciskei), which also followed the Transkei example by accepting specious independence in 1981. The agreement was made that Fort Hare would continue being administered by South Africa's DET for another five years, and only be eligible to Ciskei from 1987 onwards.[44]

Meanwhile, by 1982 on the eve of Coetzee's retirement, Fort Hare's presence had started to gravitate further than the original site of Alice. Thus the University's presence was felt within a significant administrative core of Ciskei, in the Zwelitsha area. Importantly, Coetzee's history department had also by then grown to five full staff members who also had to alternate provision of additional classes in the Zwelitsha branch. It had essentially taken Coetzee 23 years to build and resource that history department with ample personnel, whilst during those years he also sat in critical positions at senate and council representation. In those 23 years, he had also witnessed the general growth in the number of Fort Hare students, from only 350 in 1960 to just over 3 000 by 1983. In that latter year, the overall history undergraduate class almost reached the 150 mark for the first time. Yet, the department battled to produce history honours, and, especially postgraduates or historical research students. Officially then, Coetzee was partially successful in setting up a merely teaching-focused history department at Fort Hare. From 1983, the work he had instilled fell under the headship of Dermot Michael Moore, whom Coetzee had personally drafted into the department during 1977.[45]

Expectations on Moore were high within the department and the faculty of arts that he would enhance the groundwork Coetzee had laid. On his first arrival at Fort Hare during 1977, he already was considered a good teacher,

44 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 56-60; Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage*, pp. 51-52.
45 *The Fort Harian* (Fort Hare Newsletter), 8, January/April 1984.

who, in addition to a Master of Arts in History qualification also possessed Teacher's Diploma from Natal with distinction in English and principles of education. By1982 he had advanced to complete a history doctorate with UNISA on a military subject – an examination of the role of the South African Air Force in the Korean War of the early 1950s.[46] Fort Hare promoted him from senior lecturer to professor in 1983, the year he also took over the departmental headship. Whilst the nature of his doctoral research didn't necessarily equip him with grounding familiarity on the Eastern Cape, and above all, Fort Hare, he still utilised it for further modification of the syllabi that Coetzee initiated. The adjustments he made were modest, only at third year and honours levels. In the former class, an extra optional paper was developed focusing on Cold War and new power politics in selected world cases during the post-WWII period. Clearly, that new theme had much to do with Moore himself applying part of his doctoral work. Whilst he also introduced a similar theme at honours level, he equally prioritised an introduction of additional paper on the modern Southern African region (with a focus on the twentieth century). Having taken two of the only three years he served as the head of the history department to amend the course, Moore surprisingly gave up the history headship in 1986, for a senior administration post. From 1986 he accepted an invitation to serve as a Fort Hare registrar academic. Thus, the history department was left without a head for the ensuing three years, from 1986 to 1989. In that same period, Moore also ascended further to the position of deputy vice-chancellor by 1988.[47]

After the hiatus caused by the unpredicted resignation of Moore, Jan Christoffel Aucamp was appointed new head of the history department in 1989. Similarly to Coetzee, Aucamp had received training and his doctoral degree from the Stellenbosch University. Like Moore, his research was incompatible to the history of the Eastern Cape, and more so, mundane and not compatible to the Fort Hare heritage, but, focused on the history of the Cape soft grapevines.[48] His selection to the history department headship was indicative of the residual influence the Afrikaner led management of Lamprecht still held on Fort Hare in spite of the institution being technically handed over to the Ciskei administration in 1987. In any case, the idiosyncrasy of that Ciskei administration of Fort Hare was evidenced by the non-financial contribution of its government to the running affairs of the University, which were still eked

46 DM Moore, The Role of the South African Air Force in the Korean War 1950 – 1953 (Dit Lit and Phil, UNISA, 1982).

47 Calendars of the University of Fort Hare for the years 1983 to 1988; *The Fort Harian*, 8 January/April 1984.

48 JC Aucamp, *Die Geskiedenis van die Kaapse Sagtevrugteedryf, 1896-1910* (Dit Lit and Phil, Stellenbosch, 1986).

up by South Africa's DET by 1989.[49] Whilst Fort Hare had aptly embarked on the mandate of serving the Ciskei homeland, the NP government was crudely grasping the price of sustaining such a homeland system. It was, however, forces that had built around mobilising student politics, and unionising Fort Hare workers for much of the second half of the decade of the 1980s, that would pose a new challenge to the university administration during the early 1990s. They in tandem also deferred Aucamp's headship of the history department before it even gathered pace. He was compelled to reset and would operate under a rapidly changing Fort Hare from 1990 and onwards.

## 4. TRIALS AND OPTIMISMS OF CHANGE: A CHALLENGED HISTORY DEPARTMENT AMIDST DEMOCRATISING AND EXPANDING FORT HARE, 1990 -2015

Following intense insurrection during the late 1980s, the Ciskei homeland faced meltdown. Its longtime self-imposed leader, Lennox Sebe, whom Fort Hare management once attempted in vain to appoint chancellor in 1982 was ousted in a bloodless coup by Oupa Gqozo, during 1990. Persistent aversion from a majority of students and staff towards the Ciskei government, also sped the end of Lamprecht's reign and his assistants, who included Moore, as workers and students alike took inspiration from the Gqozo coup as they turned on the senior management. Crucially, in that critical period of change, staff and students were conscious of the need for leadership that resonated with the altering political climate countrywide. Brian Gardner, an accountant and senior academic, who was seen as an impartial candidate by Fort Hare's Democratic Staff Association led by black academics, was appointed acting vice-chancellor. As it turned out, the switch from the Afrikaner dominated administration of Lamprecht, preceded a tumultuous national negotiation process towards political transition and development of a post-apartheid constitution. During the brief acting role of Gardner, the negotiation process had coalesced into a forum for diverse political parties, and groups to institute a platform for discussion - the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). Political parties had to reconstitute themselves whilst engaging in the CODESA talks, wherein the fate of homelands such as Ciskei, depended largely on the NP government's bargaining power. In any case, the fate of Ciskei was predestined to collapse due to continuing insurrection, and

49 Johnson, "Control, Compliance", pp. 240-241.

particularly, by the push for a unitary democratic state by the ANC, which had been unbanned together with other African political parties in 1990.[50]

All of these developments, and especially the Fort Hare commotion, played in front of yet to be settled Aucamp. It did not help him that the number of teaching staff in the department was still low, and his staff thus remained challenged to run classes effectively in the external division in Zwelitsha. Amazingly, the fortunes of Fort Hare with student numbers continued to prosper as the demand for higher education from the black community also swelled in the early 1990s. Moreover, the university opened its doors to returning exiles, the majority of whom identified with this institution because of its long connection with the history of the liberation struggle in the country. To crystalise that image, Fort Hare inaugurated the ANC-aligned Sibusiso Bengu, a Professor of Political Science, as its first African vice-chancellor in 1991, thus ending the ephemeral leadership role of Gardner. Bengu's leadership role was also given vast support, when the ANC struggle veteran and Fort Hare alumnus of the late 1930s to early 1940s, Oliver Tambo was also appointed Chancellor. In his acceptance speech, Tambo invoked history, observing that Fort Hare had, "since its birth [been], a site of epic battles between forces of democracy and those opposed to it".[51] It was clear that the ANC had committed to supporting Fort Hare, which it fittingly saw as a recruitment ground for future generations of activists in its remobilisation campaign. Outside Fort Hare, within the homelands of the Ciskei and the Transkei, the main political parties tussled for influence. In the Eastern Cape, tertiary institutions like Rhodes, UNITRA (now Walter Sisulu) and even Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela) universities, the ANC ramped up its enlistment campaign during this early-1990s epoch.[52]

One major incident for historical studies at Fort Hare then, was the decision taken by various liberation movements at Devonshire hotel, in Johannesburg during 1991, to deposit their respective records at this university in recognition of its long association with the struggle history. The ANC, at the forefront of that decision, led the way and sent its first consignment of records to Fort Hare during September 1992. In his receipt for the university, the new vice-chancellor, Bengu laid down the gauntlet to the institutions associated with the teaching and writing of the country's history:

50 Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage*, pp. 52-54; *Fort Hare* pp. 62-63; L Wotshela, "The Fate of the Ciskei and Adjacent Border Towns, Political Transition in a Democratising South Africa, 1985-1995". In: SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Volume 4, Part 3 (Pretoria: Pan Africa Press, 2019), pp.1855 – 1899.

51 Massey, *Under Protest*, p. 285 (see especially, the South African and Fort Hare timeline).

52 Wotshela, *Capricious Patronage*, pp. 296-297; *Fort Hare* pp. 62-63; Wotshela, "The Fate of the Ciskei", pp. 1855 -1899.

> ...this is the opportunity we have all been waiting for, and there will never be a better chance for us to relook at our country's bitter past, whilst we will be at the same time armed with prospects of rewriting and correcting the account of such past. It is the moment to appreciate those who are in the position of teaching the history of the country....[53]

The move to deposit the records by the ANC, and certainly Bengu's approval speech, nudged the history department to react with the purpose of including into its syllabi some of the key aspects that were foreseen to be appropriate for South Africa's liberation history. Key challenges however still lingered as the arriving ANC and other political parties consignments remained uncatalogued to be effectively utilised for proper scholarly referencing. It remained so, for almost another decade, as the Howard Pim Unit of the Fort Hare library had to earmark two of its key members to prioritise cataloguing of the various records of the worldwide ANC missions into a proper archive. Meanwhile, in spite of readjusting syllabi on modern South Africa to include themes of resistance and rise of African nationalism, at third-year level, from 1995 onwards, Aucamp's department remained tormented by staff shortage. From 1993, it lost one of its lecturing staff Nico Jooste, yet to administration. Thus by 1994, Aucamp had only two further staff: one senior lecturer, Drusilla Yekela, whom Coetzee trained and appointed in 1973, and one lecturer Tim Goetze, whom Moore initially employed to teach in the Zwelitsha branch during the 1980s. The three staff members were only supported by one tutor, who also had administrative errands for the department. Critically, African Studies, which continued the theme on African Ethic history since prior 1960, was disbanded at the end of 1993. Thus, Anthropology and Archeology stood as independent departments from 1994 and swung a few students who had a continental interest to undertake history. As a result, overall graduate numbers for Aucamp's department remained steady, as they surpassed 200 by early 1995.[54]

The advent of the Govan Mbeki Research Resource Centre (GMRRC) at Fort Hare from 1995, also widened the dimension of historical studies. Under the leadership of a valued historian, Sean Morrow, GMRRC had the mandate to develop research capacity in the humanities and social sciences and thus encouraged interdisciplinary research with students based in different fields. Some of the students had majored in history, and while

53 Bengu Files, held at the Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare; See, Unpublished handwritten notes on acceptance of the ANC Liberation Archives, 23 September 1991, pp. 1-2.

54 General Prospectuses of University of Fort Hare, years 1990-1995; Interview: Author with M Maamoe, Fort Hare, Alice 4 August 2018. Mosoabuli Maamoe was initially one of the Howard Pim Library staff member who catalogued and prepared the ANC archive.

Aucamp's department struggled for staff to assist them with postgraduate studies, they moved to the GMRRC where they received supervision. Several of those students were prepared to generously assist in the sorting of inbound donated liberation archives, gain first-hand insight on contents, for the benefit of their research interest. Others were also engrossed by the records of Fort Hare itself, which had been generated on this institution in the course of its history. Their other focus areas were on aspects of social history and local art. Those diverse interests resulted in regular seminars, several dissertations and papers, ranging from topics of indigenous art in the Eastern Cape to records of Fort Hare, to activities of liberation movements in exile such as the ANC in Tanzania and the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO).[55] Inopportunely, the history department that could have profited from collaborating with the GMRRC continued with rendering its syllabi in isolation. That dog-in-the-manger attitude to cross-disciplinary scholarly work cost it an opportunity for the department to bolster its postgraduate programme. It thus remained a strictly teaching, rather than, research aspiring department.

Meanwhile, Bengu's tenure as the vice-chancellor came to an end midway in 1994, on his appointment as the first Minister of Education in the cabinet of Nelson Mandela. His successor Mbulelo Mzamane, a scholar of English and African literature, inherited most of the financial woes that largely arose from wage and salary bills adjustments for equitable remuneration. Besides, the majority of nearly 6 000 students of Fort Hare by 1994/5 came from poor homes. Whilst the Mandela government in its initial Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) catered for Tertiary Education Financial Students Assistance (TEFSA), non-payment of fees remained rife. That financial instability tested Mzamane's tenure, but, he like his predecessor, Bengu, opened further prospects for history and to a large extent curatorship. He made moves during his tenure in 1996 to 1998 to centralise holdings for all heritage and liberation records, including the old African collection that had been part of Anthropology whilst under African Studies. Some of that material also emanated from the Centre for Xhosa Literature and that, along with artwork, artefacts and exhibitions were processed to be accessible for academic research, and the broader public. There were also efforts to catalogue university records that included not only those of institutional bodies such as senate and council, but, also those of the institution alumni. Whilst those processes were at play, the PAC followed the ANC and also

55 Morrow, "An Argument for history", pp.32-36; B Maaba, The Students of Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, 1978 -1992 (MA, Fort Hare, 1999); S Morrow and N Vokwana, "Shaping in dull dead earth their dreams of riches and beauty": Clay Modelling at eHala and Hogsback in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27 (1), 2001, pp. 137-161; Morrow and Gxabalashe, "The records of Fort Hare", pp. 481-497.

deposited much of its collection at Fort Hare in 1996. At the beginning of 1997, Mzamane's administration consolidated all those national treasures in the new National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS), which coincidently was opened by Bengu, in his capacity as the Minister of Education. Predictably, on that occasion, Bengu re-entreated Fort Hare's commitment to history, and history teaching in his speech.[56] Aucamp's tenure, however, came to an end during that very same 1997. After almost eight years of having been the head, there was no structural change in the department. Significantly his staff compliment had diminished to what Coetzee and Moore held before him. Nevertheless, he still navigated the department at a critical period of Fort Hare's managerial change.

Mzamane's administration demonstrated its solemnity for a new history department head by outwardly advertising the vacancy. That did not deter one of the then internally contracted lecturers, Timothy Stapleton to apply. Stapleton, a Canadian who had an interest on Southern Africa already held a Dalhousie University History doctorate. He had written a monograph on his research on Maqoma, one of the renowned local Xhosa Chiefs of the nineteenth century, around the Kat river, west of the Tyhume river that encompasses Fort Hare. He, however, lost out to John Hendricks, who also had a Michigan history doctorate and teaching experience from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) where he did his graduate studies. Hendricks eloquently stated his interest on aspects of African nationalism and intellectualism that equally complemented the heritage of Fort Hare. He clinched the history headship post by underlining the necessity of including the inbound liberation archives into the evolving history syllabi.[57] Indeed once he assumed duty from 1998, he committed his staff to the drafting and addition of two pertinent modules at third-year level. One focused on a comprehensive history of the liberation struggle in twentieth-century South Africa, and the other on the significance and value of Oral History, as well as its debates. For the same third-year level, a module on the Eastern Cape history was augmented, and given a longer scope from initial contacts of European groups with local people up to facets of the twentieth century. By the end of 1999, Hendricks had upped his staff to five persons, with an additional departmental secretary. Despite the teaching staff having to provide lessons at the external Zwelitsha branch, it was a larger department than at the end term of Aucamp.[58]

56 Mzamane files, held at Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare; See, unpublished handwritten notes on the Official Opening of NAHECS, 24 September 1997; Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 64-66.

57 Interview: Author with D Yekela, Fort Hare, Alice, 2 March 2016.

58 See, General Prospectuses of Fort Hare, 1999 to 2001.

Still, there remained a challenge with the falling number of learners as history continued to face competition as a subject of choice, from other social sciences subjects, such as sociology and political sciences. Ironically, although history was seen as a struggle-orientated school subject during the apartheid years, it was waning in the school syllabus of the mid-to-late 1990s since it became subsumed into social studies to Grade 9, and became one of the optional subjects in Grades 10 to 12.[59] As mystifying as the decline of history in the post-apartheid school curriculum was, that occurrence still translated to the overall decline of potential history graduate student numbers. Indeed, in spite of the syllabi revisions, the overall graduate number of Fort Hare history department dipped to below 200 in 1999.[60] Significantly, Fort Hare was not alone during this epoch of the late 1990s in the permeating challenge of waning interest in the discipline of history. In universities where history had always been presented and pursued solely for teaching purposes, it could not stay alive. Scholarly, Paul Maylam also noted organisational and other intellectual difficulties, most certainly the unease generated by the postmodern deconstruction of hegemonic truths which manifested to self-doubt among historians at the time.[61] There were grave consequences for other institutions. For instance, history was almost wiped off the then University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) curriculum after the rationalisation of academic disciplines in that institution in 1999/2000. Whilst it partially remained a component of the school of humanities and social sciences, it was reduced to an auxiliary course often taken by students to fulfil their programmes rather than those who sought to pursue it at postgraduate level.[62]

Significantly for Fort Hare, Mzamane's administration had in that same period of 1998/9 conversely fallen, largely because of financial bungling that was amplified by the ongoing student and worker protests, amidst impending cutbacks.[63] Whereas Mzamane was ultimately sacked, the salvaging of that crisis ironically impacted further on the history department. The rescue process had initiated a strategic plan for change, and repositioning of the university. Termed *Strategic Plan 2000*, it was essentially a corporate governance tool that facilitated rationalisation and realignment of faculties, whilst creating centres for specific services and outputs as well as austerity on financial control. Derrick Swartz, an academic appointed vice-chancellor after Mzamane's demise, put into use the *Strategic Plan 2000* during the early 2000s. One of the centres that emerged with the *Plan* impacted on

59 Morrow, "An Argument for History", pp. 32-36.
60 Interview: Author with D Yekela.
61 Maylam, "Tensions within History", pp. 1-12.
62 Wotshela, "Discipline of History", pp. 77-82.
63 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 64-65.

research and production of history postgraduate students. As it transpired, the GMRCC was modified to a Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GMRDC), with wider remit to drive and govern university research across faculties. New dean of research post, with managerial staff was attached to that GMRDC.[64] Morrow, who for several years led events of the preceding unit, whilst supervising several history postgraduates was snubbed for the new deanship for another academic, who hitherto had no affairs to the unit. Essentially the history department lost all the foregoing postgraduate research activities connected to Morrow's scholarly expertise. Fort Hare would eventually lose Morrow to the Human Science Research Council during the early 2000s.

Concurrently, one of the new faculties the *Plan* yielded was termed African and Democracy Studies (ADS), which coalesced hitherto three faculties: arts, in which the history department was located, law, which was one of the largest staffed, but, had its administrative glitches at the time, and lastly theology that Mzamane had attempted to expunge, during 1998. To save funds, positions of the previous three deans, and support staff were reduced to one. Hendricks who was partly involved in the conceptualisation of the *Plan*, duly opted for the new deanship of the ADS, abandoned history headship and took one experienced history lecturer, Tim Goetze, with him to act as the new faculty manager. With financial austerity measures in place, the *Plan* also delimited what were deemed viable, or, not so viable, academic departments – strictly measured by thresholds of teaching and research outputs.[65] At the start of 2003, such measures endorsed only two teaching staff in the history department whose overall undergraduate numbers had continued to shrink to less than 150. The syllabi that was amended and adopted during Hendricks' tenure as the head remained however unchanged. As a result, those two remaining lecturers had to continue offering lessons in the main Alice campus and in the branch that had now relocated from Zwelitsha to Bisho (renamed Bhisho, after 1995), for proximity to the provincial administration headquarters. Basically, the two academics had to carry out the teaching load of modules that were initially developed for five teaching members. Whilst the department struggled for continuity, the only one remaining senior staff, Yekela, who, as aforesaid had served the department since 1973, also doubled as the acting head. With her new colleague, Luvuyo Wotshela, who had freshly been recruited after a year of postdoctoral research, with Oxford,

64 UFH, *Strategic Plan 2000*.
65 UFH, *Strategic Plan 2000*, pp. 62-63.

and Nelson Mandela Universities, they solely ran the department in Alice and in the Bisho branch for the five years from 2003 to 2007.[66]

It has to be underlined; the 2000 *Plan* did invest more money on strategic planning than on core scholarship programmes. Its end goals, though exquisite, were not easy to realise. Importantly Swartz's administration also used the *Plan* in managing the integration of the East London Rhodes campus that Fort Hare inherited in 2004. That was part of university mergers conceived and applied by then Minister of Education Kader Asmal, who succeeded Bengu. Fort Hare's inheritance of the Rhodes East London campus also raised a key question, as to how the university was to deal with the new identity of a multi-campus model. As the social geography of Fort Hare was vastly changing, and no longer concentrated in Alice, clear thinking was essential for the moving of academic programmes across the divides of spatial campus. To partially solve the problem, the new Bisho division was remoulded to focus on programmes related to public administration and governance, to harmonise with the locality of civil servants in that administrative area.[67] Thus pressure was taken off humanities disciplines to duplicate in Bisho. Nevertheless, the precise location of departments of social sciences and humanities between Alice and East London for Fort Hare became even a bigger challenge. The previous Rhodes East London division, which started in the 1970s for mainly commercial courses, had by 1990s gradually integrated, education, social sciences and humanities.[68] Its merger with Fort Hare amplified enormous overlap, or, duplication of academic fields across different spaces.

Thus after 2004, a replica history department was started for the newly merged East London campus. For the following few years it had no staff, and thus relied on sporadic lessons by Hendricks, who already was immersed with deanship. It also depended on the expertise and part-time teaching of Gary Minkley, a historian who after a stint in the University of Western Cape history department had returned to East London as a senior researcher in the newly formed Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research (FHISER), under the directorship of a renowned Anthropologist, Leslie Bank. In the meantime, the lifespan of the ADS faculty came to a hasty end at the start of 2005, with the addition of social sciences and humanities from the former Rhodes East London division. That integration yielded a Faculty of Social

66 Interview: Author with D Yekela. I personally experienced these developments whilst teaching history in the Alice campus and the Bisho branch from 2003 until my departure to the Department of Geography and Environmental Science in the second half of 2007.

67 Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, pp. 65-67.

68 P Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904 – 2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 2017), pp. 246-247.

Sciences and Humanities (SSH), for both East London and Alice campuses. The new SSH faculty still included theology, and Hendricks retained its overall deanship, but law, which hitherto was covered in the ADS, moved to set up its separate faculty.[69]

All these configurations were obligatory but did not instantly enhance graduate history teaching, and production, either in Alice, whose staff continued to be in short supply, or, in the replica department in East London that was yet to have its own staff allocation. In fact, Minkley, who partially helped with teaching in East London, was inundated further after 2006, as he became director of postgraduate studies. That new position augmented functions of the GMRDC, since it had a duty to organise and administrate postgraduate research activity across faculties. Opportunely, after 2007 the East London history department received its first staff allocation, and that led to a lectureship position for Chris Andreas, who then was also working on his doctoral research with Oxford University. A sole appointee in East London, Andreas relied on relic help he could solicit from Hendricks and Minkley, but he was equally overawed by the uncoordinated setup between East London and Alice departments. Nor was the situation getting easier for Yekela, who amidst headship obligations, which were run from the Alice front, and her continuing doctoral studies, also had to deal with staff turnover and shortage. From mid-2007, she had lost Wotshela to an internal senior lectureship appointment in the Geography and Environmental Science department. After a hiatus of over a year, her Alice history department finally got lectureship replacement that was given to Thozama April, who then was also starting with her doctoral research with UWC. She would remain with the department until 2016 but again would receive a better offer elsewhere on completion of her doctoral work.[70]

Cognisant of redeveloping a history postgraduate base, Yekela in the meantime motivated with the support of Hendricks for the appointment of Jeff Peires, as an adjunct professor for the history department. An esteemed scholar of the Eastern Cape history, with experience from teaching at Rhodes, and UNITRA, as well as work in the post-1994 government, Peires had familiarity with the heritage of the Tyhume River that linked to prominent roles of the historical Lovedale and Fort Hare. From 2008, whilst he was heading the Cory Library for Historical Research at Rhodes, he started assisting with supervision of Fort Hare postgraduates. He preferred relating more with the Alice site, where he also had acquired insight on the archives of the liberation

69 General Prospectus, University of Fort Hare, 2005.

70 General Prospectuses, University of Fort Hare, 2006 -2008; Social Sciences and Humanities Prospectuses, University of Fort Hare , 2007-2010; Interview: Author with D Yekela; Interview: Author with T April, Fort Hare, Alice, 3 September 2020.

movement, which had been deposited, catalogued and steadily transferred to NAHECS by 2010. Yet even with his gifts, Peires did not find the under-resourced and poorly-staffed Alice history department easy to assist. His intermediate and long-term objectives of mentoring postgraduates were consistently thwarted by arbitrary requirements to assist in undergraduate programmes. At times, faculty administration was lurid, and blurry terms for adjunct professorship often led to long periods without even financial rewards. Whilst he was content to assist out of altruism, and out of passion for historical studies, he considered the associated administrative needs stifling to the academic exercise. Yet, he put more time to the task, especially after 2012, when he had vacated the Cory Library to supervise a few Fort Hare masters and doctoral students.[71]

Meanwhile, the FHISER made an impact in the East London department with history postgraduate supervision. From 2008, that unit had adequate infrastructure, which included a computer laboratory, reading and seminar rooms. It attracted an array of postgraduate students from fields of the social sciences and humanities, including those studying history. From 2009, Hendricks' faculty also motivated for the awarding of the National Research Foundation (NRF) SARCHI Chair on Social Change, to Minkley, with anticipation of augmenting postgraduate research in the faculty. Some of Minkley' students also continued using the FHISER research resources. Operating similarly to, but on a far larger scale than the former GMRCC under Morrow in Alice, FHISER and Minkley's Chair flourished. From 2010, FHISER also prepared to offer a two-year Masters degree in African Studies, in partnership with the Centre for African Studies at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. That dedicated interdisciplinary research and postgraduate training, combining course work and dissertation qualified students a Fort Hare Masters degree in Social Science, focusing on either Southern African Cultural or Gender Studies. It also included some elective modules, such as heritage and social transformation, as well as history and liberation in Africa, which were attractive to those who previously were trained in history.[72] The program was certainly different from the earlier Fort Hare African Studies that orbited around Anthropology and Archeology, as well as African Ethnic History and Administration, which was pitched at undergraduate level. To a large extent, the new Masters on African Studies was also viewed by former history students as a vehicle for branching out to practically oriented career paths, than the mere practice of history itself.

71 Interview: Author with J Peires, Alice, Fort Hare, 25 September 2019.

72 See the Social Sciences and Humanities Prospectuses, University of Fort Hare, 2010 to 2015, especially FHISER African Studies Programme.

In spite of those advances, a 2010 review of academic departments across faculties, led by then Fort Hare's office of the deputy vice-chancellor, Rob Midgely, who handled academic affairs, was damning on the history department as it was for the majority of departments in the SSH faculty. The *2010 Review Report* stressed that history had to invent ways of increasing its student numbers and also address the declining continuity of students majoring in the discipline. The Report was especially critical of the Alice numbers, where the whole undergraduate enrolments had declined to less than 130 by 2010, and postgraduates to an absolute minimum of five. East London, which had the use of Minkley's SARCHI Chair, and the FHISER resources, fared much better with 21 postgraduates, notwithstanding that the overall undergraduates were still less than 200 in that department. Thus, the *Review Report* was categorical that the then existing model for history was not feasible and henceforth suggested possible solutions. One of those was a potential union of history with NAHECS, and the likewise afflicted departments such as music and fine art, to establish a School for Cultural and Heritage Studies. Such option, the *Review Report* underlined, would ensure the active utilisation of the archives held at NAHECS, which would offer the prospect for application of a chair in liberation studies. Another related possible solution the *Review Report* offered, was for a development of a teaching and research niche around an Eastern Cape history, heritage studies and the archives. In that respect, it was emphasised that the department should also work closely with the department of library and information science. Additionally, to these suggested options, there were other generic highlighted challenges, like the non-equivalent access to pertinent resources, such as library holdings, which were common for several departments operating across campuses. The lack of a community engagement strategy, which was aligned with the University policy, was also emphasised.[73]

Whilst for much of the following five years after 2010, the history department braced itself to attend to the pointed-out problems and suggested solutions, there were still lingering challenges. Firstly, NAHECS, which held various collections of the liberation archives was undergoing its own re-organisation despite its role being hinted by the *2010 Review Report* for partnership in the revival of history, and other SSH faculty departments. Although its physical records were used in previous years by many scholars, who worked on facets of liberation history, the Centre had embarked on a long-term strategic mission of digitising its holdings. That endeavour which was funded privately was pressed by the pending ANC centenary

73 *Academic Review Report*, University of Fort Hare, 2010, pp. 130-133.

celebrations. That organisation firstly envisaged showcasing the legacy of its first 100years during 2012, via a sampled digital archive.

Nevertheless, with the availability of further funding, the digitisation exercise carried beyond the initially sampled material as the ANC opted to extend the task to most of its mission records held at NAHECS, and much of that exercise continued until depletion of funds by the end of 2018. Logically the ANC-impelled digitisation also encouraged a rethink from NAHECS about spreading the same exercise to holdings of other organisations to harmonise future digital accessing of records for potential use, for either curricular revision or for specific scholarly outputs. Essentially by 2015, which is the end scope of this article, the digitisation of liberation records was not yet harmonised. It is worth underlining that the rethinking from NAHECS to extend digitisation for harmonised access was encouraged by Mvuyo Tom, who since 2008 had replaced Swartz as vice-chancellor. Tom had also seen the value of revisiting Fort Hare's history in the process of consecrating the institution's first 100 years in 2016. For him, that groundwork for an imminent Fort Hare centenary required not only digitisation and curatorship that had to yield physical and digital permanent exhibition of Fort Hare's history but constant writings on several life histories of illustrious alumni of the institution.[74] Thus from 2012, he and Michael Somniso, who meanwhile had replaced Hendricks as the SSH faculty dean, facilitated the transfer of Wotshela to the headship of NAHECS, for primarily the documentation of that history.

The second inhibition for the proposed revival of history stemmed from within the history department itself. Certainly, the staff complement that consisted of only two full-time members in each of the campuses was too low for those academics to embark on a far-reaching revision of syllabi and overly-innovative alluring strategies, as advised by the *2010 Review Plan*. Yet the staff from both campuses concentrated their energies on the aspect of modifying curriculum from 2011. Student numbers, however, did not change much by 2015, and would only rise after 2018, with the current Department of Basic Education's decision to make history compulsory at school level and thus the surge in the number of trainee teachers taking the history undergraduate, but not intending to major. Nevertheless, in the interim period, the teaching staff improvised. One of the entry-level modules that focused on the origins of global and African past was standardised to be comparable to countrywide universities. The staff also explored options of technology-

74 Those writing and documentation errands have resulted in, L Wotshela, *Fort Hare*, and W Nkuhlu: *A Life of Purpose* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, 2014); P Johnson *et al*, *Fort Hare 1916-2016: A Social, Political and Intellectual History* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, Forthcoming 2021). The physical permanent Fort Hare Exhibition is displayed at the De Beers Art Gallery at the Alice campus.

enhanced teaching and learning, as the university also introduced the Blackboard learning management system from the year 2012. Elective papers and or themes on the state of archives and their use in historical research and writing were introduced. Students at the Alice campus consistently had the opportunity of undertaking practical lessons on the preparation and use of the archive as they regularly visited and witnessed the inventorisation process as the records were prepared for digitisation.[75] Overall, the departmental team strove to adopt a pedagogical tool that made the curriculum more diverse and thrilling to entice the students to the history discipline. Such an approach was born out of the realisation that uninspiring historical presentation cannot only be arid for the student but can also be distressing for the teacher.

## 5. AN UNFULFILLED POTENTIAL – A SHORT CONCLUDING REMARK

There is, on the one hand, clear disparity between innate heritage-based from Fort Hare's generational luminaries, who have clearly shaped annals of this institution's past, and, on the other, trialled, but, otiose efforts to set up its historical studies or well-resourced history department. The basis of the former is premised on the genesis, and the evolution of Fort Hare, and whilst processes that impelled the latter were explicitly connected, they also derived from an array of other facets: from organisational phases of the institution, which were shaped by regimes whose plans had sways on academic routes, to roles of internal structures that constantly navigated pathways of scholarly disciplines. Whilst the DBE managed Fort Hare tried via ethnic composition of academic departments or faculties to control scholarship route, and whereas the history department during the first two decades under Coetzee stayed less-resourced, the history course had to be introduced. As a core humanities subject, it was still seen by the university senate to be related to other disciplines, such as the African Studies that included anthropology, and others like the political, geographical, economic and literary studies that too had historical dimension. Coetzee, and his successors, Moore and Aucamp adhered to generic syllabi applicable to several countrywide universities, but, were perhaps contemptuous to initiate curricula that was inwardly drawn from the intrinsic Fort Hare legacy. That option was probably too premature for their DBE and DET dominated reigns, whilst it is safe to say, Aucamp who was the

75 University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Document Submitted by the History Department of Objectives of Improving Academic Profile and Financial Sustainability, July/August 2011, pp. 1-11.

latest of the three had prospects, but, was overawed by major administrative change and opted to cling to the how things stood.

The last period of 1990 to 2015, first underpinned by changes from tireless Afrikaner-led organisation, to a fledgeling ANC one, emulated countrywide political change, but, became equally anomalous for a thriving history department, irrespective of the importance of the weight of history. Indeed, South Africa's difficult past spawned prospects for extended historical and other enquiries, and, on that end, the inclusive nature of liberation struggle, with facets of African nationalism broadened the scope for historical research. Fort Hare has the enviable position of being the custodian of sources for the production of such history. Such sources have contributed enormously to the growing new historiography in the country. Repeatedly, the importance of that history was and has been invoked on several fronts, within the Fort Hare site; from the voice of the celebrated struggle veteran and alumnus such as Tambo, to Bengu, its very first African vice-chancellor. Yet the challenge of creating a well-resourced and alluring history department remained less successful throughout that 25-year period for the respective heads. At the base of that test, instability, which was often prompted by lack of continuity, tested the under-resourced department. At the apex of the scale, neoliberal aspects of governance and strategic planning directed at regulating rising costs of university management did not have tolerance for marshalling a struggling history department. In that ever-changing Fort Hare environment, the ever-truncating history scholarship continued operating under duress. As this paper is going to press, it has been revealed that the Department of Higher Education and Training has moved to consolidate academic units only in the campus of affiliating majority students. The upshots of that move is that, the Alice campus that produced the aforementioned luminaries but has fewer numbers of graduate students to East London may in the not so distant future ironically be without a history department. Hopefully, for the continued protection of the identity of Fort Hare such outcome will be avoided.

# IN THE SHADOW OF APARTHEID: THE WINDHOEK OLD LOCATION

AUTHOR:

Henning Melber[1],

AFFILIATION:

[1]Extraordinary Professor, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria and Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein; Senior Research Associate, The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, and Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Commonwealth Studies/ School of Advanced Study, University of London. President of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI)

EMAIL:

Henning.Melber@nai.uu.se

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.2

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):33-58

PUBLISHED:

30 December 2020

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch



## ABSTRACT

*The so-called Old Location was established during the early years of the 20th century for most of the African population groups living in Windhoek, the capital of then South West Africa. It confined them to a space separate from but in close vicinity to the city and was the biggest urban settlement for Africans in the country. As from 1960 the residents were forced to relocate into a new township at the margins of the city against their will. This brought an end to inter-group relations, which the Apartheid system and its definition of "separate development" replaced by a stricter sub-division of the various population groups according to classifications based on ethnicity. Protest against the relocation escalated into a violent confrontation in late 1959. This contributed to a post-colonial heroic narrative, which integrates the resistance in the Old Location into the patriotic history of the anti-colonial liberation movement in government since Independence.*

*Presenting insights based mainly on archival studies, this article is an effort towards a social history of the hitherto little acknowledged aspect in the urbanisation processes of the Territory under South African administration. It maps the physical features of the location and assesses its living conditions. Some of the dynamics unfolding between the late 1940s and 1960 also document the plural ethnic interactions, the local governance and the social life of its inhabitants as well as their protest against the forced resettlement. It thereby revisits and portraits a community, which among former residents evokes positive memories compared with the imposed new life in Katutura.*

*Keywords: South West Africa, Apartheid, Windhoek, Old Location, Namibia, separate development*

O Lord, help us who roam about.
Help us who have been placed in Africa
and have no dwelling place of our own.
Give us back a dwelling place.[1]

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Old Location was the Main Location for most of the so-called non-white residents of Windhoek from the early 20th century until 1960, while a much smaller location also existed until 1961 in Klein Windhoek. Being adjacent to the white centre of town, urban planning replaced the Old Location by the newly established township Katutura at the Northern outskirts of Windhoek in the late 1950s, but many residents refused to be relocated. The protest resulted in boycotts and demonstrations, which ended in a massacre on 10 December 1959. As from 1960, forced removals were intensified. But residents in defiance continued to refuse being moved. The Old Location officially closed only in 1968.[2]

This article recapitulates aspects of the social dynamics unfolding in the shadow of apartheid prior to the forced removal until 1960. It is an initial effort to contribute to the partial reconstruction of a place in a specific context of space and time, through the official documents and observations on record.[3]

1 Prayer by Chief Hosea Kutako, delivered on occasion of the annual Herero ceremony at the ancestral graves in Okahandja, as recorded by M Scott, *A Time To Speak* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 223.

2 This article maintains the terminology used in the context of the times, though many of the terms were/are derogatory and offending. The language reflects and documents the views of those claiming (and executing) the power of definition at the given time. This does of course not mean that such language is reproduced in the affirmative. Reference is made in today's perspective to what has been the Main Location until 1960 as the Old Location or Location.

3 This is a considerably revised and modified paper originally prepared for the conference "The role of German-southern African church relations during the 1930s, World War Two and the apartheid era" (Wuppertal, 11-13 March 2014), where the results of a Study Process commissioned by churches and mission societies in Namibia, South Africa and Germany were presented. I thank Hanns Lessing and Christoph Marx for inviting me to join the Study Process with such a topical issue, Ewald Uazuvara Katjivena, Phillip Lühl and Gerhard Tötemeyer for comments on earlier drafts and Arianna Lissoni for adding valuable observations to a later draft. Documents were accessed during visits of the National Archives of Namibia in Windhoek (August 2013), the Basler Afrika Bibliographien in Basel (September/October 2013) and the archive of the United Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Aktenbestand Archiv- und Museumsstiftung der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission/VEM) in Wuppertal in March 2014 and February 2015. I am grateful to Werner Hillebrecht and his colleagues in Windhoek, to Dag Henrichsen and his colleagues in Basel and Wolfgang Apelt in Wuppertal for all the support during these stays, assisting me in getting access to the relevant files. Finally, I much appreciated the guided excursion provided by Gunther von Schumann and

Among these, the by far most instructive source is the undated detailed report of the German ethnologist Günther Wagner compiled mainly during 1951, copies of which are in the Windhoek and Basel archives.[4] During the later 1950s and early 1960s, the local photographer Ottilie Nitzsche-Reiter and her staff were among the few taking pictures, documenting the township life visually.[5] Many of the photos are now in the possession of the Namibian National Archives. In a rare exhibition, a selection of these was displayed in late 2011. They illustrated street scenes, portraits, dance events, funerals and beauty competitions. They gave the Old Location and its residents a face.[6]

## 2. MISSING HISTORY

More than half a century later, it is difficult to fully reconstruct the story of the place, its people, their exchanges and engagements with each other and with the authorities. Authentic local voices and agencies were rarely put on record. Most often, the colonising gaze of white dominance blurred the perspectives and made it difficult for current efforts to present a genuine picture not coloured by the Apartheid lenses.[7] Based on the few accessible memories of those

Helmut Bistri of the Namibia Scientific Society to the last visible remnants of the Windhoek Old Location in May 2015.

4 G Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa. Part I: District of Windhoek.* Unpublished, typeset report undated (1951). Wagner (1908-1952) was employed from 1950 onward as an "Assistant Government Anthropologist for South West Africa" by the South African government. For one of the rare recognitions of his work, applauded as a "monument", see, JB Gewald, "A Teutonic Ethnologist in the Windhoek District: Rethinking the Anthropology of Guenther Wagner". In: D leBeau and R Gordon (eds.), *Challenges for anthropology in the "African renaissance": a Southern African contribution* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2002). Part of his chapter's title ("A Teutonic Ethnologist in the Windhoek District") is inspired by the telling fact that Wagner, who arrived with his family by ship from Germany to Cape Town at the end of January 1950, entered the form for an entry permit under applicant's race with "Teutonic", p. 24.

5 In particular the young German Dieter Hinrichs, who after his professional training at the Munich Photo School joined the studio from April 1959 until December 1960, followed and documented social events at the location and contributed most to what we still have left as a visual illustration

6 "Social Life in the Old Location in the 1950s" is a collection of 57 photos, many dated from 21 May 1961. They were first at display in an exhibition at the National Archives between 14 September and 6 October 2011 and are electronically accessible at: http://dna.polytechnic.edu.na/location/. For a recent effort to reconstruct by means of photos a visualised history of another "old location" for the 1920s to 1960s, see, P Grendon *et al.*, *Usakos – Photographs beyond ruins. The old location albums 1920s-1960s* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2015); for a complementing analysis of the process G Miescher, "The NE 51 Series Frontier: The Grand Narrative of Apartheid Planning and the Small Town", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41 (3), 2015.

7 This article documents such limitations too. As one of the reviewers observed: "The only shortcoming, which unfortunately is common for most articles written on the African in the

growing up there, the forms of social life recapitulated at later stages were far more positively remembered than the realities in the newly constructed, in terms of internal ethnical sub-division much stricter segregated township named Katutura ("a place where we do not stay"). The Anglican bishop Colin O'Brien Winter has maybe best captured the ambivalence of the Old Location, where the poor material conditions contrasted with the social spirit and interaction in the daily life. He frequently visited both the last remnants of the Old Location in the mid-1960s and the still relatively new Katutura during his seven years of service in Namibia before being deported in 1972. His account remains as ambiguous as the Old Location seems to have been.[8]

While a prominent feature and reference point in modern Namibian history, the Old Location has to a large extent remained unexplored beyond the memories of those who lived there.[9] Reverend Michael Scott, a British clergyman with the Anglican Church in South Africa (nicknamed "the troublemaker"), was the only known outsider who became a nuisance for the authorities in the history of the Old Location.[10] Scott assisted the Herero leadership, in particular Chief Hosea Kutako, to petition the United Nations, drawing attention to the plight of the Namibians.[11] In 1948 he camped for two months in the dry riverbed of the Gammams River bordering to the Location.[12] Those classified as Europeans required a permit to enter the Location. As a priest, Rev. Scott was - like all church people from various denominations - exempted from this rule. But he refused to accept this privilege and hence stayed outside of the settlement area. Scott interviewed members of the Location's Advisory Board and was also shooting footage for one of the first protest films made in Southern Africa.[13] Despite this remarkable engagement,

urban areas is its dependency on a "foreign voice", the "other" to tell the story of Africans. This has, however, more to do with the nature of the colonial archive than the author's methodology and presentation."

8 CO Winter, *Namibia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 46-51.

9 A noteworthy, hardly acknowledged exception is the unpublished thesis by Hoffmann, who in her chapter on the Old Location uses a Herero praise poem to uncover a neglected aspect of dealing with the place. See, AG Hoffmann, "Since the Germans came it rains less": Landscape and identity of Herero communities in Namibia (PhD, University of Amsterdam, 2005), pp. 82-123.

10 Cf. F Troup, *In Face of Fear. Michael Scott's Challenge to South Africa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950); PA Hare and HH Blumberg (eds.), *A search for peace and justice. Reflections of Michael Scott* (London: Rex Collings, 1980); A Yates and L Chester, *The Troublemaker. Michael Scott and his lonely struggle against injustice* (London: Autumn Press, 2006).

11 For a general account of the local (mainly Herero) responses resisting incorporation into the Union of South Africa as a fifth province between the mid-1940s and the early 1950s see, J Silvester, "Forging the Fifth Province", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41 (3), 2015.

12 C Saunders, "Michael Scott and Namibia", *African Historical Review* 33 (2), 2007.

13 R Gordon, "Not Quite Cricket: "Civilization on Trial in South Africa": A Note on the First "Protest Film" Made in Southern Africa", *History in Africa* 32, 2005.

his interaction with the residents of the Location during these days receives surprisingly little attention in his memoirs, limited to two paragraphs.[14]

The administration kept a close control and did not welcome any outsiders, considered to be intruders. At a meeting of the Location's Advisory Board on 15 July 1953, chairman De Wet pointed out "that Europeans visit the Location after hours or during week-ends. … if unauthorised Europeans are noticed, they should immediately be reported".[15] According to the advocate Israel Goldblatt, who was in close contact with some of the Herero leaders resident at the Location, somewhat less "informal" visits by whites were rare occasions.[16] Reverend Karuaera (1920-2013), a widely respected spiritual leader also politically active, was quoted as "no other whites ever came".[17]

There was however a regular presence of white clergy people. In particular the missionaries of the Rhenish Mission Society and two mission sisters from Germany, who took care of health and education matters were permanently interacting with the residents of the Location.[18] The Bishop of the Anglican Church and his co-workers also had a presence in the Old Location, especially since the early 1960s, as they held church services and were teaching classes at the St Barnabas School.[19] White shop owners also visited the Location occasionally, if only to make sure that customers paid their bills.[20]

Nothing is – for obvious reasons – on record for the intimate inter-racial contacts, which presumably chairman de Wet in the quote above mainly referred to. But it is known that children were regularly interacting across the colour bar:

> A German informant who lived on the town side of the Gammams River, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Old Location whose borderline with "white"

14 Scott, *A Time To Speak*, p. 243.

15 National Archives of Namibia (hereafter NAN), Municipality of Windhoek (hereafter MWI), 1919-1961, Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/3, Volume I. No further specific reference could however be traced, if this was aimed at certain individuals.

16 I Goldblatt, *Building Bridges. Namibian Nationalists Clemens Kapuuo, Hosea Kutako, Brenden Simbwaye, Samuel Witbooi* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2010), pp. 78-88.

17 Goldblatt, *Building Bridges. Namibian Nationalists Clemens Kapuuo, Hosea Kutako, Brenden Simbwaye, Samuel Witbooi,* p. 83.

18 See for more details on this particular interaction, H Melber, "The Windhoek Old Location". In: H Lessing *et al* (eds.), *Contested Relations. Protestantism between Southern Africa and Germany from the 1930s to the Apartheid era* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015).

19 According to Mrs Gestwicki, who was part of the Anglican diocese then, she and her late husband were as US-American volunteers between 1964 and 1968 in charge of these activities and often interacted also beyond these functions with residents in the Location (information provided by Dag Henrichsen, who managed to trace Mrs Gestwicki during 2013 in the USA).

20 Information provided to Dag Henrichsen by Franz Irlich (Swakopmund), whose father had such a "native store".

> Windhoek was somewhat fluid, said that as a child he had played every day with the black children who came running across the footbridge to play in the river bed.[21]

## 3. SELECTIVE HISTORY

In marked contrast to the lack of accessible social history documenting the daily life, the Location's residents play a prominent role as a reference point in the patriotic history presenting the formation of Namibia's modern anti-colonial resistance leading to an armed liberation struggle. The refusal to be voluntarily relocated to the new township of Katutura, the protest organised and the escalation into the massacre of 10 December 1959 were turning points in the consolidation of political organisations, and especially the formation of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO).

In contrast to the prominence given to the 10 December massacre in the "struggle history" of Namibia, little has been hitherto published and made accessible for a wider audience on the organisation and forms of daily life in the Old Location. It is noteworthy that the first critical reports of visitors to South West Africa, bringing the plight of the Namibian people to the attention of the outside world during the early 1960s[22], made little to no reference to the Old Location at all.[23] The significant experience and its consequences are mentioned in the hitherto by far most authoritative history of Namibia only on one page.[24] The published personal memories of Namibians engaged in the early anti-colonial struggle of the time hardly refer to the daily life and interactions in Windhoek's old township beyond generalised statements.[25] A reason for this might be that the (auto-)biographical narratives were from activists not physically resident in the Location. With the exception of Ya-Otto, who summarises his experiences as a young teacher in the Location as from

21 MN Jafta *et al. An investigation of the shootings at the Old Location on 10 December* 1959 (Windhoek: University of Namibia, 1991), p. 27. Christo Lombard confirmed this daily interaction in a personal communication with the author. He grew up in this part of Windhoek West during the 1950s and remembers playing regularly with children of his age group from the adjacent Location.

22 Cf. C Saunders, "Some roots of anti-colonial historical writing about Namibia", *Journal of Namibian Studies* 3, 2008.

23 AK Lowenstein, *Brutal Mandate. A Journey to South West Africa* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1962); R First, *South West Africa* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

24 M Wallace with J Kinahan, *A History of Namibia. From the Beginning to 1990* (London: Hurst, 2011), p. 254.

25 V Ndadi, *Breaking Contract. The Story of Vinnia Ndadi.* Recorded and edited by D Mercer (Richmond: LSM Press, 1974); J Ya-Otto *et al*, *Battlefront Namibia. An autobiography* London: Heinemann, 1982); H Shityuwete, *Never follow the wolf. The autobiography of a Namibian freedom fighter* (London: Kliptown Boks, 1990); S Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered. The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma* (London: Panaf, 2001).

1959[26], these were mainly contract workers from the Northern part of the country known as Ovamboland.[27]

Contract workers were since 1947 accommodated at the Pokkiesdraai compound separately erected at the Northern margins of the city.[28] They often were also living as domestic staff in separate rooms at the white employer's house or were on contract in other towns or on farms. Hence most of those coming from the Northern parts of the country had little to no access to the Main Location. The impact of the violent clash of 10 December 1959 as the midwife for the formation of the militant anti-colonial resistance has therefore been the main focus of their histories on record. Both John Ya-Otto and Sam Nujoma highlight the fatal events in their autobiographies. Nujoma's book is a classical example how the history is appropriated into a self-serving reference point to promote what shortly afterwards became SWAPO.[29] The selective narrative sidelines other political organisations and activists such as the Herero Chiefs Council and the South West African National Union (SWANU), who both were more involved in organising the popular protest in the Old Location than the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO), which as a movement mainly among contract workers preceded during the 1950s the formation of SWAPO. The combat literature "did not, of course, make such writing good history. It was not "history" in any real meaning of that word, in that it did not attempt to present a rounded picture or explore the complexities and ambiguities of the struggle".[30]

Rather, the forced removal, the protest and the killing of demonstrators turned the location into "a source of potent symbolism for the emerging

26 Ya-Otto, *Battlefront Namibia*, pp. 34ff.

27 Another exception is the autobiography of Namibia's so far most prominent singer Jackson Kaujeua (1953-2010). From a different perspective (being born a few years later than the first generation of struggle activists in the Southern part of the country with a cultural background in the Herero/Damara community, and never in any higher ranks of the anticolonial movement but rather at the margins) he recalls his childhood and teenage memories of the Old Location in a much more intimate way. J Kaujeua, *Tears Over the Desert. An Autobiography* (Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1994).

28 With a focus on the harbour town of Walvis Bay the emergence of the compound system for contract workers is documented by A Byerley, "The Rise of the Compound-Hostel-Location Assemblage as Infrastructure of South African Colonial Power: The Case of Walvis Bay 1915-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41 (3), 2015.

29 For critical reviews of the constructed patriotic history in Nujoma's memoirs see, J Saunders, "Liberation and Democracy. A critical reading of Sam Nujoma's 'Autobiography'". In: H Melber (ed.), *Re-examining Liberation in Namibia. Political culture since Independence* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2003); A Du Pisani, "Memory politics in Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma. My Life in SWAPO and my participation in the liberation struggle of Namibia", *Journal of Namibian Studies* 1, 2007.

30 C Saunders, "History and the armed struggle. From anti-colonial propaganda to "patriotic history"? In: H Melber (ed.), *Transitions in Namibia. Which changes for whom?* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2007), p. 18.

nationalist movement, as well as a focus for nostalgia".[31] As Anette Hoffmann suggests, "the strongly party-politically informed institutionalisation of memory decided to cultivate … a seductive inversion: creating heroes and a heroic resistance where some Namibians still remember a brutal killing of unarmed victims".[32] Human Rights Day, celebrated internationally on 10 December, is in Namibia as Women's Day a public holiday. It commemorates the massacre and pays tribute to the women who were leading the boycott and protest.[33] One of them is honoured with a grave at the Heroes' Acre opened in 2000. Anna ("Kakurukaze") Mungunda was shot and killed while trying to set fire to the car of the location's superintendent. Sam Nujoma, the co-founder of SWAPO and its first president from 1960 to 2007, portrays her in his memoirs in the language of the heroic genre:

> I was very moved to see her body. I knew her of course. She seemed to be shining even in her death. We knew when we saw those bodies of innocent people that we had to find a way of fighting against those Boers. It was what inspired me and others to leave the country, to prepare ourselves for a protracted armed liberation struggle.[34]

His description of the corpse as "shining", almost as if surrounded by a halo, is symptomatic for the glorifying rhetoric. In marked contrast, an independent local newspaper offered in its editorial a scathing counter narrative:

> Kakurukaze Mungunda is often idolised as the Old Location's hero who aroused fervor around apartheid's forced removal of people to Katutura. Little is said about her being a wayward, out of control (some even say a drunk), stone-thrower, who was not part of the protest movement, but someone who became an accidental hero while leaders, including Sam Nujoma, were dodging and hiding from the apartheid police.[35]

31 M Wallace, *Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915-1945* (Basel: P. Schlettwein, 2002), p. 55.

32 Hoffmann, *"Since the Germans came it rains less"*, p. 87.

33 See on the institutionalisation of a post-colonial public memory culture H Melber, "'Namibia, land of the brave": Selective memories on war and violence within nation building". In: J Abbink *et al* (eds.), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003); H Melber, "Namibia's Past in the Present: Colonial Genocide and Liberation Struggle in Commemorative Narratives", *South African Historical Journal* 54, 2005.

34 Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered*, pp. 76-77.

35 *The Namibian*, 17 July 2015. Established in the mid-1980s, the newspaper has been a strong supporter of the liberation struggle, often at great personal risks for its journalists. Its originally predominantly white staff has since been to a large extent replaced by black journalists.

Despite the selective glorification of the resistance erupting in the violent clash, however, no serious systematic efforts have so far been made by the Namibian state authorities to adequately restore memory. What is "troubling",

> is the patent lack of interest displayed by the current government of Namibia's political elite towards Windhoek's urban history. This is all the more startling when one considers that the current government of Namibia prides itself on a history of struggle, the "heroes" of which it urges one and all to revere and honour.[36]

Many of those in higher government and civil service ranks are nowadays living in the new middle-class suburb of Hochland Park and the older residential area of Pionierspark. They are hardly aware that some of their homes were built close to or on the grounds of the Old Location. Nothing but a tugged away small steel bridge (manufactured by Krupp), erected for the residents to cross the then water carrying Gammams river also during the rainy season on foot to get to the adjacent "white" Windhoek West on their way to work, a few adjacent buildings (which were earlier on "native stores"), some abandoned grave stones and a small, hardly known or visible memorial site (opposite of the old, former "white" Gammams cemetery) are among the scattered remnants of its former existence.

In 1995, the Old Location Cemetery (established in 1928 and closed after the forced removal of the residents to Katutura, now marked by a new entrance portal as "1959 Heroes and Heroines Memorial Grave"), was reopened. This followed an appeal by residents with relatives buried there. The burial space was expanded, and 725 burials took place since then. In early April 2020, the Windhoek municipality decided its final closure due to lack of further space.[37]

While personal ties and emotional affinities remain alive among former residents of the Old Location and some of their offspring who were told the history of the place and its meaning for their parents and grandparents, the current remembrance in the public domain is at best selective and narrow:

> Even though the people killed in the event of the Windhoek shooting are heroes now, this official memory does not include life in the Old Location, the memory of an era of communal experience in a place where apartheid did not completely determine people's way of living together and where the unaccepted boundaries of racial segregation were crossed. Distinguishing what deserves to be remembered

36 JB Gewald, "From the Old Location to Bishops Hill: The Politics of Urban Planning and Landscape History in Windhoek, Namibia". In: M Bollig and O Bubenzer (eds.), *African Landscapes. Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Berlin: Springer, 2011), p. 258.

37 *The Namibian*, 4 March 2020 <https://www.namibian.com.na/198730/archive-read/Old-Location-Cemetery-to-be-closed>, accessed 3 October 2020.

> and how, and appropriating the site and event of history, the institutionalised act of commemoration obscures conflicting versions of history as well as other forms and functions of memory.[38]

As an opinion article in a local newspaper observed in 2017, there were still many "living witnesses to the Old Location Massacre". But in the official commemoration these "have been conspicuously absent from events marking the day year in and year out" and were denied "the mere opportunity of their reflections on the day".[39] As this shows, in Namibia too, history and its representation remains a matter for those, who hold the power of definition and shape the dominant public discourse.

## 4. SPACE AND PEOPLE

The Old Location was the product of social engineering, which had spatial components complementing racial policies of institutionalised discrimination ever since the colonisation of the territory known today as Namibia. The organisation of daily life took forms of physically separate entities confined to specific parts of the population. The locations established for the African people were in as much as the white residential areas a separate own world. The difference was that the black domestic servants, nannies, gardeners and other manual labourers were to some degree – often rather intimately – exposed to the world of the masters, while these in their overwhelming majority had no idea about the living conditions of their servants.

### 4.1 Administering segregation

Segregated living spaces were originally institutionalised under German colonialism and by no means an invention of South African apartheid.[40] The Old Location was established at the beginning of the 20th century, while a (smaller) location in Klein Windhoek also emerged before the end of the German colonial period. A small monthly fee had to be paid to the municipal administration for occupying a plot - misleadingly referred to as "hut tax".

38 Hoffmann, *"Since the Germans came it rains less"*, p. 87. For a recent visit to the site and additional background information see, "Picking Up The Tabb, Windhoek: Remembering the Old Location massacre", <https://pickingupthetabb.wordpress.com/2019/12/01/windhoek-remembering-the-old-location-massacre/>, accessed 3 October 2020.

39 *New Era*, 8 December 2017 < https://neweralive.na/posts/kae-on-friday-old-location-massacre-what-a-travesty-of-history>, accessed 3 October 2020.

40 See on the history until 1960 especially W Pendleton, *Katutura – a place where we do not stay* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1974), pp. 24-28; D Simon, Aspects of urban change in Windhoek, Namibia, during the transition to independence (PhD, University of Oxford, 1983), pp. 114-144.

The buildings erected were, however, the private property of the residents. This enforced a strong feeling of ownership among the people, who had constructed their homes.

The administration considered the physical relocation already in the 1920s. But the effects of the global economic crisis in the early 1930s shelved the plans; instead, further infrastructure was established at the existing places of residence.[41] What is remembered as the Old Location was officially declared the Windhoek Main Location under the Natives' (Urban Areas) Act (34/1924). It had an area of around 140 hectares. Its boundaries were demarcated and proclaimed by Government Notice no. 132 of 1937. Situated in relatively close vicinity to the Windhoek main cemetery at the Gammams and Arebbush (seasonal) rivers in what is today Hochland Park and at the borders to the old "white" residential area of Windhoek West, its distance from the city centre was some two to three kilometres.

As of 1932, the Main Location became the object of more systematic urban planning: it was divided into square blocks with roads intersecting at right angles. Houses (huts) were relocated according to the new plot structure. A Municipal Beer Hall[42] and a "Bantu Welfare Hall"[43] were erected in 1936 and 1937. Other infrastructure (markets, basic sanitary installations and other amenities for collective use, street lighting, private stores etc.) followed. In his comprehensive study, Wagner summarised the established structure as follows:

> The various sections are marked off from one another by lanes or alleys. With the exception of the two Ambo and the two Union sections, each of which is situated in different corners of the Location, the sections occupied by the same ethnic group adjoin one another. Theoretically, people may live only in the section (or sections) set aside for members of their own ethnic group. In practice, the residential segregation according to ethnic groups is not too strictly enforced. Thus, a number of Ambo have recently sold their houses, chiefly to Coloureds. In all cases where these houses were too dilapidated to be removed to the buyers' section, the latter were tacitly allowed

41 For developments during the inter-war period see especially M Wallace, *A History of Namibia*; D Simon, "The evolution of Windhoek 1890-1980". In: C Saunders (ed.), *Perspectives on Namibia. Past and present* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies/University of Cape Town, 1983), pp. 91-93.

42 See on the history of beer halls in the country, T van der Hoog, *Breweries, Politics and Identity: The History Behind Namibian Beer* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2019), pp. 63-66.

43 Named after the wife of the Location Superintendent Captain Bowker the Sybil Bowker Hall. Sybil Bowker played an active role as a welfare worker in the location, see, M Wallace, "'A Person is Never Angry for Nothing". Women, VD & Windhoek". In: P Hayes *et al* (eds.), *Namibia under South African Rule. Mobility & Containment 1915-1946* (Oxford: James Currey, Windhoek: Out of Africa and Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998), pp. 88-90.

> to move to the Ambo section. Similarly, a number of Nama, mostly young men, live in the Bergdama sections. The vast majority of Natives, however, live, and prefer to live, among their people. As among the rural population, kinship counts for more than friendship.[44]

Residence permit in the location was granted to (non-contract) workers employed in Windhoek or recognised as self-employed (traders, shop owners) and their dependent family members (women, children). Bona fide visitors were allowed to stay one month (in exceptional cases up to two months). Given the relatively low number of persons convicted for illegal residence despite regular raids between 1945 and 1950 (with 19 convictions as the lowest in 1949 and 55 convictions as the highest in 1950), Wagner seemed correct when observing that, "comparatively few Natives reside in the Location for any length of time without being properly registered".[45]

Generally, the officials of the Windhoek municipality and those in charge over "native affairs" seemed to follow official directives in implementing South Africa's policy of segregation and apartheid. But the case of the Rhenish Mission school for Nama children offers an example that not every civil servant in the "white" administration was an obedient implementer of apartheid. The school operated in the vicinity of the mission church, which was frequented on Sundays by the location residents for sermons. It was situated opposite of the "Höhere Privatschule" (HPS - the German higher private school) in the "white" part of town (Church Street). Because of this "irregularity", the Magistrate enquired on 22 August 1953 with the Town Clerk about the nature of the school. He was particularly interested in knowing if native children had to walk through the white town and if this caused disturbances. It required a reminder from the Magistrate's Office before the Town Clerk sent an enquiry to the Town Engineer, who on 21 September elaborated that the Rhenish Mission had rented the building from the Administration "since many years". As he maintained: "The Native school, which is only separated by the width of the street from the Hoehere Privatschule, is very disturbing to the latter. Throwing of stones and cursing between the natives and the white scholars are and will always be inevitable." Despite this information, the Town Clerk P.J. Conradie reported on 22 September 1953 to the Magistrate's Office that scholars did walk through the white area to get to the school, but that so far no complaints had been received.[46]

---

44 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 104.

45 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 95.

46 NAN/MWI, 1919-1961. Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/1, Volume no. I (storage unit 2/1/281, file no. 6/5/3). It can be assumed that Mister Conradie thereby prevented the closure of the school, which was operational until the Old Location was closed down. When I came as a student to the HPS in September 1967, I still had a view from the

## 4.2 Infrastructure and demography

The census of 1950 registered 2 246 huts and houses in the main location with an average of about 3.5 occupants. From the early 1940s, there were renewed discussions as to whether the location should be removed to another site and residents were discouraged to make improvements to their shelter.[47] Regulations issued by the Municipal Council in 1927, setting minimum standards for the erected shelters, were relaxed as a consequence of the effects of war in lacking affordable construction materials. As a result, only a few constructions complied with the 1927 regulations, and ramshackle tin hovels mushroomed (classified as "category A"), "often measuring no more than 6 x 4 x 6 feet of which 700 may be seen in the Location, some of them without any roof at all".[48] In contrast, the average type of construction ("category B")

> is a plain, rectangular structure with a ridged roof. Its framework is erected of second-hand timber, and the walls and roof consist of tin plates … nailed on to the wooden frame. The floor is usually of hard-beaten earth, with a large stone slab forming the threshold. Doors are made of wooden floor-boards nailed together. Often there are two rooms, separated by a dividing wall which, likewise, consists of tins. Occasionally one sees a ceiling of reed grass or cloth.[49]

Better than average houses ("category C"), were mainly occupied by Herero. The best type of dwelling ("category D") existed almost exclusively in the Coloured section, with one brick house resembling features of European housing standards "of a thrifty European artisan or minor official … Like the houses themselves, furniture and household utensils range from practically nothing to a lower middle-class European standard".[50] Generally, there were hardly any noticeable differences in the levels of accommodation between the sections. Between 85 per cent and 90 percent of dwellings had no inside kitchen and plots were hardly fenced in or improved, "but there are a good many houses which show that their owners take a certain pride in them".[51] In 1950, the main location had a total of 15 sections sub-divided between seven groups: five for Damara, three for Herero, two for Ovambo,

window of my classroom to the school on the other side of the road – and I do not recall any conflicts, but rather remember a "peaceful co-existence".

47 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 199.
48 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 202.
49 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 202.
50 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 203.
51 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 204.

two for residents from South Africa and one each for Mbanderu, Nama and Basters/Coloureds.[52]

According to the data provided in an (undated) form based on the "Naturelle (Stadsgebiede) Konsolidasiewet, No 25 van 1945", issued by the Union of South Africa's Department for Native Affairs, the "natives" living in the Windhoek location around 1956-57 amounted to 9 764, of whom 2 667 were under 18. "Coloureds" were numbered at 1 073, of whom 569 were under 18. "Natives" in the town area outside of the locations (but including the Ovambo compound) officially totalled 2 750, of whom 50 were under 18. The total white population was estimated at ± 15 000.[53] The Rhenish missionary Diehl presented the following census data for the African population in 1954 and 1956.[54]

| Group | September 1954 | December 1956 |
|---|---|---|
| Herero | 2 749 | 2 875 |
| Ovambo | 856 | 1 702 |
| Bergdama | 3 383 | 4 034 |
| Nama | 367 | 425 |

In 1959 the population of Windhoek was estimated at some 20 000 whites, 18 000 Africans and 1 500 so-called Coloureds or Basters. Registered male workers included 1 424 Herero, 1 634 Damara, 247 Nama, 1 445 Africans from the Union, 32 from Bechuanaland and 8 from Nyasaland. Ovambo contract workers were numbered at

4 130, of which about 2 800 were accommodated in Pokkiesdraai. Some 1 300 contract workers were living in domestic quarters with their employers in town, and 719 older "non-contract Ovambo" in the location.[55] A total of 108 "natives" resident in Windhoek held trade and business licenses for legally

52 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 103.

53 NAN/MWI, File no. 48/2 (4 volumes), storage unit 2/1/379, Volume. 1.

54 "Jahresbericht 1956 über die Arbeit in der Herero-Ovambogemeinde in Windhoek, Stationsmissionar HK Diehl im März 1957", 5. RMG 2.533 d C/h 50 d Band 4, 1946-1967, Bl. 0092.

55 N Mossolow, "Eingeborene in Windhoek", *Der Kreis* 12, 1959, p. 436. Statistical data were most likely to a certain extent flawed, as the fluctuating numbers within short periods of time suggest. In the absence of a proper registration system for residents these were guestimates or census-based figures. For an overview on Windhoek for 1921 to 1975 see, Simon, Aspects of urban change in Windhoek, Namibia, p. 121. It can however be assumed that the overall proportions roughly reflected the demographic situation, though there was certainly an unknown number of "non-whites" unregistered. These included in particular former contract workers who had abandoned their work place, living without permit in the urban area. See for this numerically unaccounted group the personal story of Ndadi (1974: 34-43).

registered own economic activities. More than a hundred cars in operational conditions were registered in African ownership.[56] Other figures, based on census data, suggest the following composition of Windhoek's population:[57]

| Year | Whites | Coloureds | Africans* | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1946 | 6 985 | 1 353 | 6 591 | 14 929 |
| 1951 | 10 310 | 1 208 | 9 080 | 20 598 |
| 1960 | 19 378 | 2 738 | 13 935 | 36 051 |

* Including contract workers

All data available suggest that Windhoek throughout the 1950s until the mid-1960s had a white population amounting to roughly half of the total population on record.

According to a 1950 survey, 14 501 of 16 857 (or 86 per cent) of the "non-European" population residing in the Windhoek district (without any distinction between the urban and rural area) were registered church members. These were subdivided into the following denominations.[58]

| | |
|---|---|
| Anglican Church Mission | 40 |
| Rhenish Herero Mission | 3 613 |
| Rhenish Nama Mission | 9 327 |
| Roman Catholic Mission | 1 471 |
| Wesleyan Methodist Mission | 45 |
| Total | 14 501 |

All five congregations had a church in the main location. The only "native" church in Windhoek was the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), claiming to have 145 members.[59] Wagner noted a strong sense of

Given the police state like control, the numbers of undiscovered deserted contract workers could however not have been very high.

56 Mossolow, "Eingeborene in Windhoek", p. 439.

57 Pendleton, *Katutura*, p. 31. Note the markedly lower figure given for Africans in 1960.

58 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 239.

59 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 245. On the history of the AMEC see, K Schlosser, *Eingeborenenkirchen in Süd- und Südwestafrika* (Kiel: Mühlau, 1958), pp. 71-124. For a more detailed account of the church life during the 1950s and the role of the Rhenish missionaries see, Melber, *The Windhoek Old Location*.

loyalty within the congregations towards their own churches, but with friendly relations to members of other churches.[60]

## 5. THE NATIVE ADVISORY BOARD

Under the South African administration, a municipal Superintendent of Locations was appointed. In 1925 the Municipality issued detailed "Location Regulations", and in 1927 it set up a Native Advisory Board, composed of the Superintendent of the Location as ex officio chairman and 12 members representing the various ethnic groups for a three-year term in office. Residents elected six councillors, while the municipality appointed the other six. Every resident above the age of 21 and in fulfilment of the tax obligations was entitled to vote.[61] Board members complained that while they were regarded as interlocutors to the people in their section, these normally did not consider them as authorities with a recognised status unless it was based on their status within the traditional order, only applicable to councillor Aaron Mungunda as a member of the Herero clans.[62]

Reproducing the ethnic affinities of the location's residents, the Advisory Board had a combined majority of Damara and Herero councillors, while the municipality often appointed representatives from the minority groups among the six non-elected members. The Board's composition in 1951 revealed that all except one of the members were classified as literate, in line with the declared intentions of the board, "to establish a closer contact between the European authorities responsible for the administration and welfare of the non-European community and the more intelligent and public-spirited members of that community, the avowed aim being to teach the non-Europeans the spirit and technique of local government in a democracy".[63]

While open to the public, the meetings and deliberations of the Board seemed to attract little interest. Members were frequently re-elected due to a limited number of candidates. Aaron Mungunda[64] and Clemens Kapuuo[65], served on the Board either as elected or as appointed members since 1927.

60 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 241.

61 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, pp. 106-108. Minutes of the monthly meetings were until August 1952 taken only in Afrikaans, as from then upon a decision by the Town Council of Windhoek also in English. Councilors from the Klein Windhoek location were also in attendance.

62 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 115.

63 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 110.

64 By profession a chief clerk, born around 1894.

65 Born around 1893 and a general dealer. His son with the same name (born in 1923) later succeeded Hosea Kutako as paramount leader of the Herero and became a co-founder of the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO), actively co-organising the resistance to the relocation. Joining the pro-South African Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) in 1975,

Board members were tasked to report back any decisions to the residents of the sections they represented, but they complained that hardly anybody would attend such meetings.[66] This might not have been a sign of disinterest by the residents in their affairs. Rather more so an indication of mistrust concerning the role of the Advisory Board, since its members were suspected to be willing collaborators with the administration. When an official previously in charge of location affairs relocated to the Union of South Africa, he made a farewell speech at an Advisory Board meeting on 19 December 1951. With reference to the initiatives to petition at the United Nations, he noted with approval that many of the councillors were not collaborating with such elements.[67]

The administrative responsibilities for locations and their residents formally changed with the institutionalisation of apartheid policy in South Africa from the mid-1950s, when the ministries in Pretoria took over "native policy" in the administered territory of South West Africa (SWA) too. That the dominant mindset was not free from unwanted irony bordering to humiliating sarcasm documents the following episode: At the meeting of the Native Advisory Board on 20 July, 1955 the Assistant Native Commissioner Warner read a (undated) message from the South African Minister of Native Affairs. In this, the minister explains that from 1 April 1955 the administration of native affairs in the territory had been transferred to his ministry. He stressed that the one "who always was your father, i.e. the administrator in Windhoek" will remain acting in his name. But SWA would in the future benefit from the tested plan approved for the natives in the Union, who he claimed were pleased. He concluded: "May the road between you and the government always remain white".[68]

In the absence of other documents or observations, the recorded minutes of the Native Advisory Board meetings offer some selective insights into the issues of concern among the residents of the main location. While the board had hardly any real powers, which remained vested in the white officials and the city's municipality, it discussed some of the matters considered of concern in the organisation of daily life.

> The functions of the Board are thus still essentially limited to the airing, under European guidance, of current issues relating to the welfare of the residents of the

he was considered a collaborator and assassinated in 1978. See, JB Gewald, "Who killed Clemens Kapuuo?", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (3), 2004.

66 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 114.

67 NAN/MWI, 1919-1961, Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/1, Volume I (storage unit 2/1/281, file no. 6/5/3).

68 "Mag die pad tussen julle en die regering altyd wit bly." NAN/MWI, 1919-1961 Native Affairs/ Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/3, Volume I. My translation. "Wit" could be interpreted as "white" and as "clean" – satire at times simply cannot match reality!

> Location by a selected body of non-Europeans. The Advisory Board has no say in the financial administration of the Location and is not informed in any detail on income and expenditure. Having no funds at its disposal, the Board does not draw up a budget or vote money.[69]

During 1947-48 the Board discussed in total 59 issues on its agenda, relating to matters of health and sanitation (15), the board's working procedures (ten), labour conditions (eight), housing and the new township (six), education (four), transport (four), stock (three), law and mitigation (three), while six were classified as miscellaneous. Wagner concluded that, "despite its limited powers, the Advisory Board performs an indispensable function in that it offers a regular opportunity for an exchange of views and ideas between the European authorities and a representative body of non-Europeans".[70]

## 6. ORDER AND SECURITY

Deliberations by the Advisory Board also documented tensions and security concerns. On 14 May 1952 Kapuuo demanded stricter control as well as the arrest and deportation of those living in or around the location without legal residence status to get rid of the *rondlopers* (those straying) in the *veld* (bush). A.S. Shipena supported him and suggested that more *boswagters* (bush guards) should be employed. H Kondombolo complained that at the social gatherings of adults in the dance hall mainly children from the Bergdamara were a disturbance.[71] Ananias S Shipena complained on 15 April 1953 that Ovambo contract workers were living in the location and entered relations with married women, as a result of which many *onegte* (fake or not genuine) children were born. Herero from the reserves were accused of the same behavior. A.S. Mungunda also complained about the influx of *naturelle* (natives) from the Union, who often came as workers for contractors. They were accused of not respecting elders and behaving like *Tsotsis* (criminals), thereby influencing the local people negatively. He criticised his own people who did military service for South Africa on the side of the allied forces for the same behaviour upon return.[72] Kapuuo complained at the meeting on 10 February 1954 that the streetlights were not properly working and also were switched off late at night, thereby allowing *kwaaijongens* (wild

69 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 110.
70 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 110.
71 NAN/MWI, 1919-1961, Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/1, Volume I (storage unit 2/1/281, file no. 6/5/3).
72 NAN/MWI, 1919-1961, Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/1, Volume I (storage unit 2/1/281, file no. 6/5/3).

youngsters) to continue their shady businesses. He urged that the lights be kept fully functional and switched on until sunrise.[73] At the meeting on 17 March 1954 Boardman J. Kamberipa complained that two constables from the Municipal Police on duty controlling the Location were not enough, especially not at night times.[74]

In 1947-48 arbitration committees were established to seek out of court settlements. Seven of these existed in 1951, each consisting of an Advisory Board member and at least four responsible members of the community in the respective section (or sections) elected by the residents and approved of by the Superintendent. Cases were dealt with either under traditional customary law or under common law, without any witness or court fees. Most of the cases that were heard in 1950 related to matrimonial disputes and offences under the liquor law, followed by violation of pass laws (387), arrears in the payment of the hut tax (185), residence in the location without permit (55), as well as some cases of "fighting" (92) and "causing a disturbance" (ten). Theft was rarely a case (11), while more serious crimes were almost completely absent, with nine cases of assault and 59 other unspecified offences.[75]

The local police unit, comprised of community members and known as the Bowker police because their station was next to the Bowker Hall, was seemingly not taken very seriously and was "easy to fool because they were unable to read or write".[76] But despite some petty offences recorded (mainly illegal beer brewing and violations of the pass laws), all in all, empirical evidence suggests "a socially highly stable and safe environment".[77] Those who grew up during this period confirmed the relative absence of serious physical violence or molestations. An informant sharing memories of women and girls using a communal bathhouse maintained: "We were never afraid to bathe there as it was safe. I cannot recall anybody ever being molested there".[78]

73 NAN/MWI, 1919-1961, Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/3, Volume I.

74 NAN/MWI, 1919-1961, Native Affairs/Native Advisory Board, File no. 65/3, Volume I, Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Non-European Advisory Board. Held in the Office of the Superintendent of Locations on Wednesday 17/3/54, p. 3.

75 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, pp. 246-251.

76 Information by Mrs Anna Bailey, as quoted in Jafta *et al*, *An investigation of the shootings at the Old Location on 10 December* 1959. p. 18.

77 Information by Mrs Anna Bailey, as quoted in Jafta *et al*, *An investigation of the shootings at the Old Location on 10 December* 1959, pp. 17-18.

78 Interview with Mrs Anna Campbell, quoted in Jafta *et al*, *An investigation of the shootings at the Old Location on 10 December* 1959, p. 17.

## 7. SOCIAL LIFE

As Wagner observed, "deep-rooted tribal antagonisms appear … to be very rare".[79] But his interviews with residents also indicated that "antagonisms between the different ethnic groups, though not violent, are still distinctly there". According to a survey among the "Coloureds", more than 90 per cent opted for relocation to a separate residential area.[80] Wagner, however, maintains that "these prejudices, jealousies, and antagonisms are more in the nature of undercurrents than an open hostility between the various sections. … On the occasion of dances, sports events, &c., members of the different sections either mingle or amuse themselves on their own, without any group antagonisms making themselves felt".[81] Attending a dance hall event, he characterised the atmosphere as "live and let live" which seems to be the keynote in the everyday relations between the various groups".[82] He concludes, "the conditions of town life tend to level down tribal differences".[83] He also observes that class differences seemed to be stronger than ethnic affiliations by noticing "a tendency for "better class people" to move together".[84]

Wagner noticed a high degree of reciprocal subsidiarity and support systems displaying exceptional generosity when assisting those in need. A notion of belonging and solidarity seemed to dominate daily life. In 1950 only five paupers received food rations from the state because they had no near relatives to look after them. A system of *gooi mekaar* (throw together) was practised in communal social networks, where helping each other and thereby entering reciprocal social contracts seemed an established practice as "mutual, though staggered, lending of money".[85]

Social activities had a prominent arena in the Municipal Beer Hall. It offered seating accommodation for several hundred men on a semi-open terrace resembling features of a beer garden and a taproom for some hundred women seated along long tables and benches. The conduct of those frequenting the facilities had "on the whole, been so orderly that the police supervision has become a mere routine duty".[86] Public dancing took place on almost a daily basis in the Sybil Bowker Hall, organised privately by people renting the venue, hiring a local band and charging admission to cover expenses: "In January 1951, the Hall had already been booked until the

79 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, pp. 111-112.
80 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* pp. 131-132.
81 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 136.
82 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 137.
83 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 141.
84 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 147.
85 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 214.
86 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 267.

end of the year".[87] Private dance halls, which had operated earlier on, were closed down since they were scenes of brawls and fights. Brass bands and dance bands were a common feature, and music was a dominant form of entertainment, as much as community singing. Cinema performances were fortnightly entertaining an audience in the Sybil Bowker Hall, featuring mainly "cowboy" movies.

A Senior Sports League was founded in 1936 under the auspices of the location's Superintendent, and a Junior Sports Union for juveniles was set up in 1944 sponsored by the welfare officer. Football was the most popular sport in the location, with 13 clubs organised in the Senior League in 1950, representing the ethnic sections (only the Nama had joined one of the Damara clubs). Matches were played on a football field with a covered "grandstand" adjacent to the location, and competitions took place for five different cups.[88] Around 20 football clubs existed in 1960.[89] The teams remained ethnically exclusive and seemed to have instilled discriminatory emotions during the matches among their supporters. As a letter concerning the "shameful picture" of "tribalism in sports" bemoaned in the *South West News*:

> Although no restrictions on the grounds of tribe is made by any team when enrolling its members, in practice it seldom happens that a team is multi-tribal. … As a logical sequence, matches between these teams are conceived by the public in the spirit of inter-tribal competition, victory being hailed as triumph over the inferior, a sign of tribal complex. Threats which often result in violence are made. These sometimes reach an extent where it becomes impossible to continue a match. Vulgar and disgusting words capable of provoking tribal hatred are frequently uttered. (…)
>
> In our everyday life, we proclaim to fight tribalism and racialism in every form they appear, yet in this particular case we remain unconcerned. Is this a shameless surrender? Let those who care for the interests and welfare of their people heed this: An ideal cannot be attained by a mere declaration of lofty principles but by the practical application of such principles in all spheres of life.[90]

Tensions also affected tennis. A "Bantu Welfare Tennis Club" was founded in 1937 but collapsed after the embezzlement of funds. In 1951 the "Excelsior Tennis Club" had 16 members from the "Cape Coloured"

87 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 275.
88 *Wagner, Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, pp. 272-273.
89 D Henrichsen, "A Glance At Our Africa. The history and contents of South West News". In: *A Glance at our Africa. Facsimile reprint of South west News/Suidwes Nuus* 1960. Compiled by D Henrichsen (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1997), p. 28. All subsequent quotes from articles in the *South West News* are based on their reproduction in this volume.
90 WH Mamugwe, "Tribalism in Sports Exposed", *South West News* 4, 1960, p. 4.

community and two "Union Natives" as members; six of the total members were female. The club tournaments were riddled by animosities: Blacks boycotted the club after Rehobother Basters refused to play against black or mixed teams without the tournament being called off.[91] Another popular sport was horse racing, staged at the "Hakahana Turf Club" founded in 1947. Until 1950 a total of 25 race meetings with six events each were held where only "native-owned horses" and black jockeys were admitted.[92]

Various churches and other associations provided additional forms of local social organisation. These included the Red Band organisation (*Truppenspieler*)[93], the Bunga Private Club and the African Improvement Society as burial and mutual aid societies among the Herero. The Coloured Teachers Association and its subsidiary Coloured Parent-Teacher Association, the Native Teacher Association, and the Non-European Railway Staff Association were the active vocational and trade union associations. Inter-ethnic tensions were reported in the Rhenish Mission School in 1957 and 1958. The Coloured principal at the Herero-Ovambo school, who had been in service for 15 years, returned to Cape Town in 1957 after the black residents had blamed him for not objecting to a decision taken by the Coloured Teachers Association to deny admittance of their children to their schools.[94] For 1958, conflicts among the 339 enrolled pupils were reported. Parents of Ovambo children complained that the newly appointed Herero principal made their children feel insecure. They felt disadvantaged and missed the former Coloured principal, whom they had considered as a trusted and neutral arbitrator.[95]

As of January 1959, the Municipality of Windhoek employed Zedekia Ngavirue (later commonly known as "Doctor Zed") as the first black social worker. On 4 July 1960 (not long before his dismissal due to his political engagement) he addressed the 12th Annual African Teachers Conference with an appeal for a "Clean up Campaign":

> Our living conditions are deplorable. You have only to look through the window to see what I mean – there you will see dirty and untidy homesteads, heaps of rubbish

91 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa*, p. 273.
92 Wagner, *Ethnic Survey of South West Africa,* p. 273.
93 See on their origin and function, W Werner, "'Playing soldiers": the Truppenspieler movement among the Herero of Namibia, 1915 to ca. 1945", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16 (3), 1990.
94 Jahresbericht 1957 über die Arbeit in der Herero-Ovambogemeinde Windhoek, Stationsmissionar HK Diehl, Ende Februar 1958, 5, RMG 2.533 d C/h 50 d Band 4, 1946-1967, Bl. 0082.
95 Stationsmissionar HK Diehl, Windhoek, 5. Mai 1959, Jahresbericht 1958 ueber die Arbeit in der Herero-Ovambogemeinde Windhoek, p. 5. RMG 2.533 d C/h 50 d Band 4, 1946-1967, Bl. 0063.

> and carcasses of dogs and cats next to our water tanks; neglected cemeteries, ever dirty communal lavatories and so forth. These conditions are not conducive to progress. The gospel of cultural development that we as teachers, ministers and social workers preach will not be of any effect to the people who receive it unless a better environment is created for them. (…) I propose that we as teachers, ministers and social workers come together and form a united front against dirt. Let us organise a campaign against this deadly evil. Let's not blame external factors only but take a critical attitude towards ourselves. I know that other societies have under oppression proved to be enterprising and progressive. (…) Why can't we, honourable as we are, do the things that other people have done? Is it really due to oppression that we cannot build a lavatory for ourselves? Why don't we get up and constructively criticise ourselves for these weaknesses lest others think we do not see them? Why should we sit down only to wait for someone to come and build a bad lavatory for us and then criticise him. … Let this be our contribution as teachers, ministers and social workers, towards the creation of a new Africa.[96]

## 8. THE END OF AN ERA

This vision of a "new Africa" had at the time of Ngavirue's speech already been exposed to the full force of the apartheid system. Beyond the structural violence executed through what by then was euphemistically called "separate development", the refusal of the location's residents to move to Katutura had escalated. Passive resistance against the relocation had taken organised forms since September 1959. It culminated in a widespread boycott of services initiated by women in early December 1959. On 10 December 1959, a meeting with representatives of the Municipality ended in mayhem. The police were brought in and in clashes unfolding 11 people were shot dead, and more than 40 were treated in hospital for mainly bullet wounds. Since that day, the life in the location was never the same again.

Several factors motivated the continued refusal to resettle among many even after the violent clash. Higher rental costs for the houses built in Katutura, bus fares and new regulations were all reasons to resist the relocation, which was – more fundamentally – from a political perspective considered an apartheid initiative by an illegal authority without legitimacy. The prohibition of owning the houses occupied was maybe the biggest stumbling block. As a former resident recalled: "Houses in the Old Location were our own, and therefore better than in Katutura. It depended on you, whether you made your house nice. I would prefer Katutura to be like the Old Location".[97] Confronted

96 Z Ngavirue, "Make You the World More Beautiful", *South West News* 5, 1960, p. 4.

97 F Friedman, *Deconstructing Windhoek: The Urban Morphology of a Post-Apartheid City* (London: University College London/Development Planning Unit, 2000), p. 6.

with the refusal to relocate, authorities threatened to deport those unwilling to move to the rural reserves. “To Move Or Not To Move” was the title of an article in the *South West News* of 20 August 1960, which concluded that, “the situation is such that the African has neither the right to improve his or her environment nor the right to have a permanent dwelling in the urban area”.

Fear and resilience, despair and civil courage were all contributing factors supporting the mobilisation for organised resistance in various forms of political associations. In this sense, the Old Location, in combination with the contract worker system and the pass laws, was an important element in the formation of the anti-colonial resistance movements in the struggle for Independence. – To that extent, “patriotic history” indeed is diagnosing the resistance against forced removal and the massacre of 10 December 1959 as a relevant marker. As suggested:

> The authorities’ attempts to move residents of the old location to a new township and the resistance they met represent a significant point in the political history of Namibia. Not only did resistance to the removal provide the first major issue taken up by the newly formed nationalist organisations shortly after their launching in 1959, but it also represented a transition in the style of political mobilisation in that it transcended parochial issues and united a broad cross-section of groups and classes in a confrontation with the colonial state.[98]

At the same time, the urban arena provided the environment for the formation of an educated vanguard, which entered new forms of exchange and mobilisation distinct from previous indigenous traditions and practices and the dominance of the traditional (ethnic) leaders, thereby inducing social diversity over and above ethnically restricted loyalties and forms of organisation. *South West News*, the first African newspaper founded in 1960 and published in nine issues, documents these fascinating dynamics unfolding. It gave a forum for opinions and people, emancipating not only from the white settler dominance but also the earlier dependencies on tribe and tradition.

## 9. REMINISCENCES OF A PAST

Sifting through the documents, a nuanced picture of the location’s life in the 1950s can hardly be restored. What emerges even from the fragmented evidence nonetheless, is a sense of ownership and belonging among the residents. The weekends saw a variety of bands playing, folks dancing, enjoying the odd sports competition, fashion shows and beauty contests. The

98 T Emmett, *Popular Resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915-1966* (Basel: P. Schlettwein, 1999), p. 285.

location vibrated with social activities and leisure time in the midst of poverty and destitution. It was an ordinary common ground for people of different histories and identities, united in being oppressed while at the same time sharing and claiming own space for unfolding their human dignity. They had more in common than what separated them. In the eyes and minds of many of those living there, it was a better place than the alternative forced upon them.

With the removal to Katutura, these people were robbed of their homes as their personal belonging. The houses they lived in – even if bordering to shacks – were theirs. It was property, which was taken from them. The limited material compensation offered by the municipal authorities did not make up for the much deeper loss, resulting in feelings of homelessness. Residents were removed to the outskirts of the city and could no longer walk through the streets of Windhoek to their work places. They were not any longer an integral albeit segregated part of the city, but were moved like cattle on trucks to the margins.

Going through the archival material, it feels easy to identify with the nostalgic tendencies some of the present-day narratives by former residents are displaying. What became the Old Location was a home, which Katutura was unable to create: its sub-divided, pre-fabricated quarters epitomising the apartheid mind of "separate development" was de-personalising the former social interactions and thereby humiliating. Similar to Sophiatown, Alexandra or District Six in South Africa's urban centres, the Old Location emerged as a reminder of how people were seeking to organise and survive in the shadow of apartheid. There seemed to be a sense of togetherness, which was stronger than the policy of divide and rule executed by the colonial system. The Old Location was the urban conglomerate, which transcended the separate identities of the "native reserves" and allowed a common ground for the people of Namibia.

Recalling the atmosphere in the Old Location, many seem to resort to selective memories of the daily life bordering to romanticising. In what was qualified as a "nostalgic journey to the beginning of days" several former residents remembered their upbringing there almost half a century later. According to Daniel Humavindu, "the Old Location created a great family in which residents looked out for one another", where they were dancing in the Bowker Hall and "Glorious" in the Ovambo Section with "only jazz and live bands and no other music". Hesron von Francois added: "we were divided into sections, but the people were close. … I had a good life there at home. There was always food, love and peace". For Katy Farao "childhood was really childhood. … Those were good times when we would play in the streets".[99]

99 *Namibian Sun*, 27 March 2012.

And Petrina Rina Tira Biwa remembers: “The segregation we experienced when we moved to Katutura was not there. … we stayed very nicely in the Old Location. Communication with other people was very good. We used to stay as family”.[100]

These might well be memories coloured by feelings of loss. But they offer some evidence for “the sense of community despite differences existing.[101] It seems not by accident that the term “family” is frequently used to characterise the general feeling of communal belonging and sharing. At least by intuition, even the missionaries of the time seemed somehow able to capture this. In his annual report for the Nama congregation in Windhoek for 1959, the Rhenish missionary Lübke resorts to a highly unorthodox blend of characterisations for the features of the Location, when he qualifies the place as a brood nest for insecurity, dirt and risks for diseases, after listing as the first word – cosiness.[102] Being a “brood nest for cosiness” is certainly at best an unusual, but maybe most appropriate effort to describe what seemed to be a contradiction, but maybe close to social reality as experienced at least in retrospective.

In 1961, the residents of the Klein Windhoek Location were all moved to Katutura. In 1963 the Pokkiesdraai compound in the vicinity of Katutura was closed, and the contract workers were moved into a new compound inside Katutura. “Coloureds” and Rehoboth Basters moved to the new residential area Khomasdal situated between the Old Location and Katutura. With the official closing of the former Main Location on 31 August 1968 “an era in township life came to an end”.[103] The former social worker Zedekia Ngavirue, who was a co-founder of the SWANU as the first national anti-colonial organisation, left soon after his dismissal for studies in Sweden. After Independence appointed as the first Director-General of the National Planning Commission, he might have captured the spirit of these days best when based on his insights he contemplated after retirement: “It was, indeed, when we owned little that we were prepared to make the greatest sacrifices”.[104]

100 M Biwa, Translation of oral interview, Petrina Biwa. National Archives, Private Accessions, SMPA.0022, Old Location oral history (undated). Quoted with kind permission of Memory Biwa.

101 *Namibian Sun*, 27 March 2012.

102 In his words, the “Werft” was a “*Brutnest von Behaglichkeit*, Unsicherheit, Schmutz und Krankheitsgefahr”. Lübke, Jahresbericht 1959 für die Nama sprechende Gemeinde Windhoek / undated, 4. RMG 2.533 d C/h 50 d, Windhoek Band 4, Bl. 0053 (my emphasis).

103 Pendleton, *Katutura*, p. 30.

104 Z Ngavirue, “Introduction”. In: *A Glance at our Africa* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1997) p. 11.

# URBAN DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS RELATIONSHIPS IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF RUWA TOWN, 1986-2015

AUTHOR:
Terence Muzorewa[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, Midlands State University

EMAIL:
terencemuzorewa@gmail.com

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.3

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):59-82

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

## ABSTRACT

*The article qualitatively analyses the relationship among stakeholders in the history of Ruwa Town development since the town's inception in 1986 up to 2015. Ruwa Town is among the post-colonial established towns in Zimbabwe which were developed using the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approach. The PPP approach has been adopted as one of the urban development models in post-colonial Zimbabwe, though not entirely effective and efficient. Hence, this article argues that harmonious relationships among stakeholders in PPPs-led urban development were fundamental in achieving efficient urban development. A tripartite relationship which includes the local authority, private land developers and residents was critical to the development of the town. The study uses both primary and secondary sources to derive research data. Primary data reviewed was mainly collected from the Ruwa Town Repository (archive) and was complemented by personal interviews. Secondary sources (Journals, books, articles and newspapers) were useful in situating the Ruwa case in broader urban studies and historiography of Zimbabwe and the world at large. The study found out that there were both cordial and hostile relationships among stakeholders during the development process of the town. Most of the hostile relations were detrimental to the development and derailed the process. This historical analysis of urban development stakeholders in Ruwa proves that good management of hostile relations is the major determinant of effective and efficient PPP-led urban development.*

**Key Words**: *Urban, Development, Ruwa, Relationships, Stakeholders, Zimbabwe, Public-Private Partnerships*

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper uses a multi-disciplinary approach which employs history and development studies to analyse the relationship among stakeholders in the development process of Ruwa Town. This development process was based on the public-private partnership (PPP) model. Ruwa Town, located 27 km east of Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare, developed out of a tripartite relationship of the Local Authority, private land developers (PLDCs) and residents of the town. PLDCs are companies that subdivide land which they own or purchase from individual private owners into urban residential and industrial plots in line with permits given to them by the Government or local authorities for the purpose of making a profit.[1] These companies service the land by constructing offsite and onsite infrastructure, which includes water supply and sewerage facilities. The developers also develop road networks and other public facilities and amenities. Though Ruwa has been used as a model of PPP-led urban development in Zimbabwe, the development process of the town has not been a fairy tale and was characterised with many tensions among the development partners. Hence, this article brings out lessons learnt from the relationship among developers of Ruwa Town, thereby offering insights into viable partnerships in urban development in Zimbabwe in particular and Africa in general. The Ruwa case suggests intuitions into the development of emerging towns involving PLDCs in future.

PLDCs were invited by the Ruwa Local Authority to create a partnership in service provision and town development because they owned 99 per cent of the land in the area and had better financial resources as compared to the Local Authority.[2] The town was founded on a white commercial farming area in 1986. Within the period 1986 to 2015 there were eight major active developers which operated in Ruwa.[3] The companies had a role to satisfy both residents and the Local Authority in terms of offsite infrastructure and public amenities construction. The Local Authority, in turn, had to satisfy the needs of the residents and served as the major link between the residents and developer companies.

This discussion is deeply embedded in the public-private partnership approach to urban development. A review of literature on PPP has unveiled scholars such as Tony Bovaird, Chris Skelcher, Erick Hans Klijn and Geert

1 TT Muzorewa, The role of private land developers in urban development in Zimbabwe: The case of Ruwa Town, 1980-2015 (Dphil, Midlands State University, 2017), pp. 1-2.

2 M Nyandoro and T Muzorewa, "Transition from growth point policy to liberal urban development in Zimbabwe: The emergence of Ruwa Town, 1980-1991", *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 13, 2017, pp. 1-10.

3 Muzorewa, The role of private land developers in urban development in Zimbabwe: The case of Ruwa Town, 1980-2015, p. 3.

Teisman, Graeme Hodge and Carsten Greve, and Roger Wettehall who defines PPP as inter-organisational arrangements that combine resources such as skills and knowledge from a public sector organisation with a private sector organisation (for-profit and nonprofit) in order to deliver societal goods.[4] Although there are varying theoretical perspectives underpinning PPPs, scholars generally refer to PPP as a hybrid organisational arrangement that has characteristics of both private and public sectors. In Ruwa, the PPP approach has been used as a vehicle for bringing together skills and knowledge from the Local Authority, together with funds and land from private land developers.

Anti-neoliberal scholars have heavily criticised PPPs for promoting profit oriented development. Faranak Miraftab criticises PPPs and views them as the "Trojan horse of neo-liberal development".[5] She establishes the relationship between partnership theory and neo-liberalism. To her, the partnership approach traces its roots to neo-liberalism. She argues that historically PPPs were implemented by leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, who were influenced by neo-liberalism.[6] Other anti-neoliberal scholars such as Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, Phillip Mirowski, Adam Peck and Jamie Tickell, and Bob Jessop argue that neo-liberalism has imposed a pervasive market mentality in urban development.[7] Hence, it is impossible for developers to serve their profit-seeking interest while at the same time, seek the residents' betterment of cities.

David Harvey also criticises PPP-led urban development for alienating ordinary citizens from "the right to the city". The main thesis of "the right to the

4 T Bovaird, "Public-private partnerships: from contested concepts to prevalent practice", *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 70, 2004, pp. 199-215; C Skelcher, "Public-private partnerships and hybridity". In: E Ferlie *et al* (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of public management* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); EH Klijn and GR Teisman, "Institutional and strategic barriers to public private partnership: An analysis of Dutch cases", *Public Money and Management* 23, 2003, pp. 137 – 146; GA Hodge and C Greve, "Public-private partnerships: An international performance review", *Public Administration Review* 67, 2007, pp. 545-558; R Wettenhall, "Mixes and partnerships through time". In: GA Hodge *et al* (eds.) *International handbook on public private partnerships* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2010).

5 F Mifaftab, "Private-Public Partnerships: The Trojan horse of neo-liberal development", *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24, 2004, p. 91.

6 Mifaftab, "Private-Public Partnerships: The Trojan horse of neo-liberal development", p. 91.

7 N Brenner and N Theodore, "Cities and geographies of actually existing neoliberalism", *Antiphode* 33, 2002, pp.349-379; P Mirowski, *Never let a serious crisis go to waste: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown* (London: Verso, 2013); J Peck and A Tickell, "Neoliberal space". In: N Brenner and N Theodore (eds.), *Spaces of neoliberalism: Urban restructuring in Western Europe and North America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.); B Jessop, "Liberalism, neoliberalism and urban governance: A state theoretical perspective", *Antiphode* 34, 2002, pp.452-472.

city" is a call for ordinary individuals to take control of the process of planning in urbanisation.[8] Hence, the right to the city challenges residents of Ruwa to rise against PLDCs and the Local Authority and take control of planning powers in the town. Harvey developed this approach from the works of Lefebvre who calls for urban revolution, to confront politically based capitalism in urban development.[9] A revolution is sometimes violent and can result in hostile relationships among stakeholders in urban development. To Harvey, the process of using private capital for the promotion of urbanisation gave more urban planning power to the private sector at the expense of ordinary people. PLDCs were invited to Ruwa because of the dire need of capital by the Local Authorities. Hence, Harvey's work remains a useful analytical tool to study PLDCs and their relationship with other stakeholders of urban growth in Ruwa.

Since Ruwa is a new town developed in the independence era, there is little literature on it compared to big cities like Harare and Bulawayo. One of the few works on Ruwa is Mark Nyandoro and Terence Muzorewa's article on the transition from growth point policy to liberal development in the emergence of Ruwa Town. The authors argue that private developers were influential in liberal urban development which replaced government monopoly in urban development during the post-colonial period in Zimbabwe.[10] According to Nyandoro and Muzorewa, PLDCs were effective instruments in ensuring the success of the liberal urban development strategy.[11] This article further evaluates the role of PLDCs by observing inter-organisation relations in the development process of the town.

This research deals with inter-organisations relationships in urban development. Inter-organisations relationship scholars such as Christine Oliver, Joseph Galaskiewicz, Donna Woods and Barbra Grey, and Christine Huxham have sought to establish the major determinants of relationships, and strategic partnerships proved to be the most crucial determinant.[12] Strategic partnership resulted in the partnership in Ruwa where private developers benefited from the platform given to them by the Local Authority to sell their

8 D Harvey, "The right to the city", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, 2003, pp. 939- 94.

9 Harvey, "The right to the city".

10 Nyandoro and Muzorewa, "Transition from growth point policy", p. 2.

11 Nyandoro and Muzorewa, "Transition from growth point policy", p. 10.

12 C Oliver, "Determinants of Interorganisational relationships: Integration and future directions", *Academy of Management Review* 15, 1990, pp. 241-265; J Galaskiewicz, "Interorganisational relations, *Annual Review of Sociology* 11, 1985, pp. 281-304; DJ Wood and B Gray, "Towards a comprehensive theory of collaboration", *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 27, 1991, pp. 139-162; C Huxham, *Creating collaborative advantage* (London: Sage, 1996).

land for profit while the latter benefited from the land and revenue in the form of endowments from the former. This meant that the Town Council and PLDCs merged and agreed to develop the area for the benefit of both parties.[13] The Local Authority created a framework and an environment in which private land developers thrived. Developers invested in projects which benefited residents by providing public amenities.

Conflict is one inherent aspect of inter-organisations relationships. According to William Zartman, "conflict is an incompatibility of positions, stagnant circumstances when mutually exclusive views prevail".[14] He argues that conflicts are inevitable, normal, and an inherent feature of human beings.[15] The Ruwa case confirms the three views on conflict in organisations which have emerged within the discipline of conflict management. The first is the traditional view which argues that conflict is always destructive and has negative impacts on development.[16] The second view on conflict has been identified as the behavioural or contemporary view, which states that conflict is natural and inevitable. According to the contemporary view, conflicts have either a negative or positive effect, all depending on how they are managed.[17] The third view is called the interactionist perspective. This perspective assumes that all conflicts are important and increase performance given that appropriate levels of the conflicts are maintained to keep projects viable, creative, innovative and self-critical.[18] In Ruwa all the three views are used to assess the conflicts that arose among the stakeholders, but the traditional view of conflicts which argues that conflict is detrimental to development is a more appropriate description of relationships among stakeholders in Ruwa. This is because inter-organisational conflicts among the partners in the development of Ruwa were common.

Conflict in the context of urban development is an issue which is not peculiar to Ruwa but common in other African towns such as Norton in Zimbabwe, Kalanga Town in Malawi and Obuasi Town in Ghana. AbdouMaliq Simone discusses contestation in terms of fundamental rights embedded in relationships among families, between men and women, patrons and clients,

13 Note, the word "Council" is used interchangeably with "Local Authority" to avoid monotonous reading, this also applies to "PLDC" which is interchangeably used with "the developer" or "the company".

14 W Zartman, *Negotiation and conflict management: Essays on theory and practice* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2008), p. 11.

15 Zartman, *Negotiation and conflict management: Essays on theory and practice*, p. 11.

16 VK Verma, "Conflict management", *The Project Management Handbook* (Berkeley: Project Management Institute, 1998), pp. 1-12.

17 Verma, "Conflict management", *The Project Management Handbook*, p. 1.

18 Verma, "Conflict management", *The Project Management Handbook*, p. 1.

and citizens and government in African cities.[19] He argues that states often find it difficult to act for the benefit of their citizens and thus take measures to avoid being accountable to them.[20] To him, there is no guarantee that various stakeholders in urban development such as municipalities, property developers, foreign and domestic investors, multilateral institutions, and popular movements can forge complementary interest.[21] Although there are many stakeholders in urban development as shown in Simone's work, my study in Ruwa focuses on the tripartite relationship of residents, the Local Authority and PLDCs

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To analyse the historical relationship among stakeholders in the development of Ruwa Town, diverse qualitative methodological approaches were used. The approaches include a multi-disciplinary approach which draws from history and development studies. To tap into the history of relationships in urban development, secondary literature (academic books and journals), print and electronic media, field research, and interviews with residents, PLDCs and local authorities' administration personnel were utilised as the basis of the research and survey. Multi-disciplinary secondary sources which focus on history, urban studies and development studies were consulted. Oral interviews were employed to gain more insights into the stakeholder's/peoples' notions and perceptions/reflections about the partnership in the town's development. Purposive sampling was used to pick informants who had experience and knowledge of the history of the town. The Ruwa Town Repository was a major source of local primary archival documents used to complement other sources of data.

## 3. STAKEHOLDERS IN RUWA'S DEVELOPMENT

There were three main stakeholders in the development and growth of Ruwa, and these were the residents, local authorities and PLDCs. The local authorities and PLDCs were responsible for providing offsite services to the residents. Eight major companies developed different areas and suburbs in Ruwa from 1986 up to 2015. Every PLDC was assigned specific areas to develop. Mashonaland Holdings Private Limited was the first company to establish itself in Ruwa, and it developed the Ruwa industrial site and the Ruwa

19 A Simone, *The social infrastructures of city life in contemporary Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2010).
20 Simone, *The social infrastructures of city life in contemporary Africa*, p. 8.
21 Simone, *The social infrastructures of city life in contemporary Africa*, p. 8.

"Location"[22] residential suburb. The "Location" was the first major suburb to be established in the town in 1986. Several companies followed Mashonaland Holdings and these include Chipukutu Properties responsible for developing Chipukutu Park and the Zimbabwe Reinsurance Corporation (ZIMRE) which developed ZIMRE Park. In addition ZB Bank/Wentspring Investments Private Limited developed Springvale Park, Damofalls Investments Land Developers developed Damofalls Park, Fairview Land Developers developed Fairview Park, the Zimbabwe Housing Company (ZHC) developed Cranbrook Park, Barochit Property Developers developed Barochit Park, and Tawona Gardens Private Limited developed both Tawona Gardens high-density suburb and Marcus Park. Since he who name bears the most power, most of the suburbs in Ruwa were named after the developers and this is a reflection of PLDCs' domination and power within the tripartite relationship.

The Local Authority or Council was the Legal custodian of service delivery and policy in the area. Since the inception of Ruwa in 1986 up to 2015, the area has been administered by three local authorities who were all appointed by the government. Ruwa was established as a growth point in 1986, and the government gave the Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP) the mandate of local administration of the growth point. Operating as a growth point from 1986 to 1990, Ruwa became an urban area under the administration of the Ruwa Local Board (RLB) set up in September 1990.[23] Ruwa was subsequently granted town status in 2008, and the Ruwa Town Council (RTC) was set up and given the role to administer the town. The responsibilities of the three stakeholders in the area created the base for their relationship. They all interacted on various platforms in the process of developing the town.

## 4. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE DEVELOPERS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The Ruwa Local Board (RLB) invited private developers to create a partnership in service provision and town development. Hence, the PLDCs became a crucial stakeholder in the development of the town and complemented the Local Authority in service delivery. Although the two acted as service providers, the Local Authority had the legal mandate of monitoring the work of the companies. The *Regional Town and Country Planning Act* (RTCPA) of

22 The suburb is popularly known as the "Location" because it resembles colonial-established high density suburbs in Harare which were called locations.

23 Muzorewa, The role of private land developers in urban development in Zimbabwe: The case of Ruwa Town, 1980-2015, p.14.

1976 updated in 1996 which was enacted to guide planning in both urban and rural areas in the country, created the base for the partnership between the Local Authority and private developers. The Act gave municipalities power to engage other stakeholders in the planning and development of their towns.

The RTCPA which provided for the introduction of the land development permit in Ruwa was a step taken by the government to create regulations for the town's development. Its provisions, which included the land development permit, guided and regulated the relationship between the companies and the local authorities.[24] Before any construction or development commenced, PLDCs were therefore obliged to apply for a development permit to the Department of Physical Planning of the Ministry of Local Government. Development was only allowed to commence upon the approval of the application. The Department of Physical Planning was mandated to work with local planning authorities to draft the permit and to make decisions on the permit application.[25] Involving the Ruwa planning authorities in making a decision on the permit application gave the Council a sense of ownership of the development project being applied for by a developer.

The RTCPA, in addition, stipulates that the applicant for land subdivision for development purposes should set aside land for public amenities development and pay development endowments to the Local Authority.[26] After successfully developing the area, PLDCs were entitled to a certificate of compliance by the Local Authority. The certificate of compliance was important to the developers because it was one of the documents required by the Registrar of [Title] Deeds to transfer ownership from the companies to those who would have purchased land.[27] This process of transfer released the PLDCs from the legal mandate of delivering services such as road maintenance and water supply to the area. The permit process gave the Ruwa local authorities control over PLDCs' development activities. Since the developers needed the certificate of compliance from the Local Authority upon finishing their projects, they were forced to comply with the Council's set standards stated in the development permit and expectations on infrastructural development. In this manner, the land development permit

24 A development permit or planning permission is a document issued to a land developer by the Department of Physical Planning before any development is carried out. The document contains conditions to be achieved by the developer and some guide lines during the development process.

25 Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), *Regional, Town and Country Planning Act* (Harare: Government Printers, 1996).

26 GoZ, *Regional, Town and Country Planning Act.*

27 Ruwa Town Repository, Permit for the subdivision of land: Chipukutu Properties, 1998; Permit for the subdivision of land, J and H Enterprises, 2001; Permit for the subdivision of land: Mashonaland Holdings LTD, 1993.

established the partnership between the Local Authority and the developer companies. Following the debate on PPPs, David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's analogy of the "rowing and steering of a boat" can be used to explain the Ruwa partnership with PLDCs.[28] For them, the local government should steer the boat (guiding development) and let the private sector row it (providing basic infrastructure). To steer development, the local authority must offer legislative and regulatory services.[29] This was done through the RTCPA permit.

Cordial relationships between the Local Authority and developer companies proved to promote development as illustrated by several events that occurred during the development process of the town. The RLB protected the companies' interest during the land reform exercise by facilitating dialogue between PLDCs and the government. The Local Authority directly corresponded with the Government in delisting farms belonging to PLDCS which were listed for acquisition during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in 2001. The FTLRP was a Government land redistribution approach which was adopted in the country, culminating in extensive repossession of commercial farmland by 2004.[30] Several farms belonging to PLDCs were listed for acquisition for redistributive purposes.[31] Some PLDCs challenged the decision by the government to list their farms for land distribution purposes. Chipukutu Properties Private Limited, for example, wrote letters to the Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement pleading for its farm to be delisted but the company's efforts were to no avail as the name of the farm continued to appear on the list of the farms to be acquired.[32] In July 2001 the Local Authority intervened on behalf of all developers to negotiate with the government for their farms to be delisted or removed from the acquisition list. The Council asked for farms in the Ruwa Growth Point area to be removed from the list of farms that were designated

28 D Osborne and T Gaebler, *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1992), p 10.

29 Osborne and Gaebler, *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*, p. 10.

30 S Moyo, "Land poverty reduction and public action in Zimbabwe", ISS/UNDP Land, Poverty and Public Action Policy Paper 11 (Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 2005), p. 2. For further reading on the land reform see, book chapters in B Raftopoulos and S Jensen (eds.), *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003); S Moyo and P Yeros, "Land occupations and land reform in Zimbabwe: Towards the national *democratic revolution*". In: S Moyo and P Yeros (eds.), *Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

31 *The Herald*, 11 February 2001.

32 Ruwa Town Repository (1C11), Letter from Chipukutu Properties to the Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, 21 December 2000; Ruwa Town Repository (1C11), Letter from J Vidler of Chipukutu Properties to the Provincial Administration Office Mashonaland East, 15 January 2001.

for redistribution because these had been set aside for urban development. This move resulted in a number of farms being removed from the FTLRP list. The farms that were delisted included Hofmoor Estate, Inverangus Farm, Chipukutu Farm, Fresness Farm, Tawona Estate, Glamis Farm and Fairview Farm.[33] Clearly, the Local Authority represented the PLDCs, and this was proof of good relations between the two entities.

However, although the Local Authority represented the PLDCs as they negotiated with the Government for land, there were cases where conflict emerged. Conflict is revealed in that the Local Authority sometimes faced challenges in collecting debts and fees from some PLDCs. An example can be given of Chipukutu Properties who were reluctant to pay directional billboard sign fees for the year 2011 to the extent that the Council threatened to dismantle the boards without notice.[34] The Council at other times had difficulties in collecting endowment fees from some PLDCs. The RLB complained to Damofalls Land Developers that the endowment they were paying was being paid in trickles.[35] The PLDCs wanted to dodge paying development and endowment fees because they wanted to maximise profits at all cost. This scenario confirms Pierre Bourdieu argument that private entities are interested in profit more than public welfare.[36] As a result, there were elements of conflict over payments between the Council and some developers.

Another source of conflict was the competition between PLDCs and the Local Authority in acquiring land for development in Ruwa. In 1997, the Local Authority wanted to acquire Cranbrook Farm of Galway Estate for the expansion of Ruwa Township.[37] This failed to materialise after the ZHC, which had better financial capacity, acquired the farm before the Council made any meaningful manoeuvres towards acquiring the farm.[38] Harvey in the "right to the city" approach emphasised the role of capital in elevating private developers planning influence over other stakeholders.[39] The Local Authority was, therefore, forced to identify another piece of land because it lacked

33 Ruwa Town Repository (1C11), Correspondence between RLB and the Provincial Administrator, 24 July 2001.
34 Ruwa Town Repository, Letter from RLB to Chipukutu Properties, 31 March 2011.
35 Ruwa Town Repository (CBB), Minutes of the meeting held between the RTC and Damofalls Land Developers, 6 April 2001.
36 P Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market* (New York: Free Press, 1998), p. 32.
37 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Correspondence between the Ministry of Local Government and RLB, 4 September, 1997.
38 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Correspondence between the Ministry of Local Government and RLB, 4 September.
39 Harvey, "The right to the city", p. 3.

the financial muscle to challenge the PLDC.[40] This situation resulted in the straining of relations between the Local Authority and the ZHC.

One of the conflicts between the Ruwa Local Authority and PLDCs emanated from lack of cooperation from the companies. In one case, the council invited the ZHC for a meeting to discuss delays in infrastructure development in 2005. The developer turned down the invitation on the bases that the agenda was trivial.[41] The Local Authority was offended by the response from the developer. In retaliation, a month later after the incident, the Local Authority declined to write a letter of support for the ZHC to procure diesel from the government for their land development project.[42] A similar example of lack of cooperation is when some PLDCs including Chipukutu Properties failed to turn up for a meeting which was called by the RLB in July 2000 to discuss a query they had raised on rates.[43] Only two PLDCs turned up for the meeting, and the Local Authority expressed its disappointment through letters to the developers who had absented themselves from the meeting.[44] These examples show that some PLDCs did not cooperate with the Local Authority, and this was detrimental to development progress.

It was not only the Local Authority which complained about lack of cooperation by the PLDCs, but the companies also complained against the Local Authority. Some developers complained about their projects being delayed by the Town Council while others accused the Council of distancing itself from development activities in Ruwa. In 2007, the chairperson of Wentspring Investments complained about the Local Authority's bureaucratic tendencies that delayed development projects.[45] Another company, the Zimbabwe Reinsurance Corporation, also felt that the Local Authority was unsympathetic to them by not giving them unlimited support for their projects they expected.[46] The problem of bureaucracy within the Local Authority is one reason why neo-liberalism gives preference to private sector administration over public sector administration.

Tawona Gardens claimed that the Council sometimes shifted terms of agreement for their gain thereby disadvantaging the developers. One example

40 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Correspondence between the Ministry of Local Government and RLB, 4 September.
41 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Letter from Zimbabwe Housing Company Private Limited to the RLB, 31 October 2005.
42 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Letter from Zimbabwe Housing Company Private Limited to the RLB, 31 October.
43 Ruwa Town Repository, Letter from RLB to Chipukutu Properties, 10 August 2000.
44 Ruwa Town Repository, Letter from RLB to Chipukutu Properties, 10 August.
45 Ruwa Town Repository, Letter from K Macdonald of Wentspring to the RLB, 8 September 2007.
46 Ruwa Town Repository (CPP), Letter from ZIMRE to the RLB, 25 November 1996.

is where the members of the developers' consortium made an agreement in 2007 with the Local Authority that the northern suburbs would benefit from the pump station and the main water pipeline the Consortium had constructed from Zimre Park to Ruwa Location.[47] However, even though the developers' consortium established the water pumping station and the main pipeline, the northern suburbs were cut off from water supplies because the RTC wanted to satisfy demand from the southern suburbs first, where there was greater population concentration in the town.[48] In another case, Tawona Gardens entered into an agreement with the RTC that they would pay their endowment in the form of land, but the Council shifted goal posts and started to demand in 2009 endowment payments in cash.[49] As indicated by Simone, it is sometimes difficult for municipalities and developers to forge complementary interest in the development process of African towns.[50] In Ruwa, the flouting of agreements compromised the integrity of the Local Authority as the leader of development projects in the town.

In most cases, conflicts between the Local Authority and the PLDCs were resolved through dialogue and negotiation as the major conflict management techniques. In organisations, negotiation is a process of combining dialectical conflict resolutions through communication.[51] In Ruwa, whenever the Local Authority was aggrieved by PLDCs, it would communicate with them through letters as happened in 2007 and 2008. Upon receiving the letters from the Local Authority, the PLDCs, for example Chipukutu and Damofalls sometimes responded by paying the money they owed the Council. At other times, developer companies which had grievances against the Local Authority used diplomatic ways to iron out their differences. An example was when the RTC demanded endowment payment in 2009 from Tawona Gardens in cash as opposed to land as agreed initially in their permit. In this case, the developer did not contest the Local Authority's position, but went and explained their financial predicament to the Council.[52] In the end, the PLDC successfully persuaded the RTC to accept land as endowment payment as per the initial agreement.[53] The approach used, forced the Local Authority to agree to receive part of the endowment from Tawona Gardens in the form of land. Tawona Gardens had realised that antagonising the Local Authority was counterproductive since the Council was responsible for approving private

47 Interview: Author with N Bakaris (Director of Tawona Gardens), Ruwa Supermarket, Ruwa, 11 January 2015.
48 Interview: Author with N Bakaris.
49 Interview: Author with N Bakaris.
50 Simone, *The social infrastructures of city life in contemporary Africa*, p. 8.
51 Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and Practice*, p. 11.
52 Interview: Author with N Bakaris.
53 Interview: Author with N Bakaris.

land developer infrastructure. Hence, PLDCs tried to be as diplomatic as they could in order to maintain good relations with the Local Authority.

## 5. RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PRIVATE LAND DEVELOPERS

Bad relationships among the developers retarded coordination which was an important tenet of town development. Private land developer projects did not usually overlap as each company developed its own piece of land and adhered to regulations on a given permit. This may seem to have reduced interaction among the developers. However, there were instances where the companies formed development alliances and cases where developers crossed each other's path.

For instance, the developers of the northern part of Ruwa exhibited rapport by creating alliances to improve infrastructure by forming the Ruwa River Consortium (RRC) water development alliance in 2007. According to the United Nations (UN) Habitat, "private actors have a peculiar ability to share a variety of resources and technologies in a cooperative way to improve urban infrastructure".[54] This was demonstrated by four developers, namely ZB Financial Holdings, Tawona Gardens, Fairview Land Developers and Barochit Property Developers, who created the RRC which was a group of PLDCs dedicated to constructing water and sewerage infrastructure.[55] The group entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Council to construct some offsite infrastructural facilities on behalf of the Local Authority.[56] This decision was reached after the developers had discovered that the Local Authority did not have adequate funds to put the required infrastructure in place.[57] Since it was financially impossible for one developer to undertake the task, a coalition of developers became the remedy for constructing the required offsite infrastructure to service Ruwa's northern Suburbs. Their contributions positively impacted infrastructure development in Ruwa. The RRC, for example, was responsible for constructing the Springvale Water Reservoir and the northern suburbs' main water pipeline. The RRC, thus, reflected cordial relationships among the PLDCs.

Not all PLDCs were able to work in harmony. Chipukutu Properties, through their legal practitioners, complained in 2005 that Damofalls Land

54 UN Habitat, *Public-private partnerships in housing and urban development* (Nairobi: UN Habitat, 2011), p 5.

55 Ruwa Town Repository, Proposed meeting to be held between RLB and Wenspring Investments PVT LTD, 23 March 2007.

56 Ruwa Town Repository, Proposed meeting to be held between RLB and Wenspring Investments PVT LTD, 23 March.

57 Interview: Author with N Bakaris.

Developers interfered with their development project. Chipukutu claimed that Damofalls illegally connected water pipes from their main water system.[58] Furthermore, during its road construction in 2005, Damofalls was allegedly said to have damaged a 200-millimetre sewer pipe that connected with Zimre Park.[59] In the process of establishing a sewerage reticulation system, the developer connected their sewerage pipes to the main pipeline through Chipukutu Park, damaging the Chipukutu Bridge.[60] In another incident, during rock blasting by Damofalls, flying debris damaged the Chipukutu Park main waterhole and rocks and debris were left scattered along most of the roads.[61] Damofalls' actions retarded Chipukutu's work. These incidents demonstrate that as much as the PLDCs played a significant role in infrastructure development, disagreements that derailed progress sometimes arose among them.

Some PLDCs like ZIMRE were not comfortable in sharing offsite infrastructure with other companies because of the stiff competition among them in the Ruwa land market. In 2000, Chipukutu Properties had a problem with linking roads and services with Zimre Park. Chipukutu Park needed access to the main Harare-Mutare highway, but the road had to go through the Zimre Park.[62] The possibility of creating road access through Zimre Park into Chipukutu Park was premised on the ability of Chipukutu Properties to construct a bridge across the river on the boundary of the two suburbs.[63] However, the construction of the bridge proved to be expensive. The solution was to connect the road at Zimre Park with the Chipukutu road at an old bridge in Zimre Park.[64] The two developers had a hard time negotiating in order to reach an agreement. This problem delayed the land survey and development of Chipukutu Park. ZIMRE did not have the will to share resources to aid the development of Chipukutu Park.

58 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between Hantor and Imerman Legal Practitioners on behalf of Chipukutu Properties and the RLB, 21 November 2005.
59 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between Hantor and Imerman Legal Practitioners on behalf of Chipukutu Properties and the RLB.
60 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between Hantor and Imerman Legal Practitioners on behalf of Chipukutu Properties and the RLB.
61 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between Hantor and Imerman Legal Practitioners on behalf of Chipukutu Properties and the RLB.
62 Ruwa Town Repository, Chipukutu Properties, Letter from B. Saich to Chipukutu Properties, cc Department of Physical Planning, 1 February 2000.
63 Ruwa Town Repository, letter from B Saich to Chipukutu Properties, cc Department of Physical Planning, 1 February 2000.
64 Ruwa Town Repository, letter from B Saich to Chipukutu Properties, cc Department of Physical Planning.

## 6. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEVELOPERS AND RUWA RESIDENTS

The relationship between the PLDCs and Ruwa residents was established mainly through the process of selling and buying of property on the property market. PLDCs were responsible for subdividing and developing land through constructing offsite and onsite infrastructure before selling it to individuals. As postulated by Adam Smith, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest".[65] In the same way, it was not out of the benevolence of PLDCs that Ruwa Town was built, but from their (developer companies) utmost desire to make a profit. Hence, capital was the bases of the PLDCs/ residents relationship.

After being impressed by the work of a developer in Gweru, the Minister of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, Ignatius Chombo, praised PLDCs for delivering quality offsite infrastructure to the residents of Gweru and promised to avail more land for urban development to PLDCs.[66] PLDCs were trusted by both the Government and the general public. Transparency by some PLDCs created a good reputation for them and gave customers (their clients) confidence in them as compared to public-led plot development. When PLDCs delivered on their promises, they established trust from the residents and enjoyed cordial relationships which were healthy for town development.

As a result of good relations, in times of crisis, the residents and prospective residents sympathised with the companies when they failed to deliver on promises they made to the residents. For example, in 2004, Barochit Property Developers Private Limited was financially crippled and was unable to finish developing offsite infrastructure for its customers to move in. In this case, the prospective residents of Barochit Park assisted the PLDC by contributing ZW$ 10 million towards purchasing a water pump which was required to upgrade the USAID pumping station which was a sanitary prerequisite before people were allowed to settle in the area by the Local Authority.[67] The prospective residents proved their willingness to help the developer because there were good relations between them.

Despite the cordial relationship between the developers and residents, in some instances, sour relationships emanated from PLDCs' slow pace

65 A Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (London: Metheen and Co. Ltd, 1904), p. 19.
66 *The Sunday Mail*, 14-20 April 2013.
67 Ruwa Town Repository (C/18), Minutes of the meeting held between RLB, Sebassa Developer and prospective residents of Sebassa, 9 June 2004.

in infrastructure development. Companies such as Damofalls, Barochit, Fairview and ZHC angered residents because they sold their plots to people before they were fully serviced. They used the revenue from the sales of such plots to complete offsite infrastructure development. Servicing of plots, therefore took longer to complete. Delays in completing the construction of infrastructure as required by the Local Authority frustrated the residents. Further frustration came from the fact that certificates of compliance were not issued by the Council unless the offsite infrastructure was complete. This also meant that plot owners did not receive title deeds which deprived them of ownership rights.

While PLDCs such as Mashonaland Holdings, ZIMRE and ZB Holdings engaged in honest and transparent transactions with customers, other cases in Ruwa exposed irregularities in land transactions resulting in bitter relationships which compromised the integrity of developers. The ZHC case can be used to illustrate the hostility which was created after developers had short-changed their clients. The company started selling plots in July 2000. The developer had told clients/customers that the plots would be completely serviced within two years.[68] However, five years after the commencement of the project, the development of offsite infrastructure was not even halfway complete.[69] At the same time, the Local Authority did not allow the PLDCs' clients to settle in Cranbrook Park since infrastructure development was still incomplete.[70] This did not please plot owners who were desperate for homes. They then made frantic efforts to communicate with the developer, but it was to no avail since they got negative responses from the company's head office.[71] The developer always gave empty promises on the state of development in Cranbrook Park.

The Local Authority tried to mediate to facilitate communication between the PLDC and the plot owners, but the company remained "arrogant", resisting dialogue.[72] Thus, the conflict reached an impasse and had to be resolved through the courts. In 2007 the Cranbrook Stand Owners Association filed

68 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Letter from Stand Owners Association to the RLB, 21 August 2005.

69 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Letter from Stand Owners Association to the RLB.

70 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Information to be used at a meeting to be held between the Permanent Secretary for Local Government, RLB and three developers namely: Tawona Portion of Galway Estate, Lot 1 of Cranbrook, Sebassa and their respective beneficiaries' representatives, 9 February 2006.

71 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Minutes for the meeting held on 16 April 2006 at Cranbrook Park, 16 April 2006.

72 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Minutes for the meeting held on 16 April 2006 at Cranbrook Park.

a lawsuit against the developer at the High Court of Zimbabwe.[73] The Court ruled in favour of the applicant (the Association), and the ZHC was placed under provisional judicial management on the 3rd of June 2007.[74] The process of going to court took significant time and resources which could have been channelled towards the growth of the suburb. PLDCs' scandals exposed at the courts drew much attention from the media. This resulted in some people losing faith in many PLDCs.

PLDCs' slow pace in developing plots did not result in conflicts in Cranbrook only, but developers such as Barochit, Fairview, Damofalls and Tawona Gardens faced the same challenge though to a lesser extent than Cranbrook. A field trip to Barochit Park in 2014 revealed much resentment towards the company from the residents. Most of the residents had bought their plots in 2000, but the development of infrastructure was still incomplete by 2014.[75] Over the decade from 2000 to 2010, the development of offsite infrastructure was slow.[76] Residents of these suburbs continued to show their unhappiness about delays in offsite infrastructural development in their area.

Fraudulent cases where bogus PLDCs duped some prospective residents in Ruwa thus increased. Such PLDCs took clients' money under the pretence that they owned land, but once they had been paid, they disappeared into oblivion. The Metof Investment scandal was one of the cases of grand duping in the history of Ruwa. More than 7 000 home seekers were deceived and had their money ripped off by Metof Investments who sold land that it did not own.[77] Metof Investment was a company owned by a "conman" who used the name Kay Makhela and sometimes used aliases Peter Elo and Jealous Mamudza.[78] Metof started selling plots in 2000 when the company's adverts

73 Ruwa Town Repository, In the High Court of Zimbabwe held at Harare Case: No. HC 7438/00, 4 July 2007.

74 Judicial management is a legal system used to rehabilitate or help companies that are financially crippled but have room for resuscitation. The aim of judicial management is to avoid liquidation or winding up of a company under a financial turmoil caused by mismanagement. A judicial manager is appointed by the Court under the provisions of the *Companies Act (24:03)* to work on revival initiatives. For further reading on the judicial management system in Zimbabwe see, R Dzvimbo, Should the Zimbabwean Companies Act Move Away from Judicial Management and Adopt Business Rescue (LLM, University of Cape Town, 2013); Ruwa Town Repository, Cranbrook Housing Development, Being Administered by Zimbabwe Housing Company (Private) Limited (Under Judicial Management), Progress Report, February 2008.

75 Interview: Author with R Jakachira (Barochit Park Home Owner), Barochit Park, Ruwa, 20 November 2014.

76 Intervier: Author with T Nyamande (Barochit Park Home Owner), Barochit Park, Ruwa, 20 November, 2014.

77 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.

78 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.

for residential plots in Ruwa started to appear in newspapers.[79] The company demanded between ZW$ 65 000 and ZW$110 000 upfront as deposit or ZW$ 125 000 for 300m$^2$ plots.[80] This bogus PLDC sold land which did not belong to them, but to J and H Enterprises which was allegedly owned by a retired army chief, General Solomon Mujuru.[81] Metof did not hold any title deeds for the land it was selling. The Department of Physical Planning and the RLB confirmed that they did not issue any development permit to Metof.[82] The PLDC had just made an offer to Mujuru to buy land at his Inverungus Farm in Ruwa, but the developer had breached the terms of the agreement resulting in the agreement being cancelled.[83] The bogus company went on to sell the land under the guise that it had bought it.

There were also cases where the bogus company deceived Zimbabweans in the diaspora who wanted to invest back home. In total, Metof sold around 5 000 bogus plots at Inverungus Farm.[84] The company made between ZW$ 33 and 56 million from deposits for these bogus plots.[85] The fraudster, Kay Makhela, was subsequently arrested in January 2000 and put to trial in March of the same year.[86] Even though Makhela was imprisoned and Metof was dissolved, the home seekers lost valuable money which they never recovered. This scandal affected other developers as well since home seekers in Ruwa lost faith in PLDCs.[87] There were many incidents that involved PLDC coning home seekers, but the ones discussed here merely illustrate how bogus companies undermined the role played by genuine PLDCs in the development of Ruwa.

Beside fraud and conflicts on service delivery, PLDCs were involved in clashes with residents over land for peri-urban farming. Some residents had a tendency of illegally growing maize, vegetables and other crops on nearby undeveloped land belonging to PLDCs. In 2007, maize was planted by neighbouring residents on land belonging to ZB Building Society. Residents even ignored the prohibitive notices on the land and went on to cultivate. The maize was then slashed. The developer reacted by commanding its workers to slash the maize crop.[88] The workers were escorted by the Local Authority's

79 Ruwa Town Repository, Addendum to the 61st Environmental Management Committee meeting, 16 January 2001.
80 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.
81 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.
82 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.
83 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.
84 *The Financial Gazette,* 21 -27 December 2000.
85 *The Financial Gazette*, 21 -27 December 2000.
86 *The Financial Gazette*, 8-14 March 2000.
87 Interview: Author with S Nyamakupe (Ruwa Resident), Better Days Bottle Store, Ruwa, 4 February 2015.
88 Interview: Author with S Nyamakupe.

police who shielded them from furious residents.[89] The Local Authority was called to support the slashing of the maize because it had a security division which dealt with property trespassing. The residents had breached the law that prohibited trespassing of private property by cultivating on land belonging to the developer. However, the residents felt that the developer should have warned them before planting instead of slashing the maize without any form of communication.[90] Slashing grown maize was perceived by residents as sinister since it deprived them of the opportunity to secure grain for food. This scenario shows how PLDCs took away the peoples' "right to the city" as explained by Harvey. The residents of Ruwa did not have any power to use open land in their neighbourhood.

Although the developer was acting in accordance with the law on trespassing, good communication with residents would have created close relationships. As a consequence of the coalition of the PLDC and the Local Authority in applying the law, some elderly residents who cultivated on the land belonging to PLDCs started to resent the duo. Residents absconded meetings called by the Council, and according to the Town Secretary, this explains the low turnout of residents during Council meetings in 2007.[91] The lack of unity between residents and the other stakeholders was detrimental to the development and growth of Ruwa.

Bitter relations and conflict between the PLDCs and residents were usually solved through dialogue with the Local Authority as the arbitrator. In the Cranbrook saga, for example, the RLB facilitated dialogue between the developer and the residents over delays in the development of offsite infrastructure.[92] Sometimes the dialogue resolved conflict between the aggrieved parties. After a series of meetings between Barochit Property Developers and residents over the developer's slow pace in building offsite infrastructure, the latter sympathised with the former and even offered financial help towards infrastructure construction.[93] This revealed the effectiveness of dialogue in solving conflicts among different parties in Ruwa.

89 Interview: Author with S Nyamakupe.

90 Interview: Author with M Kisimana (Ruwa Resident), Better Days Bottle Store, Ruwa, 4 February 2015.

91 Interview: Author with J Makombe (Ruwa Town Secretary), RTC Offices, Ruwa, 8 April 2014.

92 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Cranbrook Park minutes for the meeting held on 9 March 2006 at Local Government Makombe Building Room 801 at 8:30hrs, 9 March 2006.

93 Ruwa Town Repository (C/17), Information to be used at a meeting to be held between the Permanent Secretary for Local Government, RLB and three developers namely: Tawona Portion of Galway Estate, Lot 1 of Cranbrook, Sebassa and their Respective Beneficiaries Representatives, February 2006, p. 2.

## 7. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RUWA RESIDENTS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

PLDCs indirectly shaped the relationships between the Council and the residents since the former was mandated to safeguard the interests of the latter when interacting with PLDCs. The Local Authority was the custodian of service delivery and infrastructure development in the town. The relationship between the Council and Ruwa residents was service-oriented where the Council was the service provider, and the residents were the consumers. The Council acted as a broker between the residents and the PLDCs in line with the partnership model. The model and the neoliberal theory have both been condemned on the basis that they promoted the involvement of the private sector yet the aims of the private parties are extremely opposite to those of the public.[94] The private sector's motive is to make profit at the expense of the public residents. However, the neoliberal theory admits the weakness of the private sector and has called for the public sector to monitor the former. The Local Authority then acted as the monitor of PLDCs in Ruwa. The RLB/RTC and the residents sometimes enjoyed cordial relationships where the former intervened on behalf of the latter as the Council bargained for quality services from PLDCs.

The Local Authority acted on behalf of the residents against some PLDCs' fraudulent activities which affected the residents. In such matters, the Local Authority intervened in an endeavour to save the residents from bogus developers. After discovering the illegal sale of plots by Metof in 2001, the RLB warned the company against such practices.[95] At first, the company did not take heed of the warnings, and the RLB threatened to put a warning advert in the newspapers.[96] The threat eventually compelled the bogus developer to stop advertising Ruwa plots in the newspapers. The Local Authority went on to use notices to educate the public on the legal procedures that had to be followed before paying for residential plots.[97] The education helped home seekers to avoid being duped by bogus PLDC.

In 2002, the RLB as the custodian of law in the town intervened on behalf of the residents for them to have free access to the Chipukutu road after a developer had closed the road for public use. The developer had closed the Chipukutu road and placed restrictive barriers (security guards) on

94 Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, p. 32.
95 Ruwa Town Repository, Addendum to the 61st Environmental Management Committee meeting.
96 Ruwa Town Repository, Addendum to the 61st Environmental Management Committee meeting.
97 *The Herald*, 19 January 2001.

the road denying the residents access to the road saying that it was private property.[98] In response to this, the Local Authority reminded the developer that the road was public property and vested in the hands of the RLB in terms of the *RTCPA chapter 29:12* of 1996.[99] The RLB fined the developer an amount of ZW$ 50 000 for contravening the law.[100] The company was then instructed to remove the barrier and its security personnel from the road.[101] Residents, in this case, did not confront the PLDC who was denying them access to the road. They were, in fact, not aware of their right to access the road.

Although there were good relations between residents and the RTC, there were some isolated conflicts noted. For example, in 1994, the Ruwa Residents Association was involved in a wrangle with the RTC over what they alleged to be corruption in the allocation of plots.[102] It was alleged that, the Board was collaborating with a developer in allocating plots to non-residents mostly from Harare.[103] The issue was not resolved, and the following year the residents resorted to demonstrations.

Essential services had to be managed well. Failure to deliver vital water supply services resulted in strained relations between the residents and the Local Authority. Since the establishment of the RLB in 1990, the Local Authority had failed to provide the residents with adequate water. This became one of the major grievances of the residents against the Council. Newspaper interviews with residents revealed that residents were not happy with erratic water supplies in Ruwa. They felt that they were being short-changed and this was partly why most ratepayers were not honouring their obligations to the Council.[104] The challenges faced by the Local Authority in supplying water were clear. The Local Authority was failing to meet the water demand of the growing population, given the limited water infrastructure they had.[105] One of the reasons the Local Authority partnered with PLDCs was to improve offsite infrastructure, but despite the existence of a partnership, residents continued to complain about erratic water supplies. PLDCs' failure to establish adequate water infrastructure and water sources haunted the Local Authority. This,

98 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between RLB and Lorraine Castedo Real Estate, 21 January 2003.
99 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between RLB and Lorraine Castedo Real Estate.
100 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between RLB and Lorraine Castedo Real Estate.
101 Ruwa Town Repository, Correspondence between RLB and Lorraine Castedo Real Estate.
102 *The Herald*, 21 August 1994.
103 *The Herald*, 21 August 1994.
104 *The Herald*, 15 September, 2005.
105 CA Davison, "Urban governance and the effective delivery and management of infrastructure services in urban areas in Zimbabwe: An appraisal of water and sewerage services delivered in Ruwa", *Urban Forum* 12 (2), 2001, pp. 139-170.

despite the effort that was made, diminished the role of PLDCs in the eyes of the public.

Ruwa residents also had problems with water and sewerage bills which they alleged to be too high considering the poor services they were getting. A case in point was the 1996 water billing demonstrations in the town where angry residents converged at the Local Authority's offices seeking explanations on how they had accumulated huge water bills by more than 80 per cent.[106] The RLB admitted that they were guilty and added that the huge water bills were caused by computer errors.[107] Under normal circumstances, the Local Authority should have noticed that there was an error before distributing the billing statements to the residents. Disagreements concerning water billing continued to be an issue between the Local Authority and the residents from 1996 to 1999.

In Zimre Park there was a news bulletin called the *Zimre Park Citizen* which was established by some residents mainly to criticise the Local Authority on service delivery. In 2003, the editor, called for a petition against the Council because she felt that it was failing to deliver its duties.[108] The editor of the bulletin listed a number of residents' grievances against the Council. The grievances included continuous water cuts, dysfunctional public street lights, hawkers at street corners, trucks parked along the main road and the Local Authority's failure to supervise the cutting of grass.[109] Residents in Zimre Park felt that the Local Board had to be dissolved making way for capable and creative professionals.[110] The bulletin also called for the residents to take united action in suing the RLB after the chairman, the councillors and their technical team had failed to fulfil their promise that they would complete a new water reticulation project in Zimre Park within two weeks.[111] This was the same action and collective vision described by Harvey's "right to the city", action which calls for residents to overthrow pervasive capitalist establishment and revolutionaries the city.[112] Although no legal action was taken against the Local Authority, *Zimre Park Citizen* became the mouthpiece of the Zimre Park residents pointing out the flaws of the RLB.[113] The issues that were raised in the bulletin demonstrate that there were hostile relationships between the

106 *The Herald*, 26 June, 1996.
107 *The Herald*, 28 June, 1996.
108 *The ZIMRE Park Citizen*, September, 2003.
109 *The ZIMRE Park Citizen*, September, 2003.
110 *The ZIMRE Park Citizen*, September, 2003.
111 *The ZIMRE Park Citizen*, October, 2003.
112 Harvey, "The right to the city", p. 3.
113 Interview: Author with C Banda (Zimre Park Resident), Ruwa Post Office, Ruwa, 10 February 2015.

residents of Zimre Park and the Local Authority, and this was caused by poor service delivery.

In 2009, Chipukutu Park Owners Association accused the Local Authority of providing uneven services to suburbs in Ruwa, neglecting their area. They were concerned that Chipukutu Park was not receiving the same benefits as those being offered to their sister suburbs such as Damofalls and Ruwa Location.[114] They complained about potholes not being rehabilitated, uncut grass and erratic refuse collection.[115] The residents of Chipukutu expected to be treated as residents of their sister suburbs by receiving the same services as those given to other suburbs. It seemed, Chipukutu Park was alienated from council services on political grounds. The area was likely neglected because it was seen by the RLB councillors as a low-density suburb with a smaller electorate than its sister suburbs. The suburb had only 600 homesteads which were less compared to the Ruwa Location high-density suburb which had more than 3 000 residential houses. To get more votes in the councillors' elections, the RLB officials concentrated on suburbs that had higher populations at the expense of low-density suburbs.

The relationship between the Local Authority and residents reflected the position of PLDCs in the development of Ruwa. The Local Authority was the legal instrument for administration in Ruwa and was there to serve the residents and protect them against PLDCs. After partnering with the PLDCs in developing the area, it remained the Local Authority's mandate to protect the residents' interests against unscrupulous PLDCs. However, the relationship between the Local Authority and residents became sour when the Local Authority, together with the PLDCs failed to deliver services.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The history of the interaction between the three stakeholders demonstrates some negative aspects of the PLDCs and the Local Authority that undermined their role in the development of Ruwa Town. Shoddy service delivery was the main source of conflict in the tripartite partnership. Other sources of conflict included fraudulent cases and the lack of compliance with the Local Authority's regulations. There were also inter-organisation conflicts among the developers, which mainly emanated from competition for land markets in the town. However, turbulent relationships cannot completely discredit the PLDCs' role in the development of Ruwa, since in other instances the relationships

114 RTC, Letter from Chipukutu Park Owners Association to the Ruwa Local Board Secretary, 23 December, 2009.

115 RTC, Letter from Chipukutu Park Owners Association to the Ruwa Local Board Secretary, 23 December, 2009.

were cordial and developers made an effort to improve Ruwa's urban infrastructure, sometimes under difficult economic conditions. The historical account shows that cordial relationships among development stakeholders are crucial in achieving efficient PPP-led urban development. Communication, transparency, honour, and service are crucial tenets of conflict management under PPPs. It is the role of the public entity (local authorities and the Government) to ensure that conflict is managed among urban development stakeholders. As illustrated by Simone, residents' participation advances the larger project of the city building. Residents in Ruwa should be encouraged to participate in urban affairs that affect them. The study shows that residents were mere backbenchers and did not participate in the town planning and decision-making processes. Hence, the PLDCs and the Local Authority wielded all power in the towns' development process.

AUTHOR:
Ian Glenn[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Emeritus Professor of Media Studies, University of Cape Town

EMAIL:
ian.glenn@uct.ac.za

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.4

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):83-103

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

# CONSERVATION PROPAGANDA IN SOUTH AFRICA? THE CASE OF LAURENS VAN DER POST, THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND THE NATIONAL PARKS BOARD.

## ABSTRACT

*This article examines correspondence in the archives of the South African National Parks relating to a television film, "All Africa within us", that Sir Laurens van der Post made for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in various South African nature reserves in 1974. The correspondence reveals that The South African Department of Information, supported by Dr Piet Koornhof, who was friendly with Van der Post, helped arrange the visit, expecting that Van der Post would provide favourable coverage of South African conservation efforts and thus, indirectly, of the National Party. The article reveals the complex interplay of motives between the Parks Board, Van der Post, the Department of Information and the BBC. It shows that the Kruger Park authorities were suspicious of filmmakers and wished to control the products by, for example, asking for scripts in advance. Van der Post's letters and later commentary by his producer suggest that he changed his emphasis and focus considerably from the outset to the final production. The most fruitful approach to such productions may be in Actor-Network theory which tries to show the importance of different agents in controlling, or failing to control, a cultural product. Attempts to see conservation films as simple propaganda or political statement, the article argues, are misplaced and simplify the complexities.*

*Keywords: Eschel Rhoodie; Van der Post; BBC; Wilderness Foundation; wildlife documentary; South African National Parks; Kruger Park; rhino conservation.*

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Critics of conservation in Southern Africa and more generally see it as a colonial imposition that disregards the rights of indigenous people and creates a myth of unpeopled landscapes.[1] This criticism has been extended to wildlife documentaries as a portrayal of an artificial wilderness space that ignores the extent to which indigenous peoples have been omitted from the landscape, how human interventions shape that space or how filmmakers use various forms of artifice to create the media product.[2]

The South African situation is particularly interesting because wildlife documentaries started flourishing in South Africa and South-West Africa during the 1970s when the struggle for Namibian independence was being fought, and social upheaval in South African followed the Soweto uprising of 1976, This was a period in which David and Carol Hughes, arguably the leading wildlife filmmakers of their generation, won the top British wildlife documentary award, a Golden Panda, in 1978 for their film about the Namib made at a National Parks Board base, not far from a combat zone. What was the relationship between political and social upheaval, conservation, and wildlife films?

Correspondence in the South African National Parks (SANParks) archives, both in their Groenkloof headquarters in Pretoria and in the Kruger Park archives in Skukuza, reveals that the Department of Information, the controversial body that sought aggressively to influence internal and external coverage of South Africa, saw South Africa's conservation record as something that could be used to improve the image of the country abroad.[3] They tried to facilitate the making of television programmes that would give a positive message about South Africa and its national parks.

The most interesting case study involves a television programme made for the BBC by Laurens van der Post, the South African novelist, travel writer and filmmaker who had moved from South Africa to England. Van der Post's rise to the rank of Colonel during his service in the Second World War, his travel writing, and his critical account of how the "Bushmen" were being

1 L Meskell, *The nature of heritage : the new South Africa* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); J Mbaria and M Ogada, *The big conservation lie: the untold story of wildlife conservation in Kenya* (Washington: Lens and Pens, 2016); W Beinart and P Coates, *Environment and history: The taming of nature in the USA and South Africa* (London: Routledge, 2002).

2 D Bousé, *Wildlife films* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); C Chris, *Watching wildlife* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); JC Horak, "Wildlife documentaries: From classical forms to reality TV", *Film History, An International Journal* 18 (4), 2006.

3 M Rees and C Day, *Muldergate: The Story of the info scandal* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1980).

treated in Southern Africa in his 1955 television series and in various books had made him a highly regarded commentator on Southern Africa in the United Kingdom and internationally.

The previously unexamined correspondence related to his filming in South Africa throws an interesting light onto Van der Post's political stance in the 1970s, a time in which he was involved in various political initiatives involving South Africa and its relationships with Britain. It also shows how the National Party was trying to modernise itself and shed the image of racial *baasskap* [literally boss-hood but generally meaning white racial domination] and, particularly, how the Department of Information and the Department of Foreign Affairs tried to shape international views of South Africa.[4]

The correspondence also reveals the tensions and difficulties involved in the project because of the different expectations and agendas of Van der Post, the Department of Information, and the National Parks Board. It also suggests that there were different views within the ruling National Party because of differing interpretations of what kinds of message about the country were permissible and desirable.[5] Understanding some of this background helps understand frictions and tensions in this correspondence. In particular, it suggests that the experience of the Kruger Park with previous filmmakers made them reluctant participants at best in the project and shows that the Department of Information had very little control over the content. These tensions suggest that any attempt to see wildlife films as propaganda underestimates the complex interactions involved.

## 2. POLITICAL MESSAGING, THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND CONSERVATION

While the National Party in the early 1970s was in a powerful position, after a decade of strong economic growth, and faced little internal opposition, it realised that old-style racial apartheid could no longer be defended. It thus sought to modernise its message to suit an era of decolonisation, particularly by developing a message of anti-communism.[6] The Department

4 JDF Jones, *Storyteller : the many lives of Laurens Van der Post* (London: John Murray, 2001); J Sanders, *Apartheid's friends: the rise and fall of South Africa's secret service* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 2006).

5 H Giliomee, *The Afrikaners : biography of a people* (London: C. Hurst, 2003); PE Louw, *The rise, fall, and legacy of apartheid* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004); J Miller, *An African volk : the apartheid regime and its search for survival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) .

6 H Adam, *Modernising racial domination : South Africa's political dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Miller, *An African volk : the apartheid regime and its search for survival*.

of Information in the early 1970s attempted to use a wide range of tactics and figures to change perceptions of South Africa, particularly in the USA. One area where Western views of South Africa were positive was in the area of conservation. Jamie Miller writes of their work in "producing glossy brochures on South Africa's wildlife and economy" as a surface activity, but they aimed to do more.[7]

In Natal, at the Umfolozi Game Reserve where he was Warden, Ian Player's success in "saving" the white rhino and the re-establishing of a flourishing population in the Kruger National Park had been celebrated in documentaries, Player's own books and even became the stuff of Hollywood film in *Hatari*![8] The German naturalist Bernard Grzimek also helped shape Western perceptions at the time with his *Serengeti Shall Not Die!* – a film that successfully attacked a utilitarian British attempt to parcel out the migratory route of wildebeest to indigenous farmers.[9] So, as the world became concerned about the South African "trusteeship" of South-West Africa, one of the ways to argue for the benefits of white South African control over the area was to point to wildlife conservation.

The mission of the Department of Information was to exploit contacts who were sympathetic to South Africa by presenting a more modern, "*verlig*" or enlightened view of the apartheid system. Their attempt to influence positive foreign coverage involved a range of methods, including attempting to buy the *Washington Star*, but in this minor case of getting an endorsement of South African conservation from a respected critic of South Africa, we can see the delicate negotiations involved.

In the South Africa of the early 1970s, Afrikaner power was at its zenith. The National Party was also drawing an increasing number of English-speaking voters who, particularly after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia in 1965 had come to see the United Kingdom, the traditional reference point for the opposition United Party – by the 1974 election in disarray – far more critically. English speakers were being drawn into a more inclusive anti-communist white hegemony, something the Department of Information tried to capitalise on by secretly funding a new English language newspaper, *The Citizen*, to push a pro-government line.[10] Within Afrikanerdom, there were tensions on how much of the traditional basis of Afrikaner nationalism in the historical experience of Afrikaners and their

7 Miller, *An African volk : the apartheid regime and its search for survival,* p. 93.

8 I Player and N Steele, *Zululand wilderness: Shadow and soul* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1997); SJ Brooks, Changing nature: A critical historical geography of the Umfolozi (PhD, Queen's University Kingston, 2001).

9 T Lekan, "Serengeti shall not die: Bernhard Grzimek, wildlife film, and the making of a tourist landscape in East Africa", *German History* 29 (2), 2011.

10 Rees and Day, *Muldergate: The Story of the info scandal*.

religious identity and anti-colonial struggle could be adapted to a new defence of white power.

## 3. VAN DER POST

In the 1970s, Laurens van der Post was the best-known British-based commentator on Southern Africa and its racial problems, largely as a result of his films of the "Bushmen" and his novels. In the 1950s, his anti-communist Buchanesque novel, *Flamingo Feather* had been successful enough to tempt Alfred Hitchcock to envisage making a film of it and visiting South Africa to explore that possibility. Later critics have treated his novels and ethnographic films more suspiciously.[11]

By 1974, he was attempting to influence South Africa through his friendship with Piet Koornhof, the South African cabinet minister who had been a Rhodes Scholar and earned a PhD in anthropology from Oxford University. Jones examines the evidence that suggests that Van der Post was instrumental in securing the release of fellow Gray College old boy Bram Fischer, Nelson Mandela's lawyer at the Rivonia trial and secretly head of the illegal Communist Party in South Africa, from prison in the last year of his life through interventions that Koornhof presented to Cabinet.[12] At the same time, Van der Post was arguing for continued sporting engagement with South Africa by supporting the contentious 1974 Lions Rugby tour to South Africa.

Van der Post was also friendly with Player with whom he set up the Wilderness Foundation, a conservation Non-Governmental Organisation, in 1972. As the correspondence shows, the projected television programme was originally envisaged as being about saving rhinos which would have involved Player's collaboration.

## 4. KRUGER PARK AND WILDLIFE DOCUMENTARY

One of the puzzles in understanding the history of African wildlife documentary is why the Kruger Park, the continent's premier wildlife tourist destination, was so little used for documentary filming.[13] An examination of the relevant archive

11 EN Wilmsen, "Primal anxiety, sanctified landscapes: the imagery of primitiveness in the ethnographic fictions of Laurens van der Post", *Visual Anthropology* 15 (2), 2002; L Van Vuuren, "The many myths of Laurens van der Post: Van der Post and Bushmen in the television series Lost World of Kalahari (1958)", *South African Historical Journal* 48 (1), 2003.

12 Jones, *Storyteller,* pp. 332-33.

13 Evidence from the Kruger Park is drawn from several box files in the Skukuza archive, numbered NK27 entitled Publisiteit en films. The box files are loosely arranged by date.

in Skukuza, the administrative headquarters and main camp in the Kruger Park, shows that James Stevenson-Hamilton, first warden, tried very early on to persuade the Board to support a proposal from British wildlife filmmaker Ratcliffe Holmes to work in the park, but the proposal failed because of financial difficulties and Ratcliffe Holmes's wish to use other destinations and promote himself. Perhaps because of the failure of this attempt, Stevenson-Hamilton himself did not seem to approach any other filmmakers. There are tantalising glimpses of near misses such as a 1938 approach by the leading English wildlife filmmaker Cherry Kearton, whose second wife was South African, with a response from Stevenson-Hamilton about fees for filming, but that collaboration did not materialise.

By 1945, there were clearly tensions between the South African Railways and Harbour authorities, who were then largely responsible for encouraging international tourism, and the Kruger authorities. A major tension emerged: who controlled the images emanating from the country's leading tourist attraction at a time when the park could be used to help burnish South Africa's international reputation?

The park rangers and authorities had ways of resisting outside pressure and demands from local and international filmmakers. In 1948, for example, ranger Orpen objected to a planned Afrimerica expedition, and their claim that they would increase publicity and tourists. For Orpen, this was an American money-making project likely to distract rangers from their real jobs, and his view seems to have been typical of those in the front line.

The head of the National Parks Board and the head warden of Kruger had to take different priorities into account when confronted by requests. They had to answer to various Boards but also consider the feelings and reactions of subordinates and the other priorities of the park. There were three areas where intending visitors sought favourable filming conditions and were usually rebuffed. For optimal filming, they needed off-road access, access after normal park hours, and the aid of knowledgeable rangers. These requests recur over several decades and the head warden or local rangers were usually able to say that other priorities did not make these requests possible. To allow off-road or after-hours access would set a bad example for general tourists and the rangers were too busy with their normal duties to be able to spend time guiding filmmakers. In general, they also turned down requests to make films focusing on the rangers.

There were also concerns about the image of the park and concerns that certain content might not reflect favourably on what authorities saw as their serious scientific mission. Jane Carruthers has described how the authorities after 1948 increasingly saw their mission in scientific and "command and

control" terms.[14] This shift meant that by the 1970s there were perennial concerns about the unfavourable presentation of elephant culling, for example. Another revealing letter was regarding the Jamie Uys film, *Beautiful People*, where the Kruger allowed filming but under the condition that the film would not make any reference to the park in the credits, clearly feeling that comedy or a feeling of "onrustigheid" [disturbance] was not a suitable tone.[15] There was also the general issue of who should benefit financially from any filming in the park. The rapid development of wildlife filming in Southern Africa stemmed in large part from the rise of private lodges such as Londolozi where filmmakers could go off-road, work outside normal viewing hours, and have, or in fact be, specialised guides.[16]

These institutional habits meant that the National Parks Board and Kruger authorities expected and enjoyed quite considerable autonomy, something demonstrated in the interplay between Eschel Rhoodie of the Department of Information, Laurens van der Post, and the National Parks Board and Kruger National Park.

## 5. A CASE STUDY – THE VAN DER POST FILM

On 1 January 1974, Laurens van der Post wrote from London to Rocco Knobel, then head of the National Parks Board, setting out a request to make a film in the Kruger and Kalahari Gemsbok Parks.[17] Some twenty letters were then exchanged between Van der Post, Knobel, Tol Pienaar, head of the Kruger, and the South African Department of Information which supported Van der Post's request. One letter to Knobel was written and signed by Eschel Rhoodie, the Secretary of the Department of Information and a controversial central figure in the Muldergate scandal that cost Connie Mulder the leadership of the National Park and the Prime Ministership.

In his letter, Van der Post starts by reminding Knobel of a brief meeting years before where he had given Knobel a copy of *Flamingo Feather* as a gift, but then starts putting on institutional pressure through judicious name-dropping, before moving to personal flattery:

> I would never have presumed, after one brief meeting, writing to you unless I had been encouraged by Dr De Wet [Carel de Wet was the South African Ambassador to the United Kingdom] and his staff here to do so.

14 J Carruthers, "Conservation and wildlife management in South African national parks 1930s–1960s", *Journal of the History of Biology* 41 (2), 2008.

15 Letter from TWS Meyer of Jamie Uys productions to the Director of the National Parks Board, 9 March, 1966, Skukuza Archives, NK 27.

16 I Glenn, ""Silent Hunter" and its influence on wildlife documentary", *Communitas* 23, 2018.

17 All these letters are in Skukuza archive, NK27.

> You may have heard by now that the Department of information has cleared a project which I propose doing for BBC television. I have been trying for many years to get the BBC interested in South Africa in a non-political way, and it has been extremely hard work. But I did a few months ago get the agreement to let me make a film on the immense amount South Africa has done for conservation of wildlife and flora of its own. It is a story that has never been properly told on the screen in the English-speaking world in spite of the admirable films that your own Department of information have produced in that regard.
>
> I myself want to do it comprehensively and also to make certain that it is not done by the wrong people and slanted to a wrong end. The story, of course, would not be complete without your own very great contribution to this cause and I am writing to ask if you would allow me to come and do some filming for about a fortnight towards the beginning of May in the Kruger Park; then for perhaps a week or so in the Gemsbok Kalahari park as well.

Van der Post then moves to the typical demand for special access, asking for "your expert help and guidance, to photograph game where it is least subject to outside intrusions; in fact as regards the filming in the Kruger Park itself, although I have known it well as a visitor ever since the days of Stevenson Hamilton, I would be grateful if the filming could be done with the best possible expert guidance that your staff could give us."

The next section of the letter highlights the recurring problem of who controlled access to Kruger for making films. Van der Post at once apologises for institutional confusion but tries to pressure Knobel and assure him that he will be treated favourably:

> I deeply regret that I have been unable to give you more notice. I had understood somehow that the Ministry of Information would have approached you direct in the matter several months ago, but somehow this was not done. Unfortunately, short as the time is, the dates I have indicated are the only possible ones if the film is to be made for showing on the BBC in 1974. If it is not shown then, there are changes of control pending in the organisation, which in any case plans its programs me years ahead, that will make a showing of such film impossible for years to come, if at all. Another reason why the dates are so important is that I got the BBC to agree to show the film next winter in what is the peak viewing hour on a Sunday evening just before Christmas between 7.30 and 8.30 pm.
>
> Although, as I have said, the film itself will be a completely non-political film, I do believe its political consequences will be immense because it will put South Africa in its most creative light to a world which by now is conditioned to think of us entirely in terms of negation. I myself regard it as one of the most important things I will ever have done for South Africa, and I can pledge my word and reputation that I will allow

> nothing in this film of which any of us need to be ashamed hereafter. I emphasise this because I know how shabbily you yourself have been treated on one occasion in what purported to be an objective wildlife film. Nothing of the sort will happy [sic] this time.

Van der Post then added further inducements, claiming that the film would be shown across the English-speaking world, translated into French and German, and saying that he had "suggested to the BBC that they approach the South African Broadcasting Corporation to see whether we cannot do one in Afrikaans as well for the day when we start television at home." Van der Post thus presented himself as a South African, part of a "we" or "us' and home to which both he and Knobel belong, even though he had moved to live in England and was firmly part of the British establishment. The reminder about the gift of *Flamingo Feather* might also have been a way of reminding Knobel of his anti-communist concerns and sympathies.

On 18 January, an official in the South African Department of Information in Pretoria wrote in Afrikaans to Knobel. The letter, probably dictated by Rhoodie, supported the Van der Post project, here presented as a film about the conservation of the white rhino to be shot in Hluhluwe, Umfolozi, Kalahari-Gemsbok and Kruger parks. The letter says the project enjoyed the support of the Department of Information and the Department of Foreign Affairs and that the Director of Information in London had advised Van der Post to get in touch with Knobel directly.

The letter, having shown some deference to Knobel, then re-applies the pressure: the project would be very desirable ("*baie verdienstelik*"), it would be shown widely, the South African Ambassador in London had given his whole-hearted support, and they would strongly appreciate it if Knobel would cooperate. They also believe it would forward further cooperation with the BBC.

On 1 February, Knobel responded to Van der Post with a copy to Tol Pienaar. The letter is at once an apparent concession to the pressure being put on him, but with a bureaucratic obstacle and not-so-gentle reminder to Van der Post that Knobel was suspicious of his political sympathies. The relevant section reads:

> …I am now in a position to advise you that the National Parks Board will be prepared to assist you in making a film on the conservation work that is undertaken in the Republic of South Africa. Details of our co-operation could be made known later to you as we would first like to see a description of the film before committing ourselves completely. I hope you will understand, as I am sure you will, that we have to be very careful in giving our co-operation to any film being produced for overseas distribution.

> I recall an occasion in 1954 or 1955, I am not quite sure of the date any more when I saw a television show by yourself on the Bushman and at that time certain statements were made with which I certainly do not agree and which put South Africa in a rather bad light. I quite accept the fact that your film is intended to show creative work that is being done in South Africa, but before giving our whole hearted support we would like to have some idea of the script.
>
> I can assure you that any positive approach to anything done by South Africa shown over BBC will certainly receive our full blessing.

Knobel ended by assuring Van der Post that he remembered Van der Post's visit and the gift of a copy of his novel, *Flamingo Feather*. Knobel did not stipulate what elements of Van der Post's very influential six-part series *The Lost World of the Kalahari* he found "put South Africa in rather a bad light" but it was presumably the conclusion in which Van der Post condemned the social conditions of the San and their criminalisation for hunting, as well as the ways in which the earlier colonists had persecuted them.

There may have been other reasons for Knobel's cool reaction. The letter from the Department of Information suggested that the topic of the white rhino would mean a primary emphasis on the then Natal Parks Board and its success in saving the white rhino, with the Kruger something of an afterthought. Knobel may have felt that the Kruger deserved more attention but may also have been suspicious of the move to seek favour with the BBC and the British, traditionally hostile to Afrikaners.

This brief letter from Knobel provoked an impassioned four-page reply from Van der Post, dated 14 February.

> Dear Mr Knobel,
>
> Thank you for your letter which I received in Switzerland two days before my return to London, and forgive me for not answering it at once, because I felt the letter demanded more reflection on my part before doing so.
>
> I note that you say that your board will cooperate with me in the making of the proposed film, but then goes on despite the encouragement and the clearance I have received from your Minister to make some considerable reservations.
>
> In the first place, you say that this help is conditional on what amounts to be a script of the film of which you would have to approve. You say that you have to insist on this because nowadays one cannot be careful enough of television programmes – a general proposition which of course I do understand. You then add a sentence which by implication sets out why apparently you have to be particularly careful in my regard. The reason for this appears to be that you saw a film of mine, "The Lost World of the Kalahari", in 1956, in which you say I said things about South Africa with which you

> could not agree and which apparently you thought unfair to our native country. I do not see, first of all, why a film on such an utterly different theme with such a different intent could be related to the film I am now proposing to make in South Africa, particularly when it is coupled with a pledge from me that it will be entirely creative and produce [sic] entirely to reflect credit on what I regard as one of the most positive contributions to the life of our time by South Africa.
>
> Moreover, I do not understand how you could have found anything unfavourable to South Africa even in my Bushman film because it had nothing to do with South Africa at all, and South Africa entered into it only insofar as it was necessary to place the film in its historical context, and that only up to the early half of the 19th century. Present-day South Africa did not figure in it at all, except for one brief comparison and this was as follows: The film was completely devoted to the Bushmen of that part of the Kalahari Desert which was then situated in the British protectorate of Bechuanaland. It was indeed by implication a very severe criticism of the neglect by the British authorities of the Bushmen in their care and protection. It was taken as such in this country and there was a debate on it in Parliament, and as a result for the first time in the history of Bechuanaland, an officer was appointed charged with the special duty of protecting the interests of the Bushmen of Bechuanaland. I compared this belated action very unfavourably with the action of the South African Government in South West Africa, where I pointed out the Bushmen had enjoyed special protection for years. You will find confirmation of this fact in my book, "The Heart of the Hunter".
>
> You will readily understand, therefore, the disappointment if not dismay that such a response on your part to the television venture which I had proposed to the South African government and which had already been approved by the relevant ministry.

Van der Post then complained about the request that he should provide a script in advance, saying that he had never had to do so before but also that wildlife filmmaking was too unpredictable. He then returned to suggest the spiritual or psychic importance of nature for modern industrial man:

> My theme, as you know, is how the modern world if it is to survive, needs the return to nature more than nature needs us. It is concerned with a profound interdependence of man on the conservation of what is left of his natural environment. It is a problem which is of increasing concern to the young people and to the thoughtful older generation.
>
> Few countries have shown a greater awareness and done more in this field than South Africa but because of the existing political prejudices in South Africa, no one is aware of South Africa's great contribution in this regard to the life of our time. My sole object is to make the world aware of this in the most creative way of which I am capable.

> I do not think I really can add usefully to the statement. If my word to you that I will do nothing negative in the film is not good enough, as it has been good enough for the Ministry, I think I would really prefer not to make the film. Disappointed as I shall be, it will not be unaccompanied by some relief because I have more than enough to do in my life and less and less time to do it, and I undertook this task involuntarily because I wanted to leave my own visual testament of the beauty of the great natural Heritage we hold in trust in our native country. The loss of an unparalleled opportunity to put this testament before the world will not be mine but South Africa's.
>
> If, however, you should feel, as I hope you will after reading this, that you could cooperate fully with me in the making of this film, I am perfectly prepared on my forthcoming visit to South Africa to call on you in Pretoria and answer in detail any further questions that you may have in mind, and work out a detailed scheme of timing and co-operation with you.
>
> In the meantime I have advised the BBC that I have had to postpone my plans for making the film and that the earliest time I can start of the film would be towards the end of September or October of this year.
>
> I am sending on a copy of a letter I wrote to Dr Carel de Wet in London setting out in greater detail my original intentions in regard to the film. I am also sending a copy of this letter to Dr Piet Koornhof who is a friend of mine and whom I have kept posted all along about the progress of this venture.

After closing salutations, Van der Post added a PS: "I could see you, should you wish it, in Pretoria some time between 27th March and 3rd April, or in Cape Town if that is more convenient. I will make my arrangements accordingly, but it would help me immensely to have your response either way, as soon as possible".

Van der Post's letter shows a significant shift of theme for the film – no longer about the white rhino but about a Jungian concern with man's need for nature. Van der Post also quite admirably stands his ground on the issue of apartheid racial superiority, suggesting that the "existing political prejudices in South Africa" (not against South Africa!) are a barrier to outsiders understanding what South Africa is doing for nature conservation. Van der Post thus tacitly includes Knobel in a group of enlightened Afrikaners who realise that any claims for superiority based simply on racial difference could not stand. As Hermann Giliomee points out, in 1974, Eschel Rhoodie was proposing to senior National Party figures that the government should dispense of all laws based simply on racial difference.[18]

18 Giliomee, *The Afrikaners : biography of a people,* p.533-34.

Knobel was able to use the name-dropping at the end of Van der Post's letter to stall full approval in a deft bureaucratic riposte. In a letter of 18 February, Knobel seemed to give way by assuring Van der Post that "we will cooperate with you in trying to portray the work done in the field of nature conservation in South Africa". At the same time, he kept the question of script approval pending: "The question of the script will probably be cleared when I receive a copy of your letter to Dr Carel de Wet. I think that it is only reasonable that we should know in broad terms what line you will follow in trying to put across the message to the BBC audience of what South Africa is doing in the field of nature conservation". Van der Post, in turn, wrote on 22 February to set up a meeting with Knobel for 2 April in Pretoria, treating the matter of the script approval as something they would iron out then.

The next document in the archive reveals that pressure was being applied on Knobel by the liberal faction in the National Party government. In a confidential letter in Afrikaans dated 11 April, Eschel Rhoodie, Secretary of the Department of Information and later to be a central figure in the 'Muldergate' scandal that cost Mulder the presidency, wrote to Knobel. Rhoodie referred to a recent phone call about Van der Post, and to a letter of 5 February mentioning that the Director of Information in London and the South African Ambassador in London all supported the planned film about white rhinos. (Rhoodie may have been referring to the letter dated 18 January discussed above.) Then Rhoodie unsubtly increases the pressure by mentioning that he had discussed the matter with Dr Piet Koornhof, Minister of Sport, Recreation and Immigration and that Koornhof felt that Van der Post's attitude towards South Africa had changed so materially that he was convinced that Van der Post would treat South Africa well in the planned film. Here again, we see that Rhoodie was not going to say that Van der Post and Koornhof (and he) were now part of a new interpretation of white control but rather that Van der Post had changed from his earlier critical attitudes.

Rhoodie addressed Knobel and closed and signed the typed letter by hand, presumably as a way of making the letter more friendly and less bureaucratic. Knobel annotates the letter "telefonies beantwoord' (answered telephonically) and "Liasseer" (liaise), probably as a way of indicating that he would let his staff know about the project.

The next letter, dated 8 May, was from Van der Post to Knobel. In it Van der Post thanked Knobel for the meeting but referred to their political differences: "I hope that even if there are, as there might be, differences between us about our internal problems in South Africa, we both believe now as I do that these are honourable differences and that neither of us doubt the love of the other for our native country". He complimented Knobel for "the immense work you have done for keeping alive the interest of everyone in

the preservation of our natural life" and looked forward to seeing Knobel and making the film in the spring.

If Van der Post and Knobel stuck to their original meeting date, it seems that Knobel remained unconvinced and un-cooperative until Rhoodie intervened by phoning him and writing the follow-up letter. Knobel, however, had a strong paper trail if the film turned out to be, in any way, an embarrassment to the South African government of the day.

A few letters followed in which Van der Post explained why he had to come in late September rather than earlier (letter of 9 June), though Knobel warned him that he would be clashing with school holidays (letter of 14 June). After that, most of the correspondence in the archive is between Van der Post and Tol Pienaar, head of the Kruger Park, with Knobel copied in.

In a letter of 1 July, 1974, Van der Post sets out his ideas for the film. By now, there was no mention whatsoever of the white rhino, and the emphasis had changed completely into something far more speculative about man's relation to nature, reflecting Jungian concerns with the emptiness of modern life.

After some discussion of the dates and apologies for the timing of the visit, something Van der Post blamed on "various strikes and unpredictables in this strike-ridden and unpredictable society", (another anti-trade union complaint suggesting he repudiated communist and socialist influences on society), he turned to the composition of the party which was to include for the first part the then Features Editor of the London *Sunday Times*. He then turned to a request for "a Land-Rover or whatever Park vehicle you think best for filming in places difficult to get at where we can observe the life of your park at its most intimate and undisturbed". He continued:

> At this stage, I think it is pointless to try and give you a detailed breakdown of what we propose doing because since our actors and principle [sic] artists will be the animals and the birds of your great Reserve we cannot prescribe their behaviour in advance and allow them places and roles in our scheme. But I thought that if I told you what the theme in my mind was that I would like to convey to the world you who know all this so much better than I would be able to advise me how best to realise it and contribute to the detail and the visual unfolding of the theme on the television screen.
>
> I want to begin with what I call the abundance in the beginning that is, a picture of what Africa must have been like at the time when Virgil's Aneaes [sic] hunted the same sort of animals just off shore on the Mediterranean littoral of the northern Africa of Dido's Carthage, as our ancestors hunted down south when they landed at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. I want to impress right at the start how Africa is the greatest reservoir of natural life the world has ever seen with a variety of birds and beasts no other continent could ever equal.

I would then like to convey to viewers the kind of relationship that the human being living in the midst of this abundance had with his natural environment and how the birds and the animals were not merely food for his body but also nourishment for his mind and imagination and contributed to the growth of his spirit by reflecting, as it were in a magic mirror aspects of himself of which he was inadequately aware. I would do this of course by recalling many stories I know told to me by Bushman, Hottentots, Zulus, Masai and Baganda about animals, but I shall be most grateful here if you and your staff could add to what I already know all the many stories and legends I am certain they must know of the role of animals and birds in the African imagination and indeed recollections of what our own pioneering ancestors thought about them. For this picture of the abundance of plant and animal in the beginning I thought of several general shots like the lovely view from the top of the Oliphants gorge over the immensity of the Park, and as an example of what it must have felt like to be living in the bush, a view of the life of the park from where the Pafuri joins the Limpopo; indeed we might even start if you agree at the Pafuri, not because it will necessarily be the first in the order of the film as all that will be determined only when we can survey the whole mass of film material, but because it might be less affected by the school holidays and therefore a more convenient place from your point of view for us to start.

From there we would work our way slowly down south through the whole of the Park. Also we want to avoid what I think is the over-emphasis of all films about Africa on the horrific and the monumental in animal life. Of course we would love to do justice to the elephant and the lion but we would be just as interested in the non-aggressive and the small. For instance, I want to do the klipspringer in as much detail as possible because he is a kind of fairy prince in many of the stories I know. I would also love to have filmed the partnership between the honey-guide, the ratel and man but I imagine that unless we have the luck of the devil we would not have allowed ourselves time enough to do anything so ambitious but even just some filming of the ratel and the honey guide would at any rate enable one to pass on the story and its meaning to the imagination of man.

All these, of course, are the briefest of many illustrations but I hope enough to show you the spirit and the trend of the opening part of the film. The second part will start with the attack on the great African fortress of animal life, how it accellerated [sic] with the scramble for Africa which started a bare hundred years ago and accellerated to such an extent that at the end of the Anglo-Boer war even in South Africa many species were either extinct or fast disappearing. A great deal of this process of course will have to be illustrated documentarily and will be our special responsibility and concern, but again your own advice and that of your staff on how to set about it will be enormously appreciated.

Part three will be the realisation of how not only our own heritage but the whole natural world was imperilled: how South Africa started to fight back to preserve it and how it succeeded. Now today it is a model the rest of the world can envy. I want to end by

showing how in all conservation we are not just do-gooders out of compassion for poor defenceless flora and fauna but doing something vital for our own well-being and security and in this regard, my text is taken from the Dead Sea Scrolls, from a passage where the Disciples ask Christ how they will find the way to the Kingdom of Heaven and Christ answers them: "Follow the birds, the beasts and the fishes and they will lead you in."

I will try to show how places like the Kruger Park and the other reserves in South Africa are really great natural temples which if entered in a proper spirit of humility enable man to recover a reverence for all life including human life that he appears to have lost and that indeed, his lack of reverence for his natural environment and his greed for exploiting it purely for materialistic needs is one of the main causes of Barbarism, the brutality and the violence of our time.

I could say a great deal more, but I do not think a person of your imagination needs more from me but may I beg you to swill all this round in your imagination as I have asked all my friends to do and to help me with all that comes out of it as a result?

I look forward immensely to seeing you all and propose, if you agree, that we should start by coming to direct to you at Skukuza on 22nd September and plan a detailed schedule of work and filming there.

Incidentally, I cannot get the BBC to give me more than twenty-four days filming in the Kruger Park at the most whereas, as we both know, a whole year would barely be enough. Nonetheless I think I can get enough film material and above all, by what I propose saying give the world a glimpse of our country and an interpretation they have not had before.

All possible good wishes to you,

Laurens van der Post

## 6. VAN DER POST'S KRUGER AND REALITY

Van der Post's defence of the value of wilderness may be one of the most powerful claims made for the Kruger National Park, but in its didactic agenda of pointing to the shortcomings of modern industrial society and its inhabitants, it omitted much of the social history of the park and particularly of indigenous people moved from it. While the history of the thousands of local African inhabitants pushed from the park in its early years may have been regarded by Van der Post as uncontentious, he also explicitly mentioned filming where the Pafuri (now Luvuvhu) joins the Limpopo – and in 1969 the Makuleke people living in this area had been very contentiously forced to move from

here to land on the western border of the Kruger.[19] Van der Post also implicitly takes the line, much favoured by the Vorster government, that Afrikaners are another people shaped by Africa rather than colonisers with allegiance to another country – here he implausibly argues that they are likely to have their own folklore. For the Kruger authorities with their new scientific managerial ethos, this must have seemed simply fanciful. Unsurprisingly, Pienaar never answered the letter and did not offer local folktales or legends to Van der Post.

The apartheid system whose strains were to be exposed by the Soweto uprising of 1976 barely figures in the discussion. As Miller points out, this may be because the situation at the beginning of 1974 changed dramatically during that year because of the fall of the Portuguese government and its African colonies so that Van der Post's assumption (shared by most international commentators) that the apartheid government was firmly in place was commonplace.[20]

The last relevant letter was from Van der Post to Pienaar, dated 19 November 1974. From London, Van der Post thanked Pienaar and offered fulsome praise for "your wonderful body of men who work for you". For Van der Post, the film was to be "a wedge driven deep at last in the wall of world resistance against recognising what is good and positive and best in our beloved country and I hope that we will have driven this wedge so deep that the wall shall be bridged and that masses more can follow. With your help we can sow the seeds of a great new beginning of a world view of South Africa". He asked Pienaar to thank his staff, and Pienaar's handwritten annotation on the letter shows that copies of the letter were sent to Johan Kloppers and others.

Even here, Van der Post's letter may have carried some gentle sting – the unmistakable reference to Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* suggests that he did not shirk away from realising that Paton's critique was still valid and that he saw his task as reforming from without.

19 J Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park : a social and political history* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995); G Maluleke, "Rethinking protected area co-management in the Makuleke Region, South Africa" (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2018); C Steenkamp and J Uhr, *Makuleke Land Claim: Power Relations and Community-based Natural Resource Management* (London: IIED, 2000); P Harries, "A Forgotten Corner of the Transvaal": Reconstructing the History of a Relocated Community Through Oral Testimony and Song" (Johannesburg: History Workshop, University of Witswatersrand, 1984).

20 Miller, *An African volk : the apartheid regime and its search for survival*.

## 7. THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE AND THE FILMS THAT EMERGED

To make the film, Van der Post relied on a well-known BBC producer, Jonathan Stedall, with whom he had previously worked on a series of films on Carl Jung, one of the founding figures of psychoanalytical theory. Stedall's account of the making of the film suggests he and the BBC saw it very differently from either Van der Post's original outline to Knobel or, presumably, from what the South African Department of Information expected.[21] He writes that "Our task …. was to make a film about the mythology of the bushmen…" for a long-running series *The World About Us.* As Van der Post had intimated in his letter to Pienaar, by the time he made the film he suggests he was more interested in folklore than scientific conservation or the politics of conservation. It may very well be that this had been his angle with the BBC from the outset.

Stedall notes about the stories that the "stories that most interested Laurens, however, were those about Mantis, "a mere stick insect" who presided over the bushmen's whole mythology". Stedall even illustrated his book with a still from the film of Van der Post with a praying mantis! [Figure 1]

Stedall's perspective further complicates the notion of this film, or wildlife films more generally, being seen as straightforward ideological products. As Bruno Latour and the proponents of Actor-Network theory suggest,[22] any such product will be the result of interactions and compromises between many important actors: the BBC, the series editor, the producer, Van der Post as presenter, technical crews, conservation staff, and even the animals.

In the 48 minute television programme that emerged in 1975, Van der Post, as Stedall suggests, starts by recounting his own experience of healing through nature after World War II when he returned to the Northern Kruger Park but then concentrates almost entirely on San mythology and its implications.[23] The animals in the film are props to illustrate the San view of lions, hyenas, vultures or other animals.

The most surprising element of the film for somebody who only read the correspondence was that the Natal Parks Board figures prominently, with the white rhino elevated to a complex role as unicorn in the odd mix of San and Jungian mythologies the film espouses. The film never credits the Kruger

21 J Stedall, *Where on Earth is heaven?* (Stroud: Hawthorn, 2009).

22 B Latour, *Reassembling the social : an introduction to actor-network-theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

23 *The world about us*, "All Africa within us", aired 9 February 1975, on BBC; *The world about us*.

Park or Kalahari Gemsbok Parks directly, and the first acknowledgement at the end of the film was to the Natal Parks Board.

*Laurens van der Post with a praying mantis*

The take on the reasons for South African conservation came towards the end of the film and were decidedly Natal-centric and ahistorical, ignoring the Kruger Park's primary historical role in nature conservation in South Africa:

> It means a great deal to me that the battle to conserve this abundance began in my native South Africa. It began with an attempt to preserve the white rhino which had once lived all over Africa….The battle was fought so well that it set an example which led to the creation of vast reservations where Black, Coloured, English and Afrikaner people are inspired by a common love of the animal and nature to work together in a relationship which could be a model for the future.

This was not the praise Van der Post had intimated he would offer in his letters to Knobel or, probably, in his discussions with Carel de Wet or Piet Koornhof, but it was a tribute of sorts. For somebody like Knobel, this would have seemed a betrayal as it boosted the kind of vision of Ian Player and the Wilderness Foundation in contrast to the National Parks Board.

The BBC originally presented the film in the context of the series "The world about us", but in 1983, they cut a new 24-minute version for the finale

of the first season of what was to become the long running series, "The Natural World".[24] In this version, Van der Post is briskly introduced, but much of the personal reminiscence is cut out, and this version concentrates on San mythology. No references to rhinos or South African conservation survived.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Van der Post's film, entitled "All Africa within us", was eventually only shown on the BBC in 1975. It had little impact as a wildlife film or as a social analysis, and many summaries of Van der Post's career make no mention of it at all. Nor did the film live up to the expectations that Van der Post and, presumably, the South African Department of Information held out for it in re-shaping British, European or North American views of South Africa.

Though the Soweto uprising of 1976 may have made Van der Post seem an out of date liberal figure, his career and his role as political advisor and advocate for wilderness were not yet over. He advised British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on Rhodesia, carried on playing an influential role in the Wilderness Foundation, and took Prince Charles on safari to Kenya in 1977. During the South African negotiations, he took the part of the Inkatha Freedom Party's Mangosuthu Buthelezi in opposition to Mandela and the ANC.

For the National Parks and Kruger authorities in South Africa, the episode was part of a much longer and ongoing attempt to define their role and value as conservationists, scientists and social figures amidst increasing political tensions. The role of scientific managers that Carruthers describes found its fullest expression in the 26-part series, "Wildlife in Crisis", produced by Norma Foster, also in this period, also supported by the Department of Information.

This analysis is made in the absence of a fuller history of issues such as the Kruger's relationship with foreign wildlife filmmakers, the role of the Wilderness Foundation, the ways in which conservation efforts were used to boost South Africa's image internationally, and how factions of the National Party worked to try to re-shape South Africa's image abroad. But the complexities of one relatively minor production suggest that using conservation for propaganda is a highly complex issue: propaganda by whom and for what cause precisely?

For a supporter of Van der Post, his rationale may have been to drive Afrikaners and white South Africans more generally into a recognition of the "Africa within us"– a spiritual connection with the wilderness and the land

24 *The natural world,* season 1983, "All Africa within us", 1983, on BBC.

that should link all those living here and overcome racial prejudices. For Stedall and the BBC, this was a continuation of Van der Post's role as sage commenting on what the "Bushmen" can tell us about the psychic problems of modern man. The National Parks scientists hoped for recognition of their internationally respected role as responsible managers of a complex eco-system. The Natal Parks Board people involved would have been pushing for a recognition of how the saving of the white rhino made them the central conservation heroes in the country. For Rhoodie and Koornhof, this programme would have been a sign that Van der Post was moving to a sympathy with South Africa that would re-shape British public opinion. But a few months after the television programme was shown, Soweto June 1976 changed things utterly.

## 9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Jonathan Stedall for providing me with copies of both the 1975 and 1983 versions of the film and for helpful information about the production.

AUTHOR:
Daniel Phiri[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]History and Civic Education teacher, Malambwa Secondary School. He is also a Master of Arts History student at the University of Zambia

EMAIL:
danielphiri14@yahoo.com

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.5

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History

2020 45(2):104-124

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

# THE ROLE PLAYED BY AFRICANS IN THE BRITISH WAR EFFORT IN ABERCORN DISTRICT, NORTHERN RHODESIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

## ABSTRACT

*The First World War broke out on 28 July 1914 as a European war between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente.[1] African colonies soon joined the fighting on the side of their respective colonial masters. It was in this context that Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia) entered the war on the side of imperial Britain against Germany. In Northern Rhodesia, the war was confined to the most northerly region bordering German East Africa (Tanzania), particularly in Abercorn (Mbala) district. The British were faced with a crucial situation in the district that they incorporated the local Africans to fight the Germans. As such, the indigenous people's land in Abercorn became a battlefield. While existing studies have focussed on the part played by African porters during the First World War, scholars have largely overlooked the role played by African combatants, food suppliers, spies, and postal runners on the warfront. Thus, the article attempts to bring to the fore various roles played by Africans in Abercorn during this Great War. In this manner, the article demonstrates how the local people in Abercorn played a decisive role in determining the Allied victory by 25 November 1918 in the district in particular and in Northern Rhodesia and German East Africa in general.*

**Keywords:** *Abercorn (Mbala), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Combatants, Spies, Porters, Postal Runners, Food Production and Supplying.*

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch



1 The Triple Alliance was a military pact of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, the nucleus of the Central Powers during the First World War. The Triple Entente was a defensive pact signed by Britain, France and Russia, nucleus of the Allied Nations in the First World War. By 1914, the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente divided Europe into two armed blocs. More on this, see, B Walsh, *Modern World History* (London: John Murray, 1996), pp.5-6.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Studies examining the role played by Africans during the First World War in various regions of the African continent have largely been confined to porterage.[2] Few studies have investigated other efforts made by Africans to the belligerent nations during the war.[3] Studies which have attempted to investigate war efforts by local Africans during the Great War of 1914-18, have overlooked other significant roles played by Africans, which include those engaged as combatants on the war front, food suppliers, spies, and postal runners.[4]

On the continent, Africans participated in the First World War through three major theatres: the West African, South West Africa, and East African. The latter campaign of the Allied powers against the Germans in Tanganyika was the longest episode of the war because the German Army Commander, General Paul Emil Von Lettow Vorbeck, adopted a guerrilla strategy drawing several areas into war in which Abercorn, Northern Rhodesia's northerly district, got involved. Academics who have studied the war on this theatre such as Anderson Ross shrouded the local people's war efforts. Ross rightly observed that the imperial army faced food and transport challenges during the war. However, he unduly played down Africans' role in overcoming these challenges by stating that the problems of food and transport were only solved by widespread construction of roads and use of motor vehicles from Nyasaland.[5]

In Uganda, Africans worked as porters during the war, and this created a shortage of labour on the farms in the villages. In his study, Geoffrey William Theodore Hodges contented that, Uganda contributed a total of about 190 000 porters, arguably the largest number to the Allies during the

2 ME Page, "The War of the Thangata: Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914-18*", Journal of African History* 19 (1), 1978 ; C Luchembe, "Ethnic Stereotypes, Violence and Labour in Early Colonial Zambia". In: S Chipungu (ed.), *Guardian in Their Time, Experience of Zambians Under Colonial rule 1889-192*4 (London: MacMillan, 1992), pp. 30-49.

3 Some works focused on the role played by African Christian mission-teachers during the First World War in East Africa, see, L Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War 1"*, Journal of African History* 19 ( 1), 1978; E Yorke, "The Spectre of a Second Chilembwe: Government, Missions, and Social Control in Wartime Northern Rhodesia, 1914-18", *The Journal of African History* 31 (3), 1990; RV Pierard, "Allied Treatment of Protestant Missionaries in German East Africa World War 1", *The African Journal of Evangelical Theolodgy* 12 (1), 1993.

4 GWT Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918", *Journal of African History* 19 (1), 1978.

5 R Anderson, World War I in East Africa 1916-1918 (PhD, University of Glasgow, 2001), p. 1.

East African campaign. However, he acknowledged that some carriers came from different parts of colonial Zambia.[6]

Similarly, in Nyasaland, a British protectorate, Africans worked either as carriers or soldiers during the war. Marvin Page observed that the local people in Nyasaland started rebelling against being recruited as porters. To prove his assertion, Page cited the Chilembwe uprising as an example of African dissent in the provision of war services.[7] Despite this rebellion, colonial authorities started using excessive force to conscript Africans for war services.

Some Europeans and African farmers supplied foodstuffs to the army in Northern Rhodesia. Lewis Gann observed that during the war, farmers, both European and African, settled along the line of rail benefited from being suppliers of foodstuffs to the military.[8] Chipasha Luchembe attempted to recognise the effort made by Africans in Abercorn district during the war. He observed that the British used North-Eastern Rhodesia to counter the Germans in Tanganyika during the Great War of 1914-18.[9]

One of the most recent works that captured other roles, which Africans played during the war was done by Jan-Bart Gewald. Gewald acknowledged that some Africans were recruited as soldiers.[10] Although Gewald's work aimed at showing how the colonial state consolidated its administration in Northern Rhodesia by involving Africans in the war, it is one of the few studies that acknowledge Africans involvement in the First World War as combatants.

It is evident from the above studies that African participation in the First World War has been confined mainly to porterage. In addition, there is a lapse on the war efforts made by Africans in Abercorn district in the execution of the war by the British. It was at Abercorn that the war's last battle was fought two weeks after the cessation of fighting in Europe. Abercorn, a northerly district bordering Northern Rhodesia and German East Africa provided an arid expanse into the British colony of Northern Rhodesia, and the Allies' mineral-rich region of Katanga in the Belgian Congo. The Katanga had minerals such as copper which the Allied nations used for manufacturing ammunition for the war. Therefore, the capture of the Katanga by Germany implied a stifled supply of important war raw materials to the Allied forces, thereby giving an advantage to the Germans to win the war. Thus, this article

6 Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918", pp. 101-114.

7 Page, "The War of the Thangata: Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914-18", p. 90.

8 G Lewis, *A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), p. 165.

9 Luchembe, "Ethnic Stereotypes, Violence and Labour in Early Colonial Zambia", pp. 41-42.

10 JB Gewald, *Forged in the Great War: People, Transport and Labour, The Establishment of Colonial Rule in Zambia* ( Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2015), p.117.

also seeks to highlight the role of the indigenous people towards the Allied victory in Abercorn by 25 November 1918. The crafting of this work was dependent much on primary sources from the Faith and Encounter Centre Zambia (FENZA), Livingstone Museum (LM), and the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ).

## 2. AFRICANS AS COMBATANTS

The engagement of local Africans by the British as soldiers during the war is illuminated through the three major battles they fought against the Germans in Abercorn: Battle for the British Overseas Military Administration ( BOMA) site, Saisi, and Kasakalawe. The sections below discuss these battles in detail.

### 2.1 The Battle of Abercorn BOMA

As a BOMA, Abercorn was the centre of the enemy's interest for two major reasons. In the first place, General Lettow-Vorbeck devised a war tactic of distracting the Allied forces in Africa from the main theatre of the war in Europe. The Geman General wanted to distract the Allied countries in Africa from supplying their forces in Europe with colonial soldiers and resources.[11] This was aimed at giving a chance to the Germans fighting in Europe to defeat the Allied powers as the latter could be cut off from colonial reinforcement.[12] To achieve this, General Vorbeck planned to display guerrilla warfare in Allied nations' colonies. In the south of German East Africa (GEA), General Vorbeck considered Abercorn as a point of attracting the British forces in Northern Rhodesia into a war.[13] This was done by launching episodic attacks on the district. The British responded by fortifying the district with combatants. In the second place, Abercorn provided a waterless landmass into the Allies region of Katanga which was rich in minerals like copper. Like stated in the introductory part, the Allied nations used copper for manufacturing munitions for the war. As such, the Germans were determined to seize the Katanga region.[14] However, the seizure of the Katanga region by the Germans meant overriding Abercorn as it lay on the forefront passage into Northern Rhodesia and Belgian Congo mainland, either by land or lake Tanganyika.[15]

11 J McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966* (Rochester: James Murrey, 2012), p. 148.
12 EJ Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and The First World War: The Forgotten Colonial Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 2015).
13 Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, p. 39; R Anderson, "Norforce: Major General Edward Northey; and the Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia Frontier Force, January 1916-1918", *Scientia Militaria* 44 (1), 2016, p. 48.
14 Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, p. 49.
15 H Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press, 2004), p. 127.

Due to the above reasons, Abercorn experienced several attacks by enemy forces based in neighbouring GEA. The first German attack on Abercorn was on 5 September 1914.[16] On that occasion, they were repulsed by the local force which the District Commissioner formed.[17] It is also important to appreciate that the force which first dislodged the Germans from the BOMA was dominated by local Africans aiding the few Europeans available. With the urge to take over Abercorn, the Germans launched a second assault on the fort in the early hours of 9 September 1914.[18] The enemy started shelling from a distance although their artillery did not harm the British troops based at the BOMA due to the thick bush around the fort. From September onwards, the Germans remained within the vicinity of the district intending to seize it by force.

During these attempts by the Germans to annex Abercorn, British forces were on the defensive side of the war. This strategy was adopted because the initial British force had few soldiers and guns and needed more time to recruit Africans and train them on how to operate the firearms properly.[19] However, the colonial masters were aware of the danger of training more Africans on how to utilise guns. While this was going on, reinforcement was sought from Kasama, and in the evening of 9 September 1914, Major Harry March Stennet arrived at Abercorn BOMA with troops.[20] During the same evening, the Germans started shelling at the BOMA.[21] Having been reinforced, the Allied forces responded to German gunfire with an offensive, and at once, the latter started receding across the border in disorder.[22] During this operation, the Gemans had no casualties. However, two African soldiers were shot dead.

In November 1914, the Germans again entered the district through chief Zombe's chiefdom. This was a border territory with GEA.[23] Fire-exchange ensued between the two arch-enemies in an area which eventually became

16 The Livingstone Museum (LM) 2/4/58/1 G69/1, Report of the work done by the Northern Rhodesia Police in the 1914-18 war, p. 4; *The Northern Rhodesia Handbook* (Lusaka: Northern Rhodesia Information Department, 1953), p.17.

17 National Achieves of Zambia (hereafter NAZ) A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Correspondence from Northern Rhodesia Administrator Wallace to the secretary of the British South African Company, London, 4 September 1914.

18 V Brelsford, *The Story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment* (Bromey: Galago, 1954), p. 30.

19 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Correspondence from the Administrator to the Secretary BSACo London, 26 February 1915; NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Letter by Administrator Northern Rhodesia to the Secretary BSACo, London, 12 October 1914.

20 Brelsford, *The Story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment*, p. 30.

21 Brelsford, *The Story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment*, p. 30.

22 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Correspondence from Northern Rhodesia Administrator Wallace to the secretary of the BSACo London, 4 September 1914.

23 Interview: Author with C Sikazwe, Chief Zombe, Mbala, 27 March 2019.

known as "Malwilo".[24] It was located on the north-west of the BOMA, approximately 27 kilometres from the main British garrison.

When the war intensified on this front, the Allied troops were compelled to withdraw from their posts. In 1915, the Allied soldiers who were in Kaseshya, another border area within chief Zombe, retreated towards their garrison at the BOMA due to German gunfire. By December 1915, the British recruited more than 4 000 African combatants who fought alongside about 460 Europeans in Abercorn.[25] Despite this number, the Germans advanced further towards the BOMA between 1915 and 1917. In order to block the invading Germans, the British fortified Zombe village which lay between the two warring forces. The fortified village was located 20 kilometres away from the BOMA, and two kilometres from the GEA border.[26] The fortification was done by setting up a military camp in a mountain locally called Kalwezi. After the war, the local people renamed it as "Kamba", a local corruption of the English term "camp".[27] The mountain was given this name because the Allied forces had camped there during the war. Despite fortifying Zombe village, the Germans pressed on, while the Allied forces went on the defensive. The latter took up positions from Abercorn prison.[28]

As the fighting went on, African prisoners who were incarcerated at Abercorn prison rose to support their colonisers. Although being dangerous and already serving sentences, African inmates braved the gunshots to fetch water from Lake Chila for troops stationed at the prison.[29] Villagers from the nearby places also took water to the prison at night when the enemy could hardly see them.[30] This was done out of the local people's own desire and patriotism to support the pressed Allied soldiers. This was a significant contribution on the part of Africans because the troops needed water for various uses such as drinking and preparation of food. In addition to drawing water, African prisoners dug trenches, cut poles and fenced the garrison with barbed wires to defend the district.[31]

24 Interview: Author with J Sinyangwe, Mbala, 30 March 2019.

25 NAZ ZA/7/1/3/9 Box 88, Abercorn sub-District Annual Report the year ending 31 March 1915, 1 April 1915, p. 12; M Mbewe, "Mbala Meander: World War 1 fortifications in Mbala", *Lowdown Magazine* 20 (11), 2014, p. 29.

26 Mbewe, "Mbala Meander: World War 1 fortifications in Mbala", p. 29.

27 Interview: Author with C Sikazwe ; Interview: Author with G Simusokwe, Secretary of Chief Tafuna, Mpulungu, 29 March 2019.

28 NAZ KTN 1/1, 93, Abercorn District Notebook Volume II, H, p. 8.

29 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/197, Report on the Affairs of Abercorn and Tanganyika District covering 29 September 1914 to 30 December 1914 by the District Commissioner of Abercorn Sergeant Chesnaye to the Administrator Northern Rhodesia, 31 December 1914.

30 LM 2/4/58/1 G 67/1, Copy of the description of the work done by the Northern Rhodesia police in the 1914-18 war, p. 4.

31 NAZ KTN 1/1, 93, Abercorn District Notebook, Volume II, H, p. 8; National Museums Board, *First World War in Northern Rhodesia: Experiences of the Askari-foot Soldiers and Tenga-*

The Allies' defensive strategy operated on the premise that when the enemy's ammunitions were finished, only then would they launch their attack. It was during this time of pushing back the Germans that local prisoners became involved in the actual fight. The indigenous convicts overlooked their punishments by carrying the maxim gun and bullets for the fighters.[32] This was done under gunfire from the retreating Germans. Despite the enemy firepower, African prisoners and fighters repelled the Germans from the BOMA to the eastern border of the district.

Another notable operation during which Africans were actively engaged in combat in defence of Abercorn was the attack of 17 March 1915 near Chipogoma village. On this occasion, Allied soldiers under Lieutenant (LT.) James Joseph McCarthey were caught unaware by enemy fire. Most of the soldiers had been sent on special duties, while others were playing the game of piquet, famous among Allied troops during the First World War.[33] The commander remained with only about 50 African soldiers and five European policemen. With a strength of five Europeans and more than 100 *askari*, the Germans moved into Chipongoma village.[34] At once, the Germans seized the headman's house and began shooting at local people indiscriminately.[35] Following the killing of eight unarmed villagers, LT. McCarthey gave orders to counter the assault.[36]

During the above encounter, shooting between the two arch parties persisted with neither of them retreating from their firing positions. The Belgians who were incorporated in the war by the British in defence of Abercorn were also patrolling in the vicinity. They were then called upon by LT. McCarthey for reinforcement. It was after this reinforcement that the enemy backed down in the direction of the border. This encounter left one British officer and three African soldiers dead.[37] Two Belgians were also wounded.[38] On the other hand, four dead bodies of German forces were found at the

*Tenga War-Carriers* (Lusaka: Ministry of Tourism and Arts, 2018).

32 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Report on the Affairs of Abercorn and Tanganyika District by the District Commissioner of Abercorn PC Chesnaye to the Administrator Northern Rhodesia, 31 December 1914.

33 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by HM Stennet to the Chief Staff Officer, Salisbury, 18 March 1915.

34 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by HM Stennet to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 18 March 1915. *Askari* is a Swahili plural term for African soldiers.

35 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by HM Stennet to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 18 March 1915; Interview: Author with J Sinyangwe.

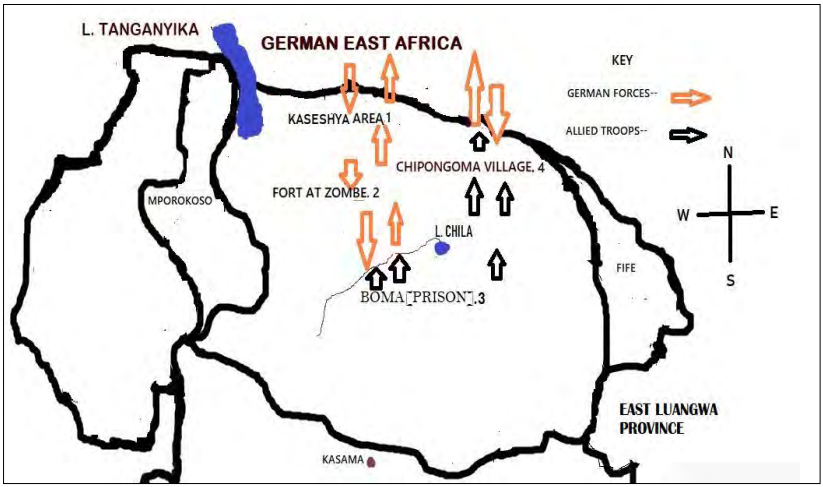
36 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Report by HM Stennet to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 18 March 1915; Interview: Author with J Sinyangwe.

37 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Telegram from Wallace Administrator to Monomutapa, 30 March 1915.

38 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Telegram from Wallace Administrator to Monomutapa, 30 March 1915.

scene: one European and three *askari.*[39] Map I illustrates significant fighting scenes during the Battle for Abercorn BOMA.

**Map I: Major Scenes of Fighting During the Battle of Abercorn BOMA**




**Source:** Adapted from, Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, p. 69.

## 2.2 The Battle of Saisi

As the Germans attacked Abercorn BOMA, they also cut telegraph wires which connected it to Fort Fife. This sabotage of telegraph wires stifled communication between the two forts. British military authorities soon realised that there was a need for a garrison between Abercorn and Fife that could prevent the Germans from having a direct access route to Kasama depot for supplies.[40] Due to these reasons, colonial authorities built a garrison between Fort Abercorn and Fife. This garrison was built at a farm (known as Jericho by the Germans) in the Valley of Saisi River. It was located 84 kilometres south-west of the Abercorn BOMA.[41]

39 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 198, Report by HM Stennet to the Chief of Staff Officer Salisbury, 18 March 1915; Interview: Author with J Sinyangwe.

40 LM 2/4/58/1 G67/1, Copy of the description of work done by the Northern Rhodesia police in the 1914-18 war, p.7.

41 *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 13 August 1915; *Zambia Daily Mail*, 24 November 2019.

Situated on the more direct route to Kasama depot, Fort Saisi experienced several attacks from the enemy for about six months in 1915. On 22 June 1915, the Germans attacked Manika village which was located 3 kilometres north-east of Fort Saisi but were repulsed by an Allied Force of 25 African soldiers and one European officer.[42] Nevertheless, the Germans made another effort to take over the fort on 28 June 1915.[43] On this occasion, too, they were repelled by the Allied powers. During this encounter, Allied forces suffered a loss of three policemen, two Africans and one European.[44] This attests to the fact that Africans were actively engaged as fighters in Abercorn during the war, and not merely as porters.[45]

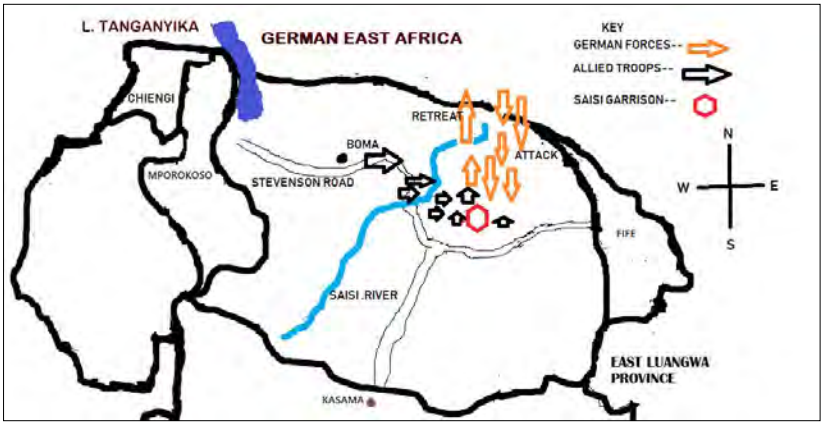
After the above encounter, British commanders at Fort Saisi became complacent. To their surprise in the early hours of 29 June 1915, the Germans attacked Saisi garrison. Due to the foggy weather, it was difficult for the Allied forces to notice the enemy's presence in the vicinity. As such, the Germans surrounded the garrison without a lot of difficulties. After cutting the communication wire that connected Saisi with Abercorn, the enemy started the onslaught on the fort at 06: 45 hours and made determined effort to dislodge the Allied troops from Saisi.[46] Throughout the day, there was fire-exchange at Fort Saisi between the Allied troops and the Germans.

Meanwhile, the cutting of the telegraph cable that connected Abercorn signified the enemy's attack at Saisi; hence, reinforcement was sent by Abercorn garrison. In the evening of 29 June 1915, a party of Allied forces from Abercorn arrived behind the enemy's position. The strength of the reinforcement was 22 Europeans of the British South African Company (BSAC) policemen and 414 African soldiers, the majority of whom were from within Abercorn.[47] Africans of Abercorn who were recruited as soldiers were distributed in all the forts of the district because they knew the topography of the area better than Africans from other districts.[48] Throughout the night of 29 to 30 June 1915, all that could be heard at the fort were gunshots. By dawn, the enemy started retreating from the fort.[49] After the cessation of shelling, the

42 *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 13 August 1915.
43 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Copy of telegram from the Commandant to the Administrator Livingstone, by runners, 9 July 1915.
44 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Correspondence sent by administrator to the Secretary BSACo London, 13 July 1915.
45 Luchembe, "Ethnic Stereotypes, Violence and Labour in Early Colonial Zambia", p. 41.
46 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Copy of telegram from the Commandant to the Administrator Livingstone, 9 July 1915.
47 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by Hodson to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 30 June 1915, p. 1.
48 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by Hodson to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 3 June 1915; Interview: Author with S Edson, Mbala, 2 April 2019.
49 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by Hodson to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 30 June 1915, p. 1.

Allied forces lost one European and three Africans.[50] The Germans had 15 Europeans killed and another 11 wounded. In addition, 19 of their *askari* were killed while many others were wounded.[51] Map II illustrates the battle of Saisi.

**Map II: The Battle of Saisi**




Source: Adapted from, Brelsford, *The story of Northern Rhodesia Regiment* , p. 38.

## 2.3 The Battle of Kasakalawe

Kasakalawe was another battle where a good number of African combatants were engaged by the British against the Germans. It was located about 17 kilometres north-west of Abercorn BOMA, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. The area was surrounded by several villages and was a host to the storage facilities of the African Lakes and Transcontinental Telegram Company.[52] On the other hand, the Germans in East Africa thought that Kasakalawe was a major military supply station of the British in Abercorn.[53] The Germans aimed at destroying the purported British supply station to suffocate the strength of the Allied forces in the district. For this reason, the Germans decided to attack Kasakalawe.

50 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report from colonel Hodson to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 30 June 1915, p. 3; *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 13 August 1915.
51 LM 2/3/2 9, This box contain pieces of newspapers, one with the title "N.R Rifles in Action; Taking of German Stockade"; *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 13 August 1915.
52 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 793/ 197, Correspondence from Lieutenant Colonel Stennet to the Commandant Northern Rhodesia Police Force Livingstone, 19 November 1914.
53 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Report on Abercorn to the Commandant General Northern Rhodesian Forces Salisbury, 28 November 1914.

On 20 November 1914, German forces based at Bismarckburg in southern Tanganyika landed at Kasakalawe via Lake Tanganyika using a ship.[54] After receiving intelligence reports from the local people about the enemy's presence in the area, the Allied forces based at Abercorn BOMA, headed for Kasakalawe with a force of 420 local men and a considerable number of Europeans under Major Stennet.[55] As this force reached the area, the Germans attacked them to which they responded with the corresponding firepower.

The Germans quickly brought in more soldiers for reinforcement by ship from Bismarckburg. After the arrival of this buttressing party, the Allied soldiers retreated from Kasakalawe to their base at Abercorn BOMA. This military encounter left one African soldier dead and several others wounded. One German soldier was shot dead by an African soldier.[56] The Germans remained in control of Kasakalawe for about 24 hours. On 21 November 1914, German troops returned to Tanganyika leaving extensive damage in the area through looting. Among items they took were communication wires of the African Transcontinental Company.[57] Later during the same day of 21 November 1914, Allied forces in the company of African troops returned to Kasakalawe. Unfortunately, all they found was destroyed property and ashes of burnt villages as the Germans had already left.[58] Map III depicts the battle of Kasakalaw.

54 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Report on Abercorn to the Commandant General Northern Rhodesian Forces Salisbury, 28 November 1914; *Times of Zambia*, 20 November 2018.

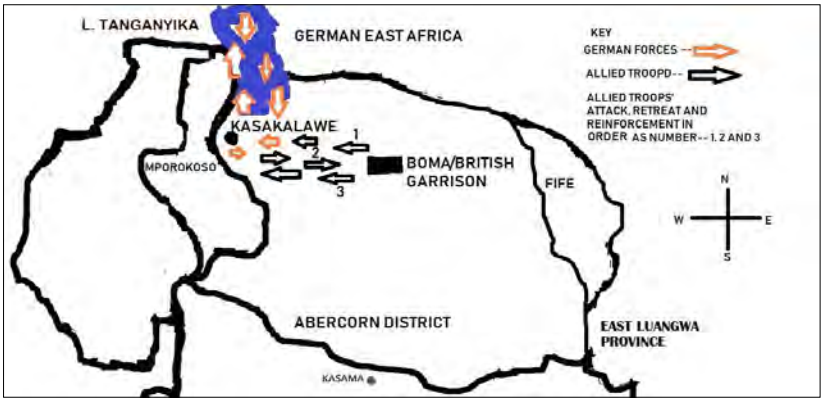
55 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Report on Abercorn to the Commandant General Northern Rhodesian Forces Salisbury, 28 November 1914.

56 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Report by the Administrator to the Secretary of BSAC London, 30 November 1914.

57 H Gamwell and M Gamwell, "The History of Abercorn", *Northern Rhodesia Journal* 5 (5), 1961, p. 254.

58 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Report on Abercorn to the Commandant General Northern Rhodesian Forces Salisbury, 28 November 1914.

**Map III: The Battle of Kasakalawe**




Source: Adapted from Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War,* p. 69; *Zambia Daily Mail*, 24 September 2018; National Museums Board, *First World War in Northern Rhodesia: Experiences of the Askari-foot Soldiers and Tenga-Tenga War-Carriers* .

In all the battles which the Allied troops fought against the Germans, African combatants were a significant factor. This was so because the local people dared to engage the enemy at first-sight without any hesitation.[59] As with the other battles described above, Africans outnumbered Europeans in this campaign as well. By the time the German General, Lettow-Voeberk, formally surrendered to the British forces at Abercorn on 25 November 1918, to mark the end of the First World War, Allied troops were composed mainly of African soldiers.[60] On this warfront, European and Indian soldiers were more susceptible to diseases and expensive to maintain. Hence, they were repatriated, leaving the battlefront for the local Africans.[61]

59 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Report by Hodson to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 30 June 1915, p.1.

60 A Samson, "Online International Encyclopedia of First World War, 1914-1918, East and Central Africa", (Berlin: Free University of Berlin, 2016); TH Parson, "Mobilising Britain's Africans Empire for war: Pragmatism vs Trusteeship", *Journal of Modern European History* 13 (2), 2015, p.189.

61 Samson, "Online International Encyclopedia of First World, 1914-1918 East and Central Africa", p.8; Parson, "Mobilising Britain's Africans Empire for war: Pragmatism vs Trusteeship", p.189.

## 3. AFRICANS AS PRODUCERS AND PROCESSERS OF FOOD FOR ALLIED TROOPS

Following the outbreak of war in Abercorn, the local people assumed the tasks of producing and processing food for the troops. While able-bodied men were conscripted into the regiment, the majority of women, children, and elderly men took the pivotal role in food production in the villages.[62]

The *Mambwe* system of cultivation of slash and burn, enabled the remaining population to carry on with farm work even when most of their male folk were enlisted for war services. The local people planted crops such as beans, millet, and cassava.[63] These crops were preferred by the indigenous people even before the war broke out because they needed less attention between planting and harvesting. The few available male labourers helped in harvesting the crops. Soon after, women and their children processed it. The latter pounded cassava and millet in readiness for cooking.[64] Women further smoked fish which was caught in nearby rivers and lakes such as Chambeshi, and Saisi.[65] Usually, women and children took the foodstuffs on their heads and backs to the military camps.[66]

When the demand for food increased in 1915, coercive measures were employed by the authorities to maintain the supply of foodstuffs. At the household level, each family was given a target to process a measurable amount of food, and village headmen supervised the whole process until it was delivered to the administration's depot.[67] In certain villages like Chipogoma, a small-sized clay pot was used to measure the quantity of food prepared by each household.[68] Also, Allied forces provided security to the local people who feared to go out to do farming.[69] This ensured that every local person in Abercorn contributed towards the war.

Besides being important suppliers of foodstuff during the war, women also collected firewood, fetched water, and provided care services to the

62 FENZA I-M-Hi 50, History of Diocese of Mbala; FENZA I-M-IP 16 I16, Father Tanguy Francois Diary, 1914-1927; Interview: Author with ZM Mutembo, freedom fighter, Mbala, 27 March 2019.
63 Interview: Author with J Siame, Mbala, 27 March 2019.
64 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 24 November 2019.
65 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 24 November 2019.
66 LM 2/4/58/1 G69/1, Copy of the description of the work done by the Northern Rhodesia police in the 1914-18 war, p. 14; *Zambia Daily Mail*, 15 November 2018.
67 LM 2/4/58/1 G69/1, Copy of the description of the work done by the Northern Rhodesia police in the 1914-18 war, p. 14; NAZ ZA/7/1/2/9 Box 88, Abercorn sub-District Annual Report the year ending 31 March 1915, 1 April 1915, p. 27
68 *Zambia Daily Mail,* 24 November 2018; Interview: Author with ZM Mutembo.
69 Interview: Author with ZM Mutembo; Interview: Author with J Sinyangwe.

soldiers.[70] The latter services included cleaning, cooking, and assisting in caring for the wounded.[71] Although the local people played a critical role as food suppliers during the war, hunger loomed in the district when the hostilities persisted. Many Africans relocated to the interior of the southern parts of Abercorn where they continued with food production.[72] During such moments, importation of food for the soldiers from other districts was intensified.

## 4. AFRICANS AS PORTERS

During the First World War, in Abercorn, the British were faced with the challenge of an efficient transport system. The road network from the capital Livingstone to Abercorn, or from Abercorn to other vital districts such as Kasama was in a poor state.[73] And when the Allied forces began the offensive on the Germans after 1916, the district failed to satiate war needs.[74] As such, the district had to look back to the capital about 1 500 kilometres away for reinforcement. This problem became worse during the rainy season when the only gravel motor road from Kasama to Abercorn became impassable owing to mud, falling trees and grass that blocked it.[75] Worse still, oxen could be killed by tsetse flies in the region. These conditions impeded any form of mechanised transport to or from Abercorn. Practically, this situation meant that the only transport system near Abercorn was a railway from Livingstone to Ndola on the Copperbelt province. As a result, Kasama was chosen as the main depot for reinforcing Abercorn due to its proximity to Ndola.[76] Nevertheless, Kasama was equally very far from Abercorn, with 104 kilometres separating the two towns.[77] However, the soldiers needed war supplies regularly from such distances.

To transport supplies from Ndola to Abercorn through Kasama, British officials used indigenous people as porters or *mtenga tenga*.[78] These porters sustained the Allied war efforts in this theatre. For instance, by December 1915, there were more than 5 000 combatants at the war front, each of whom

70 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 15 November 2018.
71 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 15 November 2018.
72 *Zambia Daily Mail,* 24 November 2019.
73 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Telegram from Northern Rhodesia Administrator to Commandant General, 17 November 1914; National Museums Board, *First World War in Northern Rhodesia*.
74 *The Northern Rhodesia Handbook*, p. 18.
75 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Copy of telegram from the Northern Rhodesia administrator to the Commandant General, 17 November 1914.
76 *Zambia Daily Mail,* 15 November 2018.
77 NAZ, KTN 1/1, 93, Abercorn District Notebook, Volume II, H, p.8.
78 *Mtenga tenga* was a Chewa term for a porter which colonial administrators mispronunced as *tenga tenga*.

required six porters for his needs.[79] This means that about 30 000 porters were recruited to meet the needs of the whole force in December 1915. This entailed that a lot of the local people were enlisted for this war service.

This porterage involved three phases of movement. First, porters walked from the point of production to the collection centre. The next stage involved carrying supplies from the collection centre to the depot, while the last stage involved the movement from the depot to the battlefront where the troops consumed the materials. Therefore, because of these varied distances, porters were also put into three categories.[80] The first group of porters were actual military carriers who delivered firearms, ammunition, and foodstuffs from the depot to the war front. This class of porters was mainly composed of local people from Abercorn because they knew the terrain of the area very well. Additionally, the indigenous people of Abercorn were also reportedly not timid of the war front like people from other parts of the country.[81] However, some Africans from other districts, especially the Ngoni of Fort Jameson (Chipata), also worked as first grade carriers. Nonetheless, Africans from Fort Jameson were mainly enlisted for the war campaign in Nyasaland due to the proximity to that country.[82]

The second class was composed of those who carried war cargo from collection centres to the depot at Abercorn, right in the heart of the battlefront.[83] On the other hand, porters, who ran from one village to another, and from one collection point to the central one, constituted the third grade. Long-distance porters from far off districts like Mumbwa were also part of the third-grade carriers.[84]

It was the third-grade porters who carried the war cargo from the Ndola railway station storage to Chuwutawuta depot in Kasama en route to Abercorn. From Chiwutawuta, Africans carried the load over to Abercorn depot. Each porter carried an average load of between 25 and 30 kilogrammes.[85] However, as the war demands increased, porters were made to carry loads above the

79 NAZ ZA/7/1/3/9 Box 88, Abercorn sub-District Annual Report the year ending 31 March 1915, 1 April 1915; Breslford, *The Story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment*, p. 37.

80 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Memorandum on the Military Porters on the Northern Border, 31 January 1917.

81 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Memorandum on the Military Porters on the Northern Border 1 April to 31 January 1917, 1 April 1917.

82 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Correspondence from Administrator Wallace to the Secretary of BSACo London. 12 February 1917.

83 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Correspondence from Draper CRB A/DC to Administrator at Livingstone, 19 October 1916; NAZ A2/3/4, Loc 794/ 198, Correspondence from Administrator Wallace to Secretary BSACo London, 12 February 1917; NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198 Correspondence from Wallace to the Secretary BSACo, 17 April 1917.

84 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Memorandum on the Military Porters on the Northern Border, 31 April 1917.

85 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 15 November 2018.

standard ones. Carriers were commanded by both Africans and Europeans who punished them for taking long on a journey. Between January 1916 and July 1918, 130 701 kilogrammes of various military needs were transported using this route to Abercorn.[86] There was also transportation of foodstuffs within Abercorn and from neighbouring districts such as Mporokoso which had a water link with the district.

More people were recruited as porters in Abercorn. By December 1914, for instance, the number of people enlisted as carriers in the district was at 3 000.[87] These worked within and outside the district to bring war cargo to the depot at Abercorn. For example, these carried 14 144 to 22 680 kilogrammes of foodstuffs in early 1915 from the neighbouring districts to Abercorn.[88] Nevertheless, when the war needs went up from 1916 onwards, the total number of first grade *mtenga-tenga* who served on this war front from the district together with Fife and Mporokoso was estimated at 11 390.[89]

Furthermore, there was a distinct class of porters known as "ambulance carriers" who went to the battlefront to provide medical evacuation services. These carried the wounded for treatment, and the dead for burial. After fire-exchange with the enemy, it was usually difficult to spot who had been killed from a distance because such encounters ended in confusion.[90] Some fighters went missing, while others were found dead or wounded. The wounded could easily be seen as they usually shouted for help due to pain they felt after being shot. These were carried to Kawimbe mission which was designated as the wartime medical treatment centre.[91] Ambulance porters also searched for dead bodies around areas where fighting took place so that they could be buried.[92] This task was difficult as most parts of the territory where fights used to take place such as Saisi, or Zombe, were covered by thick bushes, hills and deep ravines.[93] Although hills and ravines were used by the troops during fire-

86 LM 2/4/ 58/1 G 67/1, Appendices to sir Lawrence Wallace's notes, C: figures regarding water transport, p. 3.

87 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 179, Report by District Commissioner Chesnaye to the Administrator on the Affairs of Abercorn and in the Tanganyika District from 20 September 1914 to 31 December 1914, 31 December 1914, p. 8.

88 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/179, Letter from Colonel Commandant General to the Administrator Livingstone, 31 January 1915.

89 LM 2/4/ 58/1 G 67/1, Appendices to sir Lawrence Wallace's notes , B; on summary of first line military porters, p. 2.

90 The fight near Mwazi village is a good example, see, NAZ A4/1/2 Loc 822/208 ,Vollume II, Report on the Engagement near Mwazi in German East Africa, 30 April 1915, p. 3.

91 Yorke*, Britain, Northern Rhodesia and The First World War,* p. 102.

92 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 793/197, Correspondence by Colonel Hodson to the Secretary Livingstone, 27 May 1915, p. 3; NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Report by Colonel Hodson to the Secretary Livingstone copied to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 28 May 1915, p. 3.

93 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 197, Correspondence from Colonel Hodson Commandant Office to the Chief Staff Office Salisbury, 22 November 1915.

exchange for taking cover, it was a challenge to look for dead bodies in such places. All the bodies found were buried according to African traditional burial practices. The local people buried Africans, while Europeans were buried by their fellows, although locals dug their graves.[94]

## 5. AFRICANS AS SPIES

African spies formed an essential component of the army during the First World War in Abercorn. Women, men and children carried out various espionage missions during the war.[95] When the Germans initially entered Abercorn in September 1914, they regarded local women as being insignificant in as far as the prosecution of the war was concerned. However, as time went by, these women turned to be spies of the British colonial military. In December 1914, for instance, when Germans entered Abercorn through Mambwe village, the British did not know anything about this intrusion but were tipped off by a local woman. Upon noticing the Germans at Mambwe, one local woman secretly went to inform the British soldiers who were on patrol duty near the village. The woman informed the British that she had seen German soldiers at Mambwe village in the company of *askari*, while others had returned to GEA, possibly to bring more guns.[96] This information from the anonymous woman was so useful to the British that they immediately went to dislodge the Germans from Mambwe village unannounced. Without the local woman's effort as a spy, it is possible that the Germans could have done damage to both the villagers and the Allied forces in the area.[97]

In 1915, intelligence information from a local man named Jonas Sinyangwe was recorded by Colonel Frederick Arthur Hodson. Sinyangwe was captured and taken as a prisoner by German forces into Tanganyika in December 1915.[98] Before long, Sinyangwe managed to escape from GEA, and upon his arrival, he informed a British Colonel that the Germans were building a military depot at Mwanzi.[99] This threatened the security of the district as the location was near Abercorn. The informant also revealed that Germans were scheming to attack and seize Abercorn as soon as they had received more ammunition, they have been waiting for.[100] He further disclosed

94 Interview: Author with J Sinyangwe.
95 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 30 October 2018.
96 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 179, Letter by Sergeant Chesnaye to Mr Wallace, 16 February 1915.
97 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 30 October 2018.
98 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Copy of Intelligence Information given by Jonas Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, 23 December 1915, p. 2
99 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p. 2.
100 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p. 2.

that a large number of *askari* with Europeans were marching towards the direction of Fife.

Immediately after receiving the above intelligence information, the Allied forces made changes to their operations. Orders were given to the troops at Fife to keep vigil for a possible attack as the enemy was heading towards that direction.[101] Patrols were also sent along the border to be on the lookout for the enemy's movements. Sinyangwe's information turned to be accurate as the patrol mission estimated a German party of 800 *askari* and Europeans heading towards Abercorn border.[102] Sensing that their clandestine mission had been detected, the German forces instead headed in the direction of Karonga, Nyasaland.[103] This demonstrates yet again that the local people were instrumental in aiding the Allied war effort. Without such intelligence information from the local people, the Allied forces operating from Abercorn district could have encountered a deadly surprise attack from the Germans.

Because most of the intelligence reports which the local people in Abercorn provided were accurate, the British recruited some of them, including children as scouts in the military. In 1915, for instance, a local Mambwe boy was sent by Sergeant Barnashaw to gather information from the town of Bismarckburg.[104] The mission was executed without difficulties. In another incidence, in February 1915, locals, only known as Mitimingi and Chambala, were sent by Colonel FA Hodson to gather intelligence information at Bismarckburg. The duo's mission was also a success. They reported on the military equipment they saw at Bismarckburg.[105]

On the other hand, some of the local people in the district were not exclusively employed for such espionage assignments but instead used their initiative to do so. The reason for doing this was that most of the indigenous people living in outlying villages usually received harsh treatment like beating, and food grabbing from the Germans.[106] This made victims of such treatment assess the party which was worthy supporting with intelligence information during the war. These and those who had officially been recruited by the

101 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p. 2.
102 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p.2.
103 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p. 2.
104 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Copy of Intelligence made from two Local Natives from Bismarckburg, 7 February 1915; NAZ, A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Report by Sergeant Barnashaw, 17 February 1915.
105 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Copy of Intelligence made by Mitimingi and Chambala to Colonel Hodson, 7 February 1915.
106 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Report from Colonel Hodson to Chief Staff Officer Salisbury, 3 February 1915, p. 1.

British authorities spied on the Germans movements without many difficulties as they had good knowledge of the terrain and path networks.[107]

However, not all Africans in Abercorn worked for the British as spies as others also spied for the Germans. Confirming this aspect, Sinyangwe narrated to Colonel Hodson how his friend, named only as Tuseko, worked for the Germans as a spy at a fee of about ten shillings.[108] Before the outbreak of the war, Tuseko was employed as a carpenter at Abercorn BOMA such that he knew the area very well.[109] This enabled him to effectively carry out espionage missions on behalf of German forces without many challenges.

Furthermore, during the siege of Fort Saisi in 1915, the Germans were guided by a local former farmworker of the same area only known as Chikote. After the attack of Saisi, two local women who lived around the fort and were once at Bismarckburg disclosed that Chikote guided the Germans to the garrison.[110] They further revealed that Chikote worked for the Germans as their spy in Abercorn.[111] Chief Manilonga whose locality was within the border was equally used by the Germans for intelligence information over the Allied troops.[112] In 1915, the District Commissioner of Abercorn became suspicious of some local Mambwe chiefs and headmen of being used by the Germans to spy the Allied troops' movements.[113] This explains why the Germans used to surprise the Allied forces with well-calculated attacks because they knew the geography of Abercorn through the aid of some local people. For this reason, the British in Abercorn either imprisoned or exiled suspected local people who spied the Allied troops' movements on behalf of the Germans.[114]

107 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Correspondence from Hodson to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury via Livingstone, 30 June 1915.

108 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p. 2; NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 197, Intelligence information given by Masenga and Miniz, 1 July 1915.

109 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Intelligence Information by Jonas Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, p. 2.

110 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 198, Correspondence from Captain Fair in Abercorn to the Chief Staff Officer Salisbury via Livingstone, 25 June 1915; NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 198, Report from Colonel Hodson to the Staff Chiefs Officer Salisbury via Livingstone, 30 June 1915, p. 1.

111 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Report from Colonel Hodson to the Staff Chiefs Officer Salisbury via Livingstone, 30 June 1915, p. 5.

112 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Copy of Intelligence information given by two MambwesMasenga and Miniz, 1 July 1915.

113 NAZ ZA/7/1/3/9 Box 88, Abercorn sub-District Annual Report year ending 31 March 1915, 1 April 1915, p. 8.

114 NAZ A2/3/2 Loc 792/ 197, Sinyangwe to Colonel Hodson, pp. 2-3; Yorke*, Britain, Northern Rhodesia and The First World* War, p. 75.

## 6. POSTAL RUNNERS

Africans also worked for the British as postal runners during the First World War in Abercorn. During the war, the Germans from Tanganyika had a trend of seizing communication wires as booty after launching an offensive.[115] At times, it was difficult for the British to keep surveillance on the telegraph wires all the time over a wide area such as Abercorn-Fife. The problem of guarding such vital infrastructure became worse during the rainy season when the poles and cables could be destroyed by heavy rains and lightning.[116]

To maintain contacts with other districts during the war, colonial authorities in Abercorn turned to the local people as foot runners of messages. These carried letters to a named destination on foot or bicycle. From August 1914 onwards, districts south-west of Abercorn such as Mporokoso, and Chiengi, were serviced by runners.[117] Similarly, communication between Abercorn and Mpika was serviced by runners as the Germans had cut the telegraph wires in November 1914.[118] In 1915, an attempt was made to use motorcyclists as messengers. This proved ineffective as messengers on motorcycles only travelled during daytime due to the bad state of the road. At the same time, foot runners worked both during the day and night time to deliver messages.[119] Through this system, the BSAC authorities, as far as London, were kept abreast with what was happening in Abercorn during the war.

## 7. DESERTION FROM WAR DUTIES

Although Africans offered various war services, they were alive to the pressing demand of their duties. To avoid being crushed down by their duties, they deserted the columns for their homes. One of the reasons that led to desertion was the unilateral extension of contracts by the military authorities. For instance, *askari* and first-line carriers could have their contracts extended without their consent as long as the military needed their services.[120] This

115 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc, 791/ 198, Correspondence between Northern Rhodesia Administrator and the Secretary of the BSA Co London, 4 September 1914.
116 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Report by the Abercorn District Commissioner to the Secretary of Livingstone, 31 December 1914, p. 1
117 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 197, Report by the Abercorn District Commissioner to the Secretary of Livingstone, 31 December 1914, p. 1; NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/ 198, Correspondence from Administrator to Secretary BSACo, London, 10 September 1914.
118 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/ 198, Copy of telegram from Northern Rhodesia Administrator to the Administrator Salisbury, 13 February 1914.
119 LM 2/4/48/1 G 67/1, Copy of the description of the work done by the Northern Rhodesia police in the 1914-18 war, p. 4.
120 NAZ A2/3/4 Telegram of District Commissioner Abercorn to Administrator Livingstone, 28 October 1917.

made some of the local people not to renew their contracts upon completion of the initial ones. Such servicemen left their stations without certification of discharge from the authorities.[121]

Furthermore, when their role was changed unilaterally, Africans left the columns. For instance, second-grade porters had Abercorn depot as their final destination in the district, while the first-class carriers went to the battlefield as they were actual military porters. At other times, however, second-grade carriers could be turned into first-class porterage. This led to mass desertion by the local people as their responsibility and destination changed without their consent.[122]

In addition, harsh treatment by European supervisors made some Africans desert their columns. After 1916, when the Allied forces began an offensive in GEA, work became strenuous for porters due to long distances and overloads, This led to exhaustion and slow marches by porters thereby making their column commanders whip them as punishment.[123] As a result, some of the recruited Africans simply abandoned the columns in the bush for their homes.[124]

## 8. CONCLUSION

The above investigation demonstrates that Africans in Abercorn were actively engaged in the First World War through various services which they offered to the belligerent nations. Local men were crucial combatants in the three major battles fought in defence of the district. African fighters also outnumbered their British counterparts. This argument dispels the popular view, which holds that Africans were only recruited as porters during the war. Women and children were key food suppliers of the Allied troops in wartime Abercorn. It has further been established that the people of Abercorn were mainly engaged as first-class carriers due to their knowledge of the terrain. Contrary to the broader perception that the Africans in Abercorn only helped the British during the war, some of them worked for the Germans at a fee. Lastly, some Africans deserted the columns to avoid being pressed hard by war duties, an aspect which military authorities were not pleased with.

121 NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Correspondence of Administrator Wallace to the Secretary of BSACo, London, 12 February 1917; NAZ A2/3/4 Telegram of District Commissioner Abercorn to Administrator Livingstone, 29 October 1916; Interview: Author with ZM Mutembo.

122 NAZ A2/3/4, Loc 794/198, Correspondence of Drapper to Administrator Livingstone, 18 October 1916; NAZ A2/3/4 Loc 794/198, Memorandum on Engagement of Carriers for the Northern Border, by Hugh Marshal visiting Commissioner, 31 January 1917.

123 NAZ A2/3/4, Loc 794/198, Correspondence of Acting District Commissioner of Abercorn Drapper to Administrator Livingstone, 19 October 1916.

124 NAZ A2/3/1 Loc 791/197, Copy of Captain Fair's war Diary, 26 August 1915.

AUTHOR:
Marlino Eugénio Mubai[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Lecturer, Department of History, Eduardo Mondlane University

EMAIL:
marlinomubai@gmail.com

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.6

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):125-151

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

# PEOPLE'S WAR: MILITARY SUPPLIES DURING THE MOZAMBICAN CIVIL WAR, 1976–1992

## ABSTRACT

*From 1976 to 1992, the government of Mozambique under the leadership of Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) and Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO), the latter sponsored by the right-wing and racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa went to war. The independence of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1980 and the signing of the Nkomati Non-aggression Pact between the government of Mozambique and South Africa in 1984 led scholars and government officials to claim that the government would win the war because RENAMO had lost its support. These claims proved wrong as RENAMO resisted for another eight years until the signing of the general peace agreement in 1992. The paper argues that the continuation of military confrontations shows that wars are mainly fought with a complex combination of means that are not necessarily military. Claiming that the survival of RENAMO depended on external support represents a misunderstanding of the logistics and morale of both RENAMO and government troops. It is from this perspective that this paper looks at the logistics and enthusiasm of both RENAMO and government military to demonstrate that both lacked adequate military logistics to wage war. It shows that the belligerents depended on civilians and surrounding natural resources to obtain the bulk of supplies of staple foods and recruits. This state of affairs compels scholars to rethink the nature of civil wars and helps to explain the almost decade long delay in achieving peace in Mozambique. It also shows that the burden of the Mozambican civil war fell on the shoulders of civilians. Thus, what is often described as a hotspot of Cold War in Southern Africa or a war of aggression by the apartheid regime was, in practice, a peoples' war with devastating, yet varied impacts on peoples' livelihoods.*

*Keywords: FRELIMO, RENAMO, War, villagers, military, logistics, morale, natural resources, Mozambique*

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The academic debate on Mozambique's civil war has been dominated by the analysis of the causes, consequences, the roles of external and internal factors and the predominance of violence against civilians.[1] In these narratives, the government troops are often presented in populist form as having abundant resources and discipline. At the same time, the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) is still frequently portrayed as a band of terrorists without a social base.[2] This narrative of the war in Mozambique conforms with the stereotypical description of African wars as barbaric and primaeval.[3] It is a simplistic understanding of the civil war refuted by many scholars, including Colin Darch, João Cabrita, Jeremy Weinstein, Stephen Lubkemann, and Stephen Emerson. They all focused on Central Mozambique – long and widely regarded as a RENAMO stronghold.[4] Unlike such previous studies, however, this paper is based on data collected in the districts of Mabote, Funhalouro, Chigubo and Massangena which hosted the first RENAMO military bases in the interior of southern Mozambique. Taking

1 See, J Hanlon, *The Revolution under Fire* (London: Zed, 1984); A Vines, *Renamo: Terrorism in Mozambique* (London: James Curry, 1991); W Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994); O Roesch, "Renamo and Peasantry in Southern Mozambique: a View from Gaza Province", *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 26 (3), 1992, pp. 462-484"; J Love, *Southern Africa in the World Politics: Local Aspirations and Global Entanglements* (Boulder Colo.: Westview Press, 2005); JMD Mota-Lopes, Colonialism, Liberation, and Structural-adjustment in the Modern World-economy: Mozambique, South Africa, Great Britain, and Portugal and the Formation of Southern Africa (Before and under European Hegemony) (PhD, Binghamton University, New York,2005); S Onslow (ed.), *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

2 KM Thaler, "Ideology and Violence in Civil Wars: Theory and Evidence from Mozambique and Angola, Civil Wars", *Civil Wars* 14 (4), 2012, pp. 546-567; KB Wilson, "Cults of violence and counter-violence in Mozambique", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18 (3), 1992; J Alexander, "The Local State in Post-War Mozambique: Political Practice and Ideas about Authority", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67 (1), 1997, p. 8.

3 See, J Schafer, "Guerrillas and Violence in the War in Mozambique: De Socialisation or Re-Socialisation?" *African Affairs* 100, 2001, pp. 215-237; Vines, *Renamo*; Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*; PS Orogun, "Plunder, Predation and Profiteering: The Political Economy of Armed Conflicts and Economic Violence in Africa", *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 2 (2), 2003, pp. 283-313.

4 B Tavuyanago, "RENAMO: From military confrontation to peaceful democratic engagement", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 5 (1), 2011, p. 42-51; C Darch, "Are There Warlords in Provincial Mozambique? Questions of the Social Base of MNR Banditry", *Review of African Political Economy* 45/46 1989, pp. 34-49; JM Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); J Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); SC Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos: An Anthropology of the Social Condition in War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); SA Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo-Renamo Struggle, 1977-1992* (Pinetown: South Africa, 2013).

advantage of the end of the 16 year war in 1992, and the author's own (subjective) experience during the war in southern Mozambique, this research seeks to understand the dynamics of the armed groups in Mozambique's civil war. It analyses the dynamics of the belligerents in the context of scarce resources able to sustain a prolonged war.[5] It seeks to answer these questions: What means did the RENAMO and Mozambican armies have to wage war? To what extent did the military logistics, morale and discipline affect the conduct of war? In this context, how did the military negotiate their relationship with civilians?

Despite focusing on Mozambique, the paper aims to contribute to the historiography of the dynamics of civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa.[6] It builds up from the works of Carolyn Nordstrom, Jessica Schafer, Stathis Kalyvas Weinstein, Lubkemann an Emerson, which challenge simplistic explanations about the conduct of civil wars in post-colonial Africa.[7] It highlights the heterogeneity of war experience and the importance of civilians and local resources in the conduct of war. Without ignoring the national and international contexts, it explores oral sources from an area relatively neglected by researchers but strategically important for RENAMO's effort to expand to the southern region which has historically been deemed a government stronghold.[8] It was in southern Mozambique where RENAMO

5 I approach this topic as eyewitness of the 16 years civil war in Mozambique. I experienced the brutal effects of war in my home village in Inhambane Province, Southern Mozambique from 1982 to 1992. In my village, people were forced to assist both belligerents in food and porterage. Those who refused were punished exemplarily and risked to be executed. Thus, as resident of the war zone I observed closely the relationship between the military contenders and villagers.

6 See, for example, L Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005); P Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Reasons in Sierra Leonne* (London: Oxford and Heinemann, 1996); JM Hazen, *What rebels want: Resources and supply networks in wartime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013); K Mitton, *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) ; S Ellis, *Mask of Anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); AH Cook and MO Lounsbery, *Conflict dynamics: Civil wars, armed actors, and their tactics* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2017); W Minter, "The US and the War in Angola", *Review of African Political Economy* 50, 1991, pp. 135-144; I Dulley, *"*Accusation and Legitimacy in the Civil War in Angola", *Vibrant, Virtual Brazilian Anthropology,* 17, 2020; J Pearce, "*Global ideologies, local politics: The Cold War as seen from Central Angola", Journal of Southern African Studies* 43 (1), 2017, p.13–27.

7 C Nordstrom, *A different Kind of War Story* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Schafer, "Guerrillas and Violence in the War in Mozambique"; S Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 2006); Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos*; Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique*.

8 Despite its proximity to the epicenter of war in central Mozambique, the first military confrontation between government troops and Renamo guerrillas in Inhambane province

used widespread violence against civilians. As Elizabeth Lunstrum observed, "although it committed atrocities countrywide, RENAMO reserved its most brutal acts for the south, where support for the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) was strongest".[9] Therefore, without taking for granted the violence against civilians perpetrated by both sides of the conflict, this study takes a historical approach to show how the relations between soldiers and civilians changed over time and geographic location. It keeps in mind recent studies such as the work by Wesley Mwatwara showing that the battleground of the Mozambican civil war expanded to neighbouring Zimbabwe with records of selected violence against civilians. This helps to understand the changing nature of the relationship between the military and civilians. [10]

This paper is based on literature review, archival research and oral interviews. The fieldwork took place from July to December 2013. Additional information was gathered sporadically in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The archival research included new material such as government and non-governmental reports, public and private letters deposited in the archives of Inhambane Provincial government and the bulk of the documents including newspapers and news bulletins stored at the Mozambique Historical Archives in Maputo. The interviewees were mainly man and women who were at least ten years old when the war reached southern Mozambique in 1982.

Methodologically, the article builds on the work of Africanist scholars who have produced a wealth of literature on the importance of oral accounts in African historiography. Such scholars include Jan Vansina, on the definition of oral history and oral tradition[11], Joseph Miller's analysis on the challenges of oral historians in non-literate cultures[12]; John Edward Philips on the methodology of collecting oral traditions[13] and Barbara Cooper, on

occurred on 21 August 1982, See, D Hoile, *Mozambique: A Nation in Crisis* (London: Coleridge Press, 1989), p.45.

9 M Hall and T Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since Independence* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997); E Lunstrum, "Terror, Territory and Deterritorialisation: Landscapes of Terror and the Unmaking of State Power in the Mozambican "Civil" War", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99 (5), 2009, p. 888. For more on geographical variation of violence on civilians see, R Gersony, *Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique* (Washington: Bureau for Refugee Programs, Department of State, 1988), p. 28; B Massaiete, *Chicualacuala: A Guerra na Fronteira, 1975-1992* (Monografia de Licenciatura, UEM, Faculdade de Letras, Departamento de História, Maputo, 1999).

10 W Mwatwara, "The "logic" of Renamo civil war violence: Trans-border communities and Renamo incursions in Eastern Zimbabwe, 1980s-1992", Southern *Journal for Contemporary History* 45 (1), 2020, pp. 145-170.

11 J Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

12 J Miller, *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History* (Kent: Dawson Archon, 1980).

13 JE Philips (ed.), *Writing African History* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

the importance of oral history to recover the voices and experiences of the disadvantaged and on the importance of multidisciplinary aproach.[14] It uses Vansina's definition of oral history sources as "reminiscences, hearsays, or eyewitness account about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informant".[15]

The paper keeps in mind that the use of memory as a historical source is disputable. It approaches memory like Luisa Passerini who sees it "as collective and tied to both present and past, silence and speech".[16] In this approach, the paper looks at memory as a contentious field subject to reinterpretation and highly influenced by subjective experiences of the informants. Memory is also used considering the importance of genre when dealing with oral history. As Elizabeth Tonkin points out, "oral genre can be signalled by the occasion or the status of the teller".[17] Thus, the article pays attention to the various genres that people use to communicate their encounters with historical events, including tales, riddles, silence, and dance. It also considers, in Cooper words, the "poetic and performative context of the interview".[18]

The identification of the interviewees was based on the snowball sampling technique, whereby one informant leads to another. It used non-structured questions to create flexibility on the side of the informants. Given the sensitivity of the topic, the interviews began with general questions about the interviewee's personal history. As the conversation rolled on, people were asked about their whereabouts during the war and how the war affected their lives and that of their friends and relatives. The sample size consisted of 47 men and 40 women in the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane. The first criteria to participate in the study was having lived in the war zone during the conflict. Particular attention was given to those who witnessed the fighting, suffered violence and assisted the military in various capacities. Those who served combatants as carriers for both government and RENAMO fighters and those who lived in RENAMO military camps also received special attention.

The interviewees were approached bearing in mind Jan Shettler's observation that oral accounts are influenced by diverse factors including the environmental setting in which they are collected, the political and social background of the informants, the gender of informants and researcher,

14 BM Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History". In: JE Phillips (ed.), *Writing African History* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

15 Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History,* pp.12-13.

16 L Passerini, *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity, feminist scholar* (New York: Equinox Publishing Limited, 2007).

17 E Tonkin, *Narrating Our Past: The Social Construction of Oral History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.3-4.

18 Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History", p. 202.

language and instruments of data collection and genre.[19] Thus, the interviewees were approached as key players able to interpret the events according to their interest and exhibit their agency. Like Lubkemann, oral accounts were approached as "constructed (rather than collected) to emphasise the inevitably dialogic and social process of their production, between the author and the subjects in the social settings in which these interviews occurred".[20] The interviewees were also addressed keeping in mind Alessandro Portelli observation that "memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings".[21] Considering that the area of study is seen as a government stronghold, the testimonies were read against the grain of written records and examples from other regions of Mozambique.

Taking advantage of the author's proficiency in four languages spoken in southern Mozambique, namely Xi-Copi, Xi-Tswa, Xi-Changana and Portuguese, the interviewees received an exhaustive explanation of the purpose of the study. Only those interviewees who gave informed consent were interviewed in the language they felt comfortable to tell their stories. The author also explored his own subjective experience of war in the region. He was born and raised in Zavala District located in southern Inhambane which borders with the district of Mandlakazi, northeast Gaza Province. In 1987, he moved to Maputo province after seeing his school set on fire by RENAMO guerrillas. He regularly travelled from Maputo to Inhambane passing by Gaza Province. Heavily armed government troops escorted these trips. After hearing about the war in the early 1980s and witnessing a wave on internally displaced people, the author had his first-hand war experience in 1985 when he was a ten years old schoolboy. During the same year, he was caught between the government and RENAMO guerrillas' skirmishes. For the first time, he witnessed an exchange of gunfire and saw dead civilians and militaries. This experience and subsequent attacks, kidnappings, assassinations and pillage of villagers' properties are vividly present in the author's memory and served as motivation to contribute in the writing of a localised history of the civil war from the perspective of those who were in the frontline of military confrontations.

19 JB Shetler, *Telling Our Own Stories: Local Histories from South Mara, Tanzania* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 1.

20 Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos,* p.32.

21 A Portelli, "What makes oral history different". In: A Portelli (ed.), *The Death of Luigi Trastulli: From and meaning in oral history* (Albany New York : State University of New York, 1991), p.52.

## 2. RENAMO: FROM EXTERNAL DEPENDENCY TO SELF-RELIANCE

Many studies have portrayed RENAMO as a proxy of the right-wing minority regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa.[22] But from the early 1980s, RENAMO had transformed itself into a genuinely Mozambican rebel movement firmly rooted in the countryside.[23] In southern Mozambique, RENAMO established its first military bases in the districts of Mabote and Funhalouro in Inhambane Province.[24] Mabote District borders with RENAMO's epicentre in central Mozambique. Together with Funhalouro, Chigubo and Massangena, the last two in Gaza Province, these districts are isolated from the major roads. RENAMO's extension of its operations to these remote districts in the countryside and the mobile character of its guerrillas brought new challenges to the movement. It became more difficult to receive military rations from South Africa and distribute them to dispersed guerrillas. As one RENAMO commander points out, "in the late 1980s, we experienced logistical problems. Some units spent months without receiving ammunition".[25] This account is complemented by Emerson's observation that, "by 1989 the once plentiful foreign assistance pipeline had all but dried out".[26] Emerson goes further citing RENAMO forces operating in the south of the country reporting the decrease of supplies from multiple deliveries per year to only once a year by 1985, to none at all after 1990.[27] The shortage of supplies was less acute in central Mozambique.[28] This account is corroborated by Robinson who points out that;

> Renamo's Gorongosa headquarters remained a central hub for the distribution of supplies of primarily South African origin, and airstrips such as that at Maringué

22 See, Hanlon, *The Revolution under Fire*; Vines, *Renamo*; Minter, *Apartheid's Contras;* O Roesch, "Renamo and Peasantry". In: S Onslow (ed.), *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

23 Hoile, *Mozambique*, p. 86; C Geffray, *A Causa das Armas: Antropologia da Guerra Contemporânea em Moçambique* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1991); M Cahen, *Os outros: Um Historiador em Moçambique,* 1994, *Transl. Fátima Mendonça* (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2004); Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique.*

24 RT Huffman, "Colonialism, Socialism and Destabilization in Mozambique", *Africa Today* 39 (1/2), 1992, p. 19; Interview: Author with D Chibique, Mabote District, Inhambane Province, 20 August 2013; Interview: Author with AN Ngovene, Mabote District, Inhambane Province, 20 August 2013.

25 Interview: Author with CF Mazive, Tome, Funhalouro, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013.

26 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.195.

27 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.195.

28 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.195.

> became increasingly important for supply shipments as civilian aircraft replaced air-drops by military planes from the mid-1980s.[29]

In southern Mozambique, attempts to provide supplies by the sea seem to have produced minor impact thus, in this region, access to military equipment and food became an essential element for RENAMO's military campaigns.[30]

As the external support became unreliable, RENAMO looked for local solutions for both food supplies and military equipment. As far as food staples were concerned, the coincidence of severe droughts from the early 1980s to the early 1990s had forced many villagers to relocate to new areas, "constraining RENAMO's ability to subsist off the local population which itself was often on the brink of starvation".[31] Regarding the military supplies, RENAMO obtained them from the battlefield. A significant part of its weapons was captured from government troops or obtained from government army renegades.[32] As one government war veteran stated, "there were some occasions in which we were surprised by finding RENAMO guerrillas wearing new uniforms similar to the ones we had received the same week".[33]

The signing of a Non-aggression Pact between the government of Mozambique and the regime of apartheid in 1984 brought hope that RENAMO would be at ropes. Contrary to this expectation, the signing of the Nkomati Non-Aggression Pact with the Apartheid regime did not stop the expansion of RENAMO operations in the countryside.[34] According to David Robinson, a few months before the signing of the agreement, South African Defense Forces delivered massive supplies of weapons to RENAMO. Robinson adds that, even after the agreement, the South African Defense forces continued to supply RENAMO and encouraged diversification of RENAMO's support, including from American conservatives.[35] Owing to this continuous support, the period between 1983 and 1987 witnessed the expansion of RENAMO attacks countrywide.[36] It is noteworthy to remark that the evidence that RENAMO continued receiving supplies after Nkomati Agreement and that it expanded its operations does not mean that it was not affected by the Pact. The disruption

29 DA Robinson, Curse on the land: a history of the Mozambican Civil War (PhD, University of Western Australia, 2006), pp.58-59.
30 Robinson, Curse of on the land, p.59.
31 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.196.
32 Hoile, *Mozambique*, p. 39; Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.196.
33 Interview: Author with CF Noa, Maputo, 15 October 2017; Interview: Author with C Mwaria, Maputo, 20 April 2018.
34 See, Hoile, *Mozambique,* p.6.
35 Robinson, Curse on the Land-History, p.21.
36 On South Africa's lack of commitment to enforce the Nkomati agreement see, Hoile, *Mozambique,* p.7; Robinson, *Curse on the Land-History,* p.179.

of overt delivery of supplies affected some of the key logistics, including communications. As Emerson points out, by the late 1980s, RENAMO lost its advantage in the communication network as its communication equipment (like radios) became broken and old, and they lacked access to reliable spare parts.[37] This coincided with the government of FRELIMO's diplomatic endevours which included gradual abandonment of centrally planned economy and adherence to Bretton Woods institutions.[38] This move was signalled by the visits of President Samora Machel to the United States and United Kingdom which marked the beginning of change from radical Marxism-Leninism to a liberal economy thus, laying foundations to cooperation with countries that had been RENAMO traditional sympathisers.[39]

In addition to weapons, the guerrillas needed food, which they could not obtain from external sources in the long term. Locally, they could count on requisitions from local communities and harvesting meat or plant foods from the wild. They could farm, but the peripatetic nature of guerrilla warfare and cyclical droughts interfered with such efforts. This situation compelled RENAMO to build networks of popular support in areas under its control. As one former RENAMO guerrilla observed: "in the military bases we used to eat bush meat and the food that we used to request from local people. We used to farm, but it was not viable because we were attacked frequently by FRELIMO, forcing us to abandon our unripe crops".[40] Moreover, the prolonged drought that affected southern Mozambique intermittently from the early 1980s to early 1990s hampered agricultural production and reduced sources of food for guerrillas. Under these circumstances, guerrilla members had to obtain food either from civilians or by attacking government shops and warehouses.[41]

According to oral testimonies, when RENAMO guerrillas penetrated the district of Mabote in 1980, they poached wild animals and requested chickens, goats and cows from villagers.[42] As these resources became exhausted, RENAMO guerrillas began to use violence to pressurise people to provide them with food and intelligence. Also, in search of food supplies, RENAMO launched frequent ambushes on civilians' vehicles along the main roads. The majority of these RENAMO attacks were directed at mineworkers, humanitarian aid convoys, and all civilians suspected of transporting valuable

37 See, Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.194.
38 International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
39 DL Douek, "New light on the Samora Machel assassination: "I realised that it was not accident", *Third World Quaterly* 38 (9), 2017, p. 17.
40 In Xitswa language *Kuthekela,* means to request but during the war it meant extortion. Interview: Author with AW Mazive, Tome, Funhalouro, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013.
41 Author's reminiscence of wartime, 1980-1992.
42 Interview: Author with CF Mazive, Tome, Funhalouro, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013; Interview: Author with AN Ngovene, Mabote Distric, Inhambane Province, 20 August 2013.

items, mainly food. In southern Mozambique, civilians travelling along the N1 Highway near Maluana, 3 de Fevereiro, Pessene, Chimbala and Lindela became frequent targets of attacks.[43] RENAMO assassinated many people and destroyed hundreds of cars.[44] Among the victims was the sister of the author's primary school colleague and friend from Chibembe village in the district of Zavala, south of Inhambane province.[45] The government well-publicised these attacks on civilians to paint the image of RENAMO as a gang of armed bandits without any political agenda.[46] RENAMO's attitude towards civilians in southern Mozambique challenges Weinstein's assertion that

> rebel groups that emerge in environments rich in natural resources or with the external support of an outside patron tend to commit high levels of indiscriminate violence; movements that arise in resource-poor contexts perpetuate far fewer abuses and employ violence selectively and strategically.[47]

In the case of RENAMO, external support and abundance of local resources in the early stage of war led to less violence. Oral accounts point that the decline of agricultural production due to prolonged drought in the early eighties coincided with the escalation of violence against civilians in the southern region. As some residents of Mabote, Funhalouro, Chigubo and Massangena Districts pointed out, "the 1980s were difficult times. We did not have food because of drought yet, RENAMO guerrillas demanded food from us. If we said we had nothing, they wouldn't understand. They would beat or even kill if you did not give them food".[48] The escalation of violence in Southern Mozambique was not accidental. Some scholars claimed that RENAMO had categorised southern Mozambique as a zone of destruction.[49] Nevertheless, this categorisation does not reflect the reality of the whole southern Mozambique because oral testimonies show that violence was contextual and localised. In areas where RENAMO controlled large areas

43 *NOTÍCIAS*, 21 October 1987; *NOTÍCIAS*, 30 November 1987.

44 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.186; AHM, *TEMPO* 895, 6 December 1987, 4; AHM, *NOTICIAS*, 18 August 1985.

45 Interview: Author with AF Magambo, Maputo, 16 October 2019.

46 For more detailed information about the attacks on civilians in N1 see ,*TEMPO* 6 December 1987, 4; *NOTICIAS*, 18 August 1985; *AIM*, 137, December 1987, 11-12; *AIM,* 137, December 1987. This image of RENAMO was contested by the results of the first democratic election held in 1994 which saw RENAMO articulating a political agenda and wining 112 parliamentary seats out of 250. See, J Armon *et al*, *The Mozambican Peace Process in Perspective* (London: Conciliation Resources in Association with Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 1998), p.16.

47 Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*, p.7.

48 Interview: Author with JW Mbanguene, Tome, Funhalouro, District, Inhambane Province, 23 August 2013.

49 Gersony, *Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts*, p.28; Roesch, "Renamo and Peasantry".

of dispersed settlements such as Funhalouro, in Inhambane and Saúte in Chigubo, Gaza Province, people report few episodes of violence.[50] In contrast, in these areas, people reported violence from government troops. According to Deolinda José Macucua "when government troops dislodged RENAMO from Tome, many people were assassinated after accused of collaborating with RENAMO".[51] Another argument which should be analysed with a grain of salt is the idea that RENAMO violence against civilians in southern Mozambique reflected ethnic rivalries between the Shangana (pro-FRELIMO) and Ndau (Pro-RENAMO) dating back pre-colonial time.[52] Recent studies dismiss this justification by showing that unlike other African civil wars, the conflict between FRELIMO and RENAMO revolved around regional economic differences rather than ethnicity.[53] As Fernando Florêncio, remarks, RENAMO proximity with Ndau ethnic group can be explained by its genesis among the Ndau of both Mozambique and Rhodesia. Florêncio explains that RENAMO first recruits and leadership came from vaNdau. This explains why the movement adopted Ndau as a sort of lingua franca.[54] Thus, ethnic differences seem not to have played a significant role in the administration of violence in the region.

It is important to emphasise that it is not the objective of this paper to revive the debate over violence in Mozambican civil war. This paper aims to study the logistics of war with particular emphasis on the role of people and their resources. Thus, violence is analysed as a by-product of a complex relationship between civilians and the military. Unlike Weinstein, who focuses only on rebel groups, this study brings together rebels, government troops and civilians in a single analytical category. It builds on Eric Morier-Genoud's approach of war as a "total" fact.[55] It approaches violence against civilians in southern Mozambique, keeping in mind Kalyvas' and Claire Metelits' argument that rival sides use violence selectively.[56] It also conforms with Lubkemann's claim that Mozambique's civil war was "a fragmented war"(…) in

50 Interview: Author with SM Ndove, Nhanala, Chigubo District, Gaza Province, 30 August 2013; Interview: Author with MF Novela, Mavume, Funhalouro District, Inhambane Province, 3 September 2013.

51 Interview: Author with DJ Macuacua Tome, Funhalouro District Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013.

52 F Florêncio, "Identidade étnica e práticas politicas entre os vaNdau de Moçambique", *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 3, 2002, pp. 39-63.

53 H Kayuni, "The Upsurge of tension between Renamo and Frelimo in Mozambique: The contest for traditional leadership support", *Journal of Humanities* 24, 2016, p. 81.

54 Florêncio, "Identidade étnica", p.13.

55 E Morier-Genoud, "War in Inhambane: Reshaping state, society and economy". In: E Morier-Genoud *et al* (ed.), *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976-1992* (New York: James Currey, 2018), p.150.

56 Metelits. *Inside Insurgency*, p.11.

which violence was problematised by the social and cultural formations across which it was staged.[57] Therefore, the experience from southern Mozambique shows that relations between civilians and combatants were complex and could be situated on a spectrum of violence and coercion on one side but collaboration on the other.[58] These relations fit with Lubkermann's assertion of war as a social condition", which does not stop social trajectories and life projects.[59] In Lubkermann's terms, the experience of war was also about "the prosecution of everyday life through more violent means".[60] In fact, oral accounts show that villagers took advantage of the war environment to settle personal differences.[61] As one villager from Mabote Ditrict recalled, "during the war, many people were falsely accused of collaboration with one side of the military contenders. A dispute over a woman would lead to accusation of collaborating with the enemy".[62] Oral accounts provide examples of people who used the war to eliminate competitors and people suspected of being witches. As one villager from Massangena District recalls, "many people enriched themselves during the war by engaging in the business of stolen goods including cattle".[63] Others used the war to force women who they wouldn't marry in a normal setup. According to an interviewee from Chigubo District, "having a gun opened the door to access everything someone wanted including women".[64]

Having analysed logistical conditions of RENAMO with particular focus on the interior of southern Mozambique, now the focus is on the motivation of these guerrillas. Some scholars have argued that neo-colonialists and disgruntled, frustrated Mozambicans formed RENAMO.[65] In this approach, the RENAMO leadership is presented as lacking a cohesive and viable political project that could attract people to join the struggle. At the same time, many RENAMO guerrillas were said to be conscripted.[66] All former RENAMO

57 Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence;* Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos,* p. 42.
58 For more on the political economy of war see Orogun, "Plunder, Predation and Profiteering", pp.283-313.
59 Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos* p.249.
60 Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos,* p.42.
61 Interview: Author with AF Chichonge and AH Chichongue, Tome, Funhadouro District, Inhambane Province, 21 August 2013.
62 Interview: Author with DN Chitlango, Tanguane Mabote District, 16 August 2013.
63 Interview: Author with AH Chichongue, Tome-Sede, Funhalouro District, Inhambane Province, 21 August 2013.
64 Interview: Author with RR Chauque, Mavue, Massangena District, Gaza Province, 13 August 2013.
65 Vines, *Renamo*; Minter, *Apartheid's Contras.*
66 Roesch, "Renamo and Peasantry", pp.462- 484; H Anderson, *Mozambique: A War against the People* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion.*

guerrilla interviewed in this study were conscripted. In the words of Albino Capitine Chaia:

> "In 1981, I was kidnapped by Matsanga (RENAMO) when I was returning from South Africa. They found me in Timondzwanine. Someone told us, to not use that way. We insisted because the alternative was too long. We saw boot marks along the way, and we thought they were government troops. When we saw them, we tried to run, but they stopped us with guns. Other young men who were with us were almost killed. One was coming from Maputo. They said, "you are coming from Maputo so, you are a FRELIMO soldier". For some of us, coming from South Africa was not a problem. They took the guy coming from Maputo to a secret place to inspect his legs to see whether he had boot marks. Since he did not have marks, they concluded that he was coming from work, he was not a soldier. They took us to the base, but we were separated there. I don't know where the others went. The two young men received guns, and I was oriented to stay in the base. My job was to cook for wounded soldiers. In the middle of the war, I became the manager of the food they were looting out there. I was in the Dombe base".[67]

Armando Sumbane remembers that he was captured in his home village of Tome in Funhalouro. In his words,

> they caught me in my farm; they tied me up and marched me to their base, where I spent some time in confinement. After that, I went through a short military training. After some years, I became a commander; I was operating in Panda, Homoine and Morrombene districts. I targeted lorries caring humanitarian aid. I also led my men to areas where cattle were abundant. I ate meat! I met my wife in the base. I had some children over there, after the war I brought them home.[68]

Having an army mostly composed of people recruited by force, it is vital to understand how RENAMO survived 16 years of struggle with limited resources to wage war? Many studies have highlighted various reasons impelling the youth to join rebel groups.[69] The accounts of former RENAMO guerrillas confirm that indeed, there are multiple explanations for the motivation and morale of RENAMO guerrillas. As a former RENAMO guerrilla pointed out; to secure the loyalty of its guerrillas, RENAMO used the Janus-faced tactic of seduction and intimidation. In the words of one of RENAMO's ex-combatants,

67 Interview: Author with AC Chaia, Tanguane, Mabote District, Inhambane Province, 13 August 2013.

68 Interview: Author with AF Sumbane, Tome, Funhalouro Distric, 22 August 2013.

69 Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest*; Nordstrom, *A different Kind of War Story;* Geffray, *A Causa das Armas.*

> I was myself kidnapped, but I quickly adapted and embraced the struggle. Like me, all those who embraced the struggle did not suffer. But the commanders were very vigilant to neutralise deserters. When caught, deserters were exemplarily punished and killed to intimidate all those who would consider fleeing.[70]

This statement confirms that there was a preoccupation in lifting the morale of guerrillas by promising them a better life after the end of the war. Therefore, while some recruits were coerced, others embraced the guerrilla war heartily hoping to improve their living condition after the end of the war. [71] A former RENAMO guerrilla said that "one of our favourite songs sung in the morning gatherings said that "after the war comes bonanza".[72] It is also important to observe that despite the uncertainty of guerrilla life due to the unpredictability of attacks by government troops, people created families in the military bases. As one informant told Lubkemann, in the war zone, there was also space to have a normal life – to fall in love, have romantic relationships and to experience intimacy.[73] When the war ended in 1992, many guerrillas returned home with spouses and children. A woman who returned from war married to a former guerrilla recalled;

> "I was kidnapped together with my mother. My mother was assassinated, and I was kept captive for three years. During this period, I had a relationship with one guerrilla. We had two children during the war. When the war ended, we returned home, where I introduced him to my parents. He paid the matrimonial compensation (lobola), and we continue living together.[74]

The experience of this couple reveals that for fighters who had family in the war zone, the war was also about the protection of their families.

Another factor that led people to join RENAMO was the easy access to looted goods such as bicycles, cattle, cloth, blankets, radios and sewing machines.[75] For example, when government troops overran RENAMO guerrilla in Manzuile, they found many bicycles, radios sewing machines and other domestic utensils.[76] It is essential to underline that because of the collapse of the post-colonial socialist project, these objects had become

70 Interview: Author with DM Chitlango.
71 Interview: Author with AF Sumbane, Tome-Funhalouro District, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013; Interview: Author with AC Chaia.
72 Interview: Author with AC Chaia.
73 Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos* p.216.
74 Interview: Author with Z Nkome, Inharrime, Inhambane Provice Distric, 20 December 2018.
75 On the selling of looted goods see, Robinson, Curse on the Land-History, p.71
76 Interview: Author with JW Mbanguene, Tome, Funhalouro, District, Inhambane Province, 23 August 2013.

luxuries and symbol of high status.[77] As a resident of southern Mozambique and a son of a mineworker, I recall that having a radio cassette, sewing machine and South African heavy cotton blankets was a privilege. Teachers and other public employees used to order these objects from my father and other mineworkers.[78] Moreover, oral accounts point out that very often, RENAMO guerrillas targeted the houses of mineworkers to demand these objects.[79]

As far as cattle is concerned, despite its abundance in the region of study, oral accounts highlighted that it is not common for the herders to slaughter cows to eat. The meat was regarded as a luxury food, yet RENAMO guerrillas took it as an integral part of their regular diet. [80] Taking advantage of peoples' "greediness" for meat, RENAMO slaughtered looted cows and goats and distributed meat to civilians. According to a victim of RENAMO kidnapping, in 1987, his friend refused to flee with him from RENAMO's captivity because he could not leave before eating meat.[81] This episode is in line with a statement by a woman interviewed near the former RENAMO base of Manzuile in Funhalouro who confirmed that the meat of cows taken from local communities attracted many villagers to RENAMO.[82]

It is also important to remark that RENAMO camps in Mabote, Massangena and Chigubo District were located within Zinave and Banhine National Parks. This ensured them access to game meat, ivory and rhino horns. A recent study by Mwatwara shows that RENAMO used game meat and animal products such as elephant tuskers and rhino horn to establish a complex commercial network with civilians in the borderland of Mozambique and Zimbabwe.[83] In the process, those who honoured their trading commitments enjoyed a good relationship with guerrillas while those who defaulted were selectively punished.[84] Mwatwara's study shows the complicated nature of the "logic" of violence perpetrated by RENAMO and puts into question the idea that RENAMO violence was indiscriminate.

77 On the collapse of socialist project in Mozambique see, M Ottaway, "From Symbolic Socialism to Symbolic Reform", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 26 (2), 1988, p.223.
78 Author's reminiscences of wartime, 1980-1992.
79 Interview: Author with TL Chitlango.
80 Interview: Author with CF Mazive Tome-Funhalouro District, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013; Interview: Author with AD Mazive, Tome-Funhalouro District, Inhambane Province, 23 August 2013
81 Interview: Author with GJ Malate, Maputo Province, 21 July 1990.
82 Interview: Author with AD Mazive, Tome, Funhalouro District, Inhambane Province, 23 August 2013.
83 W Mwatwara, "The "Logic" of Renamo civil war violence: Trans-Border Communities and Renamo Incursions in Eastern Zimbabwe, 1980s-1992", *Southern Journal for Contemporary History* 45 (1), 2020, p.158-159.
84 Mwatwara, "The "Logic" of Renamo civil war violence".

One of the striking realities about RENAMO in southern Mozambique was its inability to articulate a coherent political ideology of mobilisation. The majority of interviewees for this study did not have a clear idea of what RENAMO was fighting for. Those who were kidnapped and taken to RENAMO bases were physically isolated from the guerrillas for some time before being integrated as guerrillas or forced labour. Because of this isolation, they claim that they did not receive any explanation of the causes of war. The central message that they received consisted of threats of death to those attempting to escape.[85] As one villager kidnapped by RENAMO recalled; "I decided to stay in the base because I was told that if I tried to escape to areas controlled by the government, I would be treated as an enemy and subjected to torture or even execution. They told me that for government troops, everyone who lived in RENAMO camps was an enemy".[86] Many people expressed similar fears to justify their permanence in RENAMO camps. Such testimonies show that fear was the key factor that kept people under RENAMO's control. People feared execution by both government and RENAMO military.

Thus, unlike central and northern Mozambique, in the southern region, with some exceptions, coercion appeared to be the dominant but not the only force behind peoples' loyalty to RENAMO. This might be explained by RENAMO's inability to articulate a strong political message and to develop large administrative territories as attested by Morier-Genoud's research in southern Inhambane.[87] RENAMO guerrillas' relationship with civilians in Inhambane contrasts with Domingos Do Rosário's argument that, in Nampula Province, RENAMO used selective violence and controlled areas that became spaces of socialisation.[88] Zambézia is another province where people adhered voluntarily to RENAMO, and the guerrilla created liberated zones with social services.[89] These findings reinforce this paper's argument that there is no single or mono-causal explanation for the relationship between the military and civilians in a war context. They also complement Morier-Genoud, Michel Cahen and Do Rosário's argument that "the war developed distinctive features in different areas of the country".[90] The lack of open popular support

85 Interview: Author with AW Mazive, Tome, Funhalouro, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013.
86 Interview: Author with CF Mazive, Tome, Funhalouro, Inhambane Province, 22 August 2013.
87 Morier-Genoud, "War in Inhambane", p.156.
88 DM Do Rosário, "War to Enforce a Political Project? Renamo in Nampula Province, 1983-1992". In E Morier-Genoud *et al* (eds.), *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976-1992* (Rochester, New York: James Currey, 2018), p.61.
89 See, S Chichava, "The Anti-Frelimo Movements". In: E Morier-Genoud *et al* (eds.), *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976-1992* (Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2018), p.32.
90 E Morier-Genoud *et al* (eds.), *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976-1992* (New York: James Currey, 2018), p.222.

in southern Mozambique as demonstrated by the case study in Ilha Josina Machel in Maputo Province is one such evidence of regional distinctiveness.[91]

## 3. GOVERNMENT TROOPS RESOURCES DURING THE CIVIL WAR

This section provides an overview of the poor material conditions and low morale of the Mozambican armed forces at national level. It includes the voices of people who dealt with this resource scarcity in the interior of southern Mozambique. In the process, it demystifies the idea that only RENAMO forces depended on the extortion of civilians. Based on evidence from fieldwork, it shows that despite having access to armoured vehicles and helicopters, the idea that government troops were well equipped, and disciplined is misleading. It conceals many problems such as incompetence, corruption, sabotage and reliance on obsolete communication networks.[92] It also neglects the impact of Rhodesian regime attacks on economic and military targets in southern Mozambique.

Emerging from ten years of guerrilla warfare against the Portuguese colonial regime, as the civil war began, the government of Mozambique was still in the process of transforming FRELIMO guerrilla forces that had just participated in the liberation struggle against the Portuguese into a regular national army. It is important to remember that before RENAMO's insertion in Mozambique's countryside, Rhodesian troops were bombing Mozambican military and civilian targets in retaliation for Mozambique's implementation of United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia. [93] Moreover, Mozambique's support for Zimbabwe's liberation struggled had also angered the Rhodesian regime.[94] Thus, the civil war waged by RENAMO found the new government of Mozambique unprepared for yet another cycle of a prolonged war. In fact, RENAMO consolidated its offensive while most of the liberation struggle war veterans were expecting to pass into civilian life and enjoy the benefits of their struggle for independence. Faced with the challenge of a fast-expanding RENAMO, the government had to request military assistance from Eastern European countries and Cuba.[95] It was under these circumstances that

91 L Bunker, "War Accounts from Ilha Josina Machel, Maputo Province". In: E Morier-Genoud *et al* (eds.), *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976-1992* (New York: James Currey, 2018), p.191.

92 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* pp.196-199.

93 CVL Munguambe, Solidarity and the Struggle for Zimbabwe: Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) in Mozambique, 1975-1980 (MA, University of Western Cape, 2019), pp.25-6.

94 On Rhodesian attacks on Mozambique see, Massaiete, *Chicualacuala*; Mota-Lopes, *Colonialism, liberation, and structural-adjustment,* p.476.

95 Hoile, *Mozambique,* pp.31, 44, 47, 49, 76.

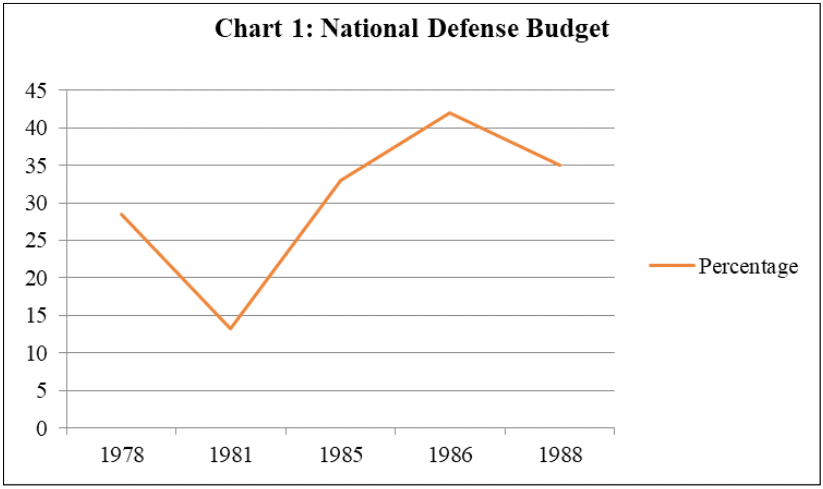
Mozambique received hundreds of military experts from the Soviet Union and Cuba. It also became one of the regular customers of the Soviet military industry and Cuban capacity-building support of the military. Cuba assistance came in the form of military training and military medicine. [96] According to one government war veteran, who was trained in Cuba, in 1977;

> "I was part of a group of 300 young men who went to receive military training at Centro de Formação Militar No. 39 da Ilha da Juventude ( Centre for Military Training Number 39 in Juventude Island, Cuba). Initially, we were expected to receive a one-year training but, under Cuban authorities' advice, the training was extended to three years. We returned to Mozambique in 1980 to occupy key positions as commanders and instructors in areas of infantry and anti-aerial defence".[97]

As RENAMO actions extended to other regions of Mozambique particularly the corridors of Beira and Nacala which connect countries of the hinterland to Mozambican ports in the coast, FRELIMO requested military assistance from the direct beneficiaries of these corridors. In this context, Zimbabwean troops were requested to protect the Beira corridor, which consists of a road, railway and oil pipeline. As a result, in 1985 there were nearly 15 000 Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique.[98] Further north, Tanzanian troops were deployed to protect the Nacala corridor, which was very important for Zambian and Malawian exports and imports. In 1986, the government signed a joint security agreement with Malawi leading to the deployment of Malawian troops in northern Mozambique.[99]

The recourse to external military assistance, together with the increase of recruits impacted the national budget. To create an organised and well-equipped army, the government allocated a disproportionate amount of money to the Ministry of Defense. As is demonstrated in the following chart, in 1986, the funds allocated to Defense reached a record of 42 per cent of the national budget. Considering that in this period Mozambican economy had collapsed due to war and prolonged drought and that many people did not have access to adequate education and health services, allocating near half of the national budget to army says a lot about the government counter-insurgency strategy. It gives the impression that the government failed to understand that to counter the insurgency, one must win the hearts and minds of civilians.

96 See, J Veloso, *Memórias em Voo Rasante* (Maputo: JVCI Lda, 2006), p.140-141.
97 Interview: Author with XA Cadete, Maputo City, 26 September 2019.
98 Hoile, *Mozambique,* p.6; Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique,* p.187.
99 Hoile, *Mozambique*, p.7.




Source: Based on data from AIM, 20, February 1978; AIM, 54, December 1980; Supplement to AIM, 142, September 1988; AIM, 114, January 1986, 4; AIM, 108, July 1985.

In 1984, President Machel appointed General Armando Panguene and Colonel Sérgio Vieira as deputy ministers of Defense adding the number of Defense Ministers to four.[100] With this concentration of resources on Defense forces, the government expected to defeat RENAMO rapidly and definitively.

To the dismay of the ruling party, the allocation of more resources did not translate into success in the battlefield. As the Chief of Staff of the national armed forces had admitted in 1982, the government was on defensive position while RENAMO took the initiative by attacking government targets. Throughout the war, the Chief of Staff attributed this condition to disorganisation of the armed forces.[101] Although the government received military support from the Soviet Union, on the battlefield, it was proven that weapons alone do not fight a war. Warfare also demanded good planning and management.

During the war period, the Mozambican armed forces encountered severe indiscipline problems, mismanagement and corruption.[102] The mismanagement of funds and resources in the Ministry of Defense had long roots, but it was not addressed openly. Under the one-party regime,

100 *AIM*, 91, January 1984.
101 *AIM*, 91, January 1984.
102 Robinson, *Curse on the Land-History,* p.231; AHM, AIM, 65, November 1981, p.1.

the majority of people did not have space to denounce irregularities. Only a few people such as President Machel were in a better position to denounce irregularities committed in the management of public treasure. Machel took his first major action in 1981 when he announced a cleanup operation in the Mozambican Armed forces, people's militias, police and security services.[103] Following setbacks in the battlefield, Machel condemned what he called infiltrated elements in the defence and security forces. He pointed out that "infiltrated elements violated the constitution, the principles of FRELIMO Party and the law of the land through arbitrary imprisonment, beatings, torture, and other forms of abuse of power".[104] In 1989 President Joaquim Chissano, the successor to President Machel, admitted the existence of corruption in the party structures.[105] Chissano gave examples of theft and indiscriminate killing of cattle involving high political officials.[106] The use of expressions such as "infiltration" and "indiscriminate killings" by Machel and Chissano hints the existence of high-ranking military officers not fully committed to the army's objectives. It shows that like RENAMO, some segments of government troops were involved in the acts of banditry and looting of civilians.

The fragilities of the armed forces and the weakness of the thesis that they were disciplined were more exposed with the introduction of a multi-party system under the constitution of 1990. Evidence of corruption, abuse of power and shortage of supplies within the armed forces showed that, after all, as it was happening with RENAMO guerrillas, government troops were also operating in precarious conditions. This affected their relationship with civilians. A statement by the Governor of Niassa Province, condemning the commanders of government troops who in 1981 were accused of rape, consuming alcohol while on duty, threatening local people with firearms and stealing large quantities of merchandise destined to supply civilians and military in Marrupa and Mecula districts reveal the collapse of law, order and morals among government troops.[107]

The most alarming cases of corruption in the armed forces came from Nampula province. In 1992, the Provincial Governor pointed the failure to pay soldiers their wages as the primary cause of the defeats suffered by the national army in that province. These problems, he said, allowed RENAMO to occupy several towns in the province in 1991-92.[108] Also, in Nampula Province, a military prosecutor brought to light cases of corruption and abuse of power within the provincial military command. He accused the provincial

103 Robinson, Curse on the Land-History, pp.321-233; AHM, AIM, 65, November 1981, p.1.
104 *AIM*, 65, November 1981.
105 Machel died in 1986 in a plane crash.
106 *NOTICIAS,* 19 April 1989.
107 *AIM*, 129, June 1992.
108 *AIM,* 191, June 1992.

commander of suspending him from the post in Nampula Province Military Tribunal because he was determined to fight corruption. The prosecutor also denounced military judges who accepted bribes. He went on to accuse the chief attorney of stealing money from military court, and of being always drunk.[109]

While the high commanders were selling military rations for personal benefit, the soldiers on the battlefront were starving. It became common to hear rumours of soldiers left to their fate in remote areas without food supplies and salaries. According to the former commander in chief of government troops in Mabote-Inhambane, the army endured long periods without receiving food supplies. He described an episode in which government troops resorted to eating the leaves of wild-grown trees. Other war veterans provided accounts of soldiers going into combat on the verge of starvation.[110] Arguably, as a result, they extorted food from civilians.

Corruption and mismanagement eroded the morals of government forces. Still, it was not until the opening of the country to liberal democracy and greater freedom of expression from 1990 that it was brought to the attention of the public. A look at the letters to the editors of the main newspapers and news magazines from 1990 reveals the problems faced by servicemen. In an open letter published in *TEMPO* news magazine, a war veteran, complained, "I had not received my salary for two years. Many soldiers are abandoning their positions to look for food. Is it the ministry of defence policy to train soldiers and then abandon them?"[111] He questioned. Another war veteran said that after joining the army in 1982, he did not receive his salary for four years. He questioned;

> why do salaries not reach the soldiers while the Ministry of Defence sends them to the Provincial Command? Why are the military commanders eager to send troops to combat missions, but they do not pay them? Why does the Provincial Military Command not act against the irregularities committed against the soldiers? We were recruited before preparing our future. Initially, we were told that there was money. They mobilised us politically, but this does not pay the comrades that suffer day and night.[112]

Another veteran expressed his frustration with the poor salaries paid in the armed forces. He underlined that the situation prevented him from working with passion and dedication. He stated that when he joined the armed forces in 1985, he was already married and had two children. He asked how

109 AHM, *AIM,* 187, February 1992, 21.
110 Interview: Author with DN Chitlango.
111 *TEMPO*, 26 April 1992.
112 *TEMPO*, 26 July 1992.

someone could survive with low salaries paid in the army, especially given the rising costs of living in the country.[113]

Oral accounts from war veterans and civilians confirm that some military units stationed in the interior used to go over six months without receiving supplies. One war veteran recalled that "lacking necessities and supplies, we had to live off the land, but because of the drought, it was difficult to find wild products and water sources".[114]

While ordinary soldiers focused their denunciation on their superiors, civilians complained about abuse by soldiers stationed in their community to protect them. Like the military, in the 1990s, civilians used the media to express their dissatisfaction with the military and other state functionaries. In Inhambane Province, civilians wrote to the provincial government denouncing abuses committed by government troops. They accused government troops of acting as judges, extorting civilians' goods and flogging people without reason.[115] In this case, the governor forwarded the letter to Provincial Military Command to verify the allegations and take appropriate measures.[116] The final answer to the letter came eight months later. It blamed the victims, accusing them of taking civil conflicts to the military. It recommended local authorities to instruct civilians to seek justice in local courts while addressing words of comfort to the victim of flogging.[117] This reaction from the provincial military command shows that government troops were loath to recognise their mistakes and overlooked excesses against civilians. In another letter to the editor of *TEMPO* Magazine published in 1992, a civilian told how he was forced to cancel his trip from Inhambane to Maputo after suffering extortion by government troops in Chongoene, Gaza.

> "I identified myself as a war veteran". he wrote, "but despite having documents proving my discharge, they accused me of having bought them. I challenged the soldier who interrogated me to tell me where they sell military service discharge cards. My question infuriated the soldier, and he ordered me to lie down to be flogged. To avoid flogging, I used the money saved for my return from Maputo to bribe the soldiers".[118]

This episode, reveals the abuses committed by the government against civilians, including war veterans.

113 *TEMPO*, 2 August 1992.
114 Interview: Author with D Chibique, Mabote District, Inhambane Province, 20 August 2013.
115 Arquivo do Governo da Província de Inhambane (thereafter AGPI), Eusébio Maurício Bavane, *Requerimento ao Governador da Província de Inhambane*, 29 March1986.
116 AGPI, Gabinete do Governador da Província de Inhambane, *Despacho*, 7 October, 1986.
117 AGPI, Partido FRELIMO, Comité Provincial de Inhambane, Departamento de Defesa. *Informação sobre o Trabalho Realizado no Distrito de Zavala.* Inhambane, 28 Novembro, 1986.
118 *TEMPO,* 26 July 1992.

Another civilian in Nampula Province complained about theft and rape. He pointed out that civilians were facing two wars, one with government troops and the other with RENAMO guerrillas. He contended that it was not clear what distinguished RENAMO from government forces. He went on to question,

> where the humble people will live if not in their land? How will the fish survive if not in the water? If the soldier does not respect the people whom are they going to respect? When some courageous people question them, they say that civilians have no right to speak to soldiers. It is not from people that the soldiers do get fat?[119]

As many soldiers used to say, he observed; "Who does not get fat in this war will never get fat".[120] These letters to public media and government authorities show that the Mozambique Armed Forces, Foças Armadas de Moçambique (FAM) were rife with disorganisation and indiscipline. They also show that in both RENAMO and government forces, there were people who used the war to pursue everyday life through violence.

Despite the denunciation of irregularities, the condition of the military in the frontline did not improve. Left without adequate supplies, they engaged in actions that put them in conflict with civilians. "By mid-1989 rank-and-file soldiers were virtually on strike due to lack of pay and supplies. Thus, some turned to banditry as a survival strategy".[121] In 1992, government troops went on strike in several parts of the country. The mutineers demanded non-paid wages and the updating of pensions for veterans and the war-disabled. [122] The first mutinies took place in late July among commandos and members of the Maputo City garrison. They spread to Manica province in August. Additional mutinies occurred in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado and Dondo, Sofala Province.[123]

As the criticism and protests by both civilians and the military show, the condition of the government forces was precarious. By 1992, lacking adequate supplies and facing the worst drought in 30 years in southern Africa, like RENAMO guerrillas, government forces increased the level of taxation and coercion of the local population.[124] Moreover, disorganisation and corruption detracted potential conscripts. Soldiers lacked morale and

119 *TEMPO,* 26 April 1992. Among ordinary Mozambicans, being fat is an indication of wellbeing. In the heyday of socialist propaganda, the petit bourgeoisie was depicted in cartoons with big bellies.
120 *TEMPO,* 26 April 1992.
121 Robinson, Curse on the Land-History, p.309.
122 *AIM*, 195, July 1992.
123 *AIM*, 195, July 1992.
124 Robinson, Curse on the Land-History, p.327.

material support to wage war. This forced many soldiers to desert the army. It also made it difficult to convince the youth to join the army. Consequently, the military services received many requests for the postponement of military enlistment. A letter written by a civil servant shows some of the arguments used to avoid military service. He argued that he was the only one left to take care of his family because his brother was already in the army. He added that he was attending school, and he would like to write exams before being incorporated.[125] Letters like these were often written by young men working in public administration. Managers of state companies wrote similar letters arguing that the government should exempt their employees from military conscription. Such arguments benefited, primarily, the educated and well-connected people. As one citizen complained, the military service became the burden of those not attending school and the illiterate.[126]While the literate used such tactics, many ordinary people adopted various strategies including nepotism, corruption and migration.[127] Since local party structures coordinated the recruitment in rural areas, it was difficult for the youth to hide. For the ordinary men, the only option available was to flee the countryside to South Africa and Zimbabwe, but this was risky because of the checkpoints installed throughout the main roads.[128] Besides, they needed passports which were not issued to people who had not served in the military. Illegal migration had many risks. Since RENAMO received logistic support from South Africa and it had installed its military bases near the border.

Subsequently, many young men were captured by Renamo and integrated into their ranks as guerrillas while attempting to flee government recruitment.[129] Vasco Mbondzo was captured by RENAMO trying to cross the border illegally. He remembers that;

> everyone was expected to serve the military. My brothers were already incorporated, but that was not enough, they also wanted me. In 1989, I decided to cross the border to South Africa. After walking day and night from Massangena, we reached the border. We met people who offered themselves to show us the way. Surprisingly we found ourselves surrounded by armed men. They told us that we had to join them in the struggle against FRELIMO. We had no choice but to comply. After spending three weeks of training, I managed to escape. I entered the South African territory, where I lived as a refugee until the end of the war in 1992.[130]

125 AGPI, Lourenço Matsinhe, Carta para o Presidente do Comité Provincial de Recrutamento Military, 27 February 1990.
126 *NOTICIAS*, 11 April 1984.
127 Interview: Author with V Mbonzo, Massangena District, Inhambane Province, 15 August 2013.
128 Interview: Author with DN Chitlango.
129 Interview: Author with DN Chitlango.
130 Interview: Author with V Mbondzo.

In urban areas, the youth avoided recruitment by attending school and purchasing forged medical certificates stating that they were suffering from diseases such as asthma, tuberculosis and epilepsy.[131] As an interviewee who worked in a public hospital stated, "selling forged medical certificates was a lucrative business. Many young men approached us, looking for documents that could prevent them from serving the army".[132]

Hence, an overview of logistics and morale of both RENAMO guerrillas and government troops shows that contrary to government propaganda about the "parasitic" character of RENAMO, both belligerents lacked reliable military and food supplies. Despite being entitled to benefit from state resources, government troops were often left without ammunition and food, clothing and other indispensable goods. With the near-collapse of government supply chains due to corruption, poor roads and RENAMO attacks on military convoys, it became the duty of civilians to assist government troops by providing food, water, and building barracks and digging trenches. As a resident of Inhambane Province, I used to see my mother and other women carrying water and food to government troops barracks. In 1985, people from my village were responsible for the construction of barracks and digging trenches for government troops in the vicinity of my primary school in Matimbe.[133] This is an example of how government troops, like RENAMO guerrillas, relied on civilians and nature to survive. As it was common among RENAMO guerrillas, the relationship between government troops and civilians combined voluntary and coercive mobilisation. When prolonged drought exacerbated the effects of war by exhausting natural resources and agricultural production, the contenders engaged in systemic violence and extortion of civilians.

As the war became prolonged, government troops lost their will to fight.[134] By the late 1980s, government troops passed from an offensive to defensive posture. Information from civilians and war veterans reveal that on various occasions, government troops delayed chasing RENAMO guerrillas while they looted from villagers.[135] In fact, some government troops were more concerned with getting plunder rather than protecting civilians. As one government war veteran recalled how;

131 Interview: Author with AA Buque, Maputo Province, 17 May 2018; HV Massangaie, Zavala District, Inhambane Province, 19 April 2019.

132 Interview: Author with A Chiponde, Zavala District, Inhambane Province, 20 December 2018.

133 Author's reminiscence of war in Zavala District, Inhambane Province, 1980-1992.

134 See, B Munslow, "Mozambique and the Death of Machel", *Third World Quarterly* 10 (1), 1988, p.29; G William, "The Mozambique Crisis: A Case for United Nations Military Intervention", *Cornell International Law Journal* 24 (1), p.1991.

135 Interview: Author with VJ Massangaie; Interview: Author with CC Noa, Maputo Province, 15 October 2013.

> there was a time when we were tired and demoralised. We did not receive regular supplies, including food. Villagers would come to report the presence of RENAMO guerrillas, but we wouldn't chase them immediately. We waited until they extracted some food from local shops or populations and then chased them. We knew they would leave some food behind.[136]

This testimony confirms Robinson finding that in the late 1980s, the government acknowledged that FAM members were involved in assaulting convoys of food destined to internally displaced people and victims of prolonged drought.[137] These actions had a devastating impact on civilians and the rural economy. Villagers saw their cattle depleted by soldiers and certain people, particularly mineworkers, became the soldiers' preferred targets. The experience of João Mangunhane is an example of how government troops were also involved in assaulting civilians:

> Near Mapinhane, mineworkers were the main target of FRELIMO troops. João Mangunhane battalion ambushed mineworker in N1. They took his clothes. Without knowing, one soldier took the stolen objects to the house of the very same mineworker they had assaulted. In the following day, the mineworker arrived home. He told his wife that he had been attacked and his car was torched. When he looked around his room, he saw a bag of potatoes and his radio. He said, "that is my radio, where did you get it?" The wife replied that a soldier had asked her to keep it. 'This is my radio, he said, if I am lying look at the type record". He went to commando to file a complaint. João was expelled from the army. As I speak today, João is still alive and votes RENAMO. He came here with RENAMO politicians to campaign.[138]

## 4. CONCLUSION

This paper explored the dynamics of warfare and armed groups in post-colonial Mozambique. Building from studies on combat ethnohistory particularly Nordstrom and Harri Englund,[139] and especially Lubkemann's theory of war as a social condition and her rejection of the idea of a single Mozambican civil war, it acknowledges the complexity of civilians and military relationship in wartime.[140] The testimony of witnesses demonstrates the dependency of both government and RENAMO guerrillas on civilians. This contrasts with the government narrative about both government and RENAMO

136 Interview: Author with D Chibique, Mabote District, Inhambane Province, 20 August 2013.
137 Robinson, Curse on the Land-History, p.329.
138 Interview: Author with CA Nhachale, Tanguane, Mabote District, 16 August 2013.
139 Nordstrom, *A different Kind of War Story;* H Englund, *From War to Peace on the Mozambique-Malawi Borderland* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).
140 Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos.*

logistics and morale. Therefore, those who claim that the independence of Zimbabwe, the Nkomati Non-Aggression Pact and the end of apartheid in South Africa left no room for successful military rebellion in Mozambique fail to acknowledge that wars are fought with a complex combination of means that are not necessarily military.

Evidence from the fieldwork confirmed Cahen's argument that the Nkomati Accord "had the opposite effect to what FRELIMO expected: RENAMO ended up settling wholly in Mozambique, and the war consequently became a countrywide civil conflict".[141] Thus, the continuation of war showed that it depended on diverse factors, including the contribution of civilians and natural endowment. This state of affairs compels scholars to rethink the nature of civil wars and helps to explain the almost decade long delay in achieving peace in Mozambique. Shifting from previous studies which focused on the role of external forces and over-relied on data collected in central Mozambique,[142] this paper demonstrated that in southern Mozambique, civilians played an significant role in sustaining the war. The experience of southern Mozambique complements recent studies, particularly by Emerson who also shows that, contrary to pro-government propaganda, the Mozambican state also lacked sufficient resources to wage the war.[143] Like RENAMO, the government forces depended on the contribution of villagers for its logistics. As the war endured for 16 long years, both government and RENAMO military forces lost morale and capacity to fight. Instead, they resorted to violence to extract food staples and other resources. The only difference between government troops and RENAMO guerrillas is that the former had the backup of state media which controlled the narrative of the war experiences, internally and externally. This contributed significantly in the way RENAMO was perceived as lacking any tangible political project and as solely responsible for atrocities against civilians.

Moreover, unlike RENAMO, despite being unreliable, government troops had salaries and could expect to receive regular supplies from the state budget. They were also under the scrutiny of civilians who could report their malpractices to state authorities. This differentiated the relationship between the belligerents and civilians slightly, but both were dependent on civilians to wage war. Thus, what is often described as a hotspot of Cold War in Southern Africa or a war of aggression by the apartheid regime was, in practice, a peoples' war with devastating, yet varied impacts on peoples' livelihoods.

141 Cahen, "The War as Seen by RENAMO", p.107.
142 Hanlon, *The Revolution under Fire;* Love, *Southern Africa in the World Politics;* Vines, *Renamo*; Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*; Orogun, "Plunder, Predation and Profiteering".
143 Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique.*

AUTHOR:
Lotti Nkomo[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Post-Doctoral Fellow, International Studies Group, University of the Free State

EMAIL:
lottinkomo@gmail.com

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.7

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):152-180

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

# WINDS OF SMALL CHANGE: CHIEFS, CHIEFLY POWERS, EVOLVING POLITICS AND THE STATE IN ZIMBABWE, 1985–1999.

ABSTRACT

*In 1980, the independence government of Zimbabwe adopted a political and administrative policy which was hostile to chiefs. The charge was that chieftaincy was backward, unproductive, undemocratic, and a "sellout" institution that had sided with the colonial system. Consequently, chieftaincy was relegated to the fringes of the state, whereby it lost its authority over grassroots judicial and land affairs, a key marker of its power and status. However, from 1985 the government began to court the chiefs by, among other ways, ceasing hostile rhetoric and promising to return them their "original" powers. The scholarship has mainly explained this shift in terms of growing political opposition, among other factors that challenged the government's legitimacy. This article examines the relationship between chiefs and government from 1985 to 1999. Building on literature that has emphasised the government's motives for turning to chiefs, it considers whether chiefs got their powers back. It argues that the state did not cede back to chiefs the powers they yearned for and continued to keep them at the margins of its administrative processes. It mainly sought chiefs' legitimating and mobilising capabilities in the context of waning political fortunes. By the close of the 1990s, chiefs were still battling to get their land and judicial powers back.*

**Keywords:** *Chiefs; traditional leaders; government; Zimbabwe; ZANU-PF; history; politics*

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch



## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1985, after five years of open hostility against chiefs, the post-independence government of Zimbabwe was compelled by various sets of

circumstances to reconsider its position.[1] It restructured laws and policies that affected chiefs and grassroots judicial and land administration and adopted pro-chiefs rhetoric. The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) was set on mending its strained relationship with chiefs.[2] Its central promise was the substantial restoration of chiefly authority over rural judicial and land affairs – key markers of chiefs' power and status. Chiefs had lost these powers at independence on the grounds of government's modernisation and democratisation drive. It was also a retributive exercise against the chiefs' entanglement with the colonial state, particularly during the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) years.[3] Furthermore, as it advocated a socialist transformation, as David Maxwell noted, ZANU-PF "had little time for patriarchal authorities" like chiefs.[4]

However, from the mid-1980s, in addition to making legal and administrative concessions, the government also abandoned its generalised characterisation of chiefs as colonial collaborators and chieftaincy as a "backward, unproductive, and undemocratic institution" that constrained progress.[5] In its stead, it deployed for the ensuing 15 years Rhodesian-era-like rhetoric which touted chieftaincy as indispensable, and chiefs as the real representatives of the people, supporters of the liberation struggle, and custodians of Zimbabwe's land, cultures and values. There was, clearly, a radical break with the past in ZANU-PF's chiefly politics.

---

1 Chiefs are the highest embodiment of the "traditional", cultural and spiritual leadership recognised by the government in rural areas. Therefore, they are considered key social leaders; The terms "chiefs" and "chieftaincy" are a source of political and academic debate. However, they are in common usage in Zimbabwe by government, chiefs and the general public. I adopt them here not to disregard the various connotations that they may carry, but because they allow for flexibility in discussing the subject matter at hand. J Williams, *Chieftaincy, the state and democracy: Political legitimacy in post-apartheid South Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 5, also prefers these terms for they "allow for a more fluid narrative".

2 "ZANU-PF" and "government" are used interchangeably because of the deep conflation of the two in terms of leadership and functions. The party continues to dominate the government and to direct government policy, in addition to its unrestricted access to state resources.

3 The emasculation of chiefs upon attaining independence was common across Africa. See, for example, T Ranger, *Peasant consciousness and guerrilla war in Zimbabwe: A comparative study* (London: James Currey, 1985); E Gonçalves, "Finding the chief: Traditional authority and decentralisation in Mozambique", *Africa Insight* 35 (3), 2005, pp. 64–70; R Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the chiefs: The politics of chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951-60* (Accra: F. Reimmer, 2000).

4 D Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs in Zimbabwe: A social history of the Hwesa people, 1870s–1990s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 151.

5 J Alexander, "The politics of states and chiefs in Zimbabwe". In: J Comaroff and J Comaroff (eds.), *The politics of custom: Chiefship, capital and the state in contemporary Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 142.

Several factors made it easy for the state to re-establish the lost connection with chieftaincy. First, from the early days of independence, chiefs themselves had protested their relegation and campaigned for closer association with the state.[6] Second, ordinary villagers, for historical, cultural and existential reasons, largely continued to accord respect to chiefs. Villagers still took their various grievances to chiefs, requested them to settle their disputes, and approached them for land, sometimes by-passing state-supported institutions such as primary courts, Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs). These institutions had been tasked with overseeing grassroots judicial and land affairs.[7] Third, while a section of the party and government pushed for the weakening of chieftaincy, another element supported the institution, mainly emphasising the state's reconciliation policy and the importance of chiefs to social stability.[8] Fourth, even those who supported the isolation of chieftaincy did not suggest that the state abolish or completely delink from the institution. In view of the Rhodesian situation, whereby the Rhodesian Front regime resorted to traditional leaders to cushion itself from nationalist politics, it can be surmised that perhaps some had calculated that ZANU-PF would need the help of chiefs in future in the event of political and electoral pressures.[9] Last, socialism, which ZANU-PF had touted to be the guiding ideology in governing the country, and which it claimed was incompatible with chieftaincy, never actually took off the ground.[10]

6 D Lan, *Guns and rain: Guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985), p. 14.

7 M Bourdillon, *The Shona peoples* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987), p. 111; L Nkomo, Chiefs and government in post-colonial Zimbabwe (MA, University of the Free State, 2015), p. 64.

8 See, *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 March 1988, col. 109, Richard Shambambeva-Nyandoro; J Alexander, *The unsettled land: State-making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1893-2003* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2006), p. 167.

9 See, J Frederikse, *None but ourselves: Masses versus the media in the making of Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), pp. 76–82 for how the Rhodesian Front enlisted chiefs as political allies in the 1960s and 1970s; After all some independent African states had begun to enlist chiefs for political support under the guise of "authenticity" and "returning to the earth". See, for example, C Young and T Turner, *The rise and decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 210–212; I predominantly use the term "chiefs" in the paper. However, I occasionally resort to "traditional leaders" when referring to the entire hierarchy of chiefs, headmen and village heads.

10 See, T Meisenhelder, "The decline of socialism in Zimbabwe", *Social Justice* 21 (4), 1994, pp. 83–101; ZANU-PF, *1980 election manifesto* (Harare: ZANU-PF, 1980), pp. 4–5, boldly declares the party's commitment to socialism. Broadly, proponents of socialism accused chiefs of being, among other things, elitist puppets of the colonial system, undemocratic, patriarchal, divisive, tribalistic, and backward. See, M Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (London: James Currey, 1996); L Ntsebeza, *Democracy compromised: Chiefs and the politics of the land in South Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Therefore, in light of this combination of factors, the state began courting the chiefs at the beginning of the second half of the 1980s, and the base was always set for their return. Neither static nor closed, chieftaincy is perpetually exposed to political pressures. Cyclically, it is co-opted, rejected and reordered according to the prevailing political aspirations of the government of the day. As established by Wim van Binsbergen and Andrew Ainslie and Thembela Kepe, it was not uncommon across Africa for politically-struggling governments to, after initial rejection of chiefs, make a *volte-face* as they sought to exploit the proven mobilising capabilities of chiefs.[11] The ZANU-PF regime was no exception.

This article joins the discussion on the post-independence relationship between chiefs and government in Zimbabwe.[12] Scholars largely concur that after its initial sidelining of chiefs in the first five years of independence, from 1985, the state began to make overtures to chieftaincy in search of more cordial relations.[13] As Maxwell demonstrated, as in the late colonial era, there was a political dimension to this development – ZANU-PF politicians sought to reactivate potential sources of legitimacy that it had previously sidelined.[14] It is revealing that the new direction was made in the run-up to the 1985 general elections. This was mainly because dissident activities and South Africa's destabilisation campaign were affecting Zimbabwe, the struggling economy was beginning to stoke public disgruntlement and the independence euphoria was waning, among other issues. ZANU-PF's hegemony was increasingly being tested. As Maxwell reasoned, the revived concern for chiefs, also

11 W van Binsbergen, "Chiefs in independent Zambia: Exploring the Zambian national press", *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 19 (25), 1987, pp. 139–201; A Ainslie and T Kepe, "Understanding the resurgence of traditional authorities in post-apartheid South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42 (1), 2015, pp. 1–14.

12 These include J Alexander, "Things fall apart, the centre can hold: Processes of post-war political change in Zimbabwe's rural areas". In: L Lauridsen (ed.), *Bringing institutions back in: The role of institutions in civil society, state and economy* (Roskilde: Roskilde University Press, 1993), p. 37; A Ladley, "Just spirits?: In search of tradition in the customary law courts in Zimbabwe", Paper presented at the International Symposium on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism, University of Ottawa, 1990; V Chakunda and A Chikerema, "Indigenisation of democracy: Harnessing traditional leadership in promoting democratic values in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Power, Politics and Governance* 2 (1), 2014, pp. 67–78; T Ranger, "Democracy and traditional political structures in Zimbabwe 1890–1999". In: N Bhebe and T Ranger (eds.), *The historical dimensions of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe, Volume 1: Pre-colonial and colonial legacies* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2001), pp. 31–52.

13 This differs with Jeffrey Kurebwa's contention that the government's stance towards traditional leadership institutions only "changed in the second decade of independence". See, J Kurebwa, "The capture of traditional leaders by political parties in Zimbabwe for political expediency". In: S Chhabra (ed.), *Civic engagement in social and political constructs* (Hershey Park: IGI Global, 2020), p. 206.

14 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 151.

emerged at a time the state's rural development strategy was floundering and its ability to mobilise the rural constituency was weakening.[15] The party feared that the continued marginalisation of chiefs would not only leave rural areas without a base to mobilise against the invasion of radical opposition politics but would also drive them into hostile alliances.

However, this article focuses less on the state's motivations for realigning the relations. Indeed, by adopting the Chiefs and Headmen Act (1988), Customary Law and Local Courts Act (1990), and the Traditional Leaders Act (1998), among other instruments, the state's focus was overwhelmingly on winning wider legitimacy premised on the political support of chiefs rather than ameliorating chieftaincy's pre-1985 position. The article has considered whether the state kept its promise to reinstate chiefly powers. What has emerged is that it did not cede much. As in the first five years of independence, during the subsequent 15 years leading to 2000 chieftaincy remained on the administrative fringes of the Zimbabwean state with roles limited to effecting state-drafted plans. If chiefs endeavoured to gain wider roles in land and judicial affairs, this article argues, it was largely a futile exercise. ZANU-PF sought the revival of the alliance without delivering much on the powers chiefs yearned for, preferring planning on a technocratic basis.[16] What is clear, this article concurs with Maxwell, is that the government recognised that chieftaincy had "far from lost its significance" in the eyes of their people and, therefore, still had significant influence over the grassroots.[17]

A wide range of debates concerning chiefs in post-independence Africa has greatly informed this study. Lungisile Ntsebeza and Mahmood Mamdani have led the charge that, hereditary, chieftaincy operates in a "despotic customary sphere", is divisive, reduces rural people to subjects rather than citizens and is, therefore, "a threat to progress".[18] In addition, chiefs are prone to state-sponsored patronage politics which has rendered them more accountable to the state than to the people they lead. Across colonial Africa, in defending their patronage benefits some chiefs, for instance, became

15 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, pp. 174, 222.

16 The basis for chiefs' demands for enhanced powers over land was historical rather than legal. In the pre-colonial era, chiefs were deemed to be "custodians" of the land. Claiming ancestral sanction, they held the land in trust for their people and were the final authority on matters pertaining to the use and possession of land. See L Palagashvili "African chiefs: comparative governance under colonial rule", *Public Choice* 174 (3), 2018, pp. 286–287; Ø Eggen, "Chiefs and everyday governance: Parallel state organisations in Malawi", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37 (2), 2011, p. 321.

17 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 150.

18 Mamdani, *Citizen and subject,* pp. 109–137; L Ntsebeza, "Democratisation and traditional authorities in the new South Africa", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 19 (1), 1999, pp. 83–87.

apathetic to liberation struggles.[19] It is partly for this reason that, as observed by Euclides Gonçalves and Louise Fortmann, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, among other African countries, banned, weakened or stopped recognising traditional leadership institutions at independence.[20]

In the post-independence era, chiefs have mainly been in alliance with ruling regimes. While sometimes perceived as a crucial agent of social development, stability and peace, Tompson Makahamadze *et al.* have argued that chiefs can also be a source of fear in the eyes of villagers. They have overseen violence, denied people legitimate access to resources and services, and banished villagers linked to opposition politics, among other things, on behalf of beleaguered governments.[21] By seeking to force people into certain political behaviours, traditional leaders impede development and violate people's rights. Indeed, John Makumbe has demonstrated that, as regime change ideas tend to originate in urban areas, governments will seek to halt their diffusion into the largely conservative and electorally reliable rural areas.[22] Therefore, chiefs are considered well-placed for this task, particularly because of "the limits of state power to organise directly".[23] As Lotti Nkomo observed, the value of chiefs to ZANU-PF's power-retention agenda lay in the fact that they were closer to their subjects than most administrative and political officials, who were separated from their rural constituencies by both class and geography.[24]

Of interest to scholars has also been chieftaincy's remarkable "resilience" and ability to adapt in the context of historical, political and administrative pressures, mainly from the state. Carolyn Logan and Joey

19 A Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils in Rhodesia: Transition from patriarchal to bureaucratic power* (London: Heinemann, 1971), preface; J Holleman, *Chief, council and commissioner: Some problems of government in Rhodesia* (Assen: Royal VanGorcum, 1968), p. 346–348; A van Nieuwaal, "States and chiefs: Are chiefs mere puppets", *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 28 (37), 1996, pp. 39–78.

20 Gonçalves, "Finding the chief", p. 1; Generally, L Fortmann, *Peasants, officials and participation in rural Tanzania: Experience with villagisation and decentralisation* (New York: Cornell University, 1980).

21 T Makahamadze *et al*., "The role of traditional leaders in fostering democracy, justice and human rights in Zimbabwe", *African Anthropologist* 16 (1), 2009, pp. 33–47.

22 J Makumbe, "Local authorities and traditional leadership". In: J de Visser *et al*. (eds.), *Local government reform in Zimbabwe: A policy dialogue* (Bellville: Community Law Centre, 2010), p. 94.

23 Kurebwa, "The capture of traditional leaders", p. 198.

24 Nkomo, Chiefs and government, p. 87; Across Africa the return to chiefs by post-independence governments was often in the context of unsuccessful policies, poor economic performance, exhausted nationalism, and internal conflicts, among other pressures. See, for example, Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 183; Broadly, P Geschiere, "African chiefs and the cold war moment: Millenial capitalism and the struggle over moral authority". In: J Comaroff and J Comaroff, *The politics of custom: Chiefship, capital, and the state in contemporary Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 49–78.

Power observed that despite being disempowered, banned or losing recognition in various post-independence states, chieftaincy, due to varying factors, has survived and re-emerged as an important actor on the socio-political landscape.[25] Furthermore, traditional leadership institutions cannot be easily wished away as they are intimately embedded in the African social, cultural and political fabric. This study builds on these debates to tell the story of chiefs and government relations in Zimbabwe between the mid-1980s and the end of the 1990s.

## 2. RHETORIC AND THE RENEWED INTEREST IN CHIEFS

From the second half of the 1980s, ZANU-PF began to reconsider its hostile position towards chieftaincy. It reconfigured its rhetoric to recast their colonial history in a manner that sought to boost chiefs' deflated political, administrative and social status. The narrative of chiefs as "sellouts" and "anachronisms" began to be replaced by a glut of conciliatory terms such as "real custodians of the land", "heroes of the liberation struggle", "guardians of our culture", "pillars of social cohesion and stability", and "partners in development", among others.[26] ZANU-PF members and government officials who were slow in adopting the new position were castigated for lacking appreciation of the historical, cultural and developmental roles of chieftaincy. For example, in August 1987 Senator Patrick Chinamasa was widely rebuked by his fellow ZANU-PF parliamentarians for contemptuously suggesting that, "Chiefs have no role to play in modern administration and politics".[27] Indeed, the relationship between chiefs and government had entered another historical phase.

Since independence ZANU-PF has relied on history to gain legitimacy. As Terrence Ranger observed, history has been, "at the centre of politics in Zimbabwe far more than in any other southern African country".[28] As the party pointed to history in order to justify its exclusion of chiefs at independence, it also resorted to history to explain their reincorporation after 1985. For example, in 1988 ZANU-PF legislator Richard Shambambeva-Nyandoro, in one of the conveniently reworked versions of the liberation war, claimed that

25 C Logan, "The roots of resilience: Exploring popular support for African traditional authorities", *Afrobarometer working paper series*, 128, 2011, p. 1; J Power, "Chieftaincy in Malawi: Reinvention, re-emergence or resilience? A Kasungu case study", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46 (2), 2020, pp. 263–264.

26 This rhetoric by government and party officials was invariably captured in public speeches, newspapers and parliamentary debates.

27 *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August 1987, col. 22, Patrick Chinamasa.

28 T Ranger, "Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (2), 2004, p. 34.

"had it not been for chiefs, this country would not have been independent in 1980. Chiefs played a crucial role, together with spirit mediums, politicians and fighters".[29] Even the history of known wartime "collaborationist" chiefs was redefined to suit the new political agenda. For instance, in the 1970s Chirau Communal Lands' Chief Jeremiah Chirau was widely presented by ZANU-PF as a "stooge" of the UDI government.[30] However, at Chirau's funeral in 1985, President Robert Mugabe eulogised that Chief Chirau was "quick to learn from his mistakes and realise the true national character of the struggle".[31] In the same year, at the funeral of Umzingwane's Chief Sigola, another perceived loyalist of the Smith regime, ZANU-PF Speaker of Parliament, Nolan Makombe, described him as a person who "refused to be compromised by being co-opted into anti-people alliances with the Rhodesian government. He stood firm on the side of the masses, sometimes at great personal peril, to those who had taken up arms to liberate their army and people".[32] Yet Chief Sigola was among the Smith delegation to Winston Churchill's funeral, was elected into the Chiefs' Council, and was a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, all this "in recognition of his hard work" on both the political and administrative fronts of the colonial government.[33] Whether such chiefs really became "political born-agains" is yet to be established. What is clear, however, is ZANU-PF's shifting position with regards to chiefs.

Government and ZANU-PF officials took turns to apologise to chiefs for withdrawing their land and judicial powers at independence. The rhetoric came to revolve around the restoration of such powers. In 1990, Minister of Local Government, Joseph Msika, urged chiefs to accept this apology because "people in government are ordinary people, like anyone else they learn things. If they discover that a mistake has been made, the mistake is corrected […] We learnt by experience that we could not exclude the chiefs completely from the administration of this country".[34] The rejuvenated notions of "culture", "tradition", and overstated expressions about a merry pre-colonial past – whereby chiefs were social and political leaders in "harmonious" societies – replaced the adverse characterisation of chiefs.

The government's new cordiality towards chiefs continued throughout the 1990s. In 1995, Deputy Minister of Local Government, Tony Gara, appealed to Makoni chiefs and headmen "to use all traditional means at

29 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Independence Day celebrations speech by Makoni DA, 18 April 1987.
30 Frederikse, *None but ourselves*, pp. 76–79.
31 *Herald*, 28 January 1985.
32 *Herald*, 12 February 1991.
33 Frederikse, *None but ourselves*, pp. 76–82, gives considerable attention to how, particularly the Smith government, used patronage politics to win chiefs like Chirau and Sigola to its side.
34 *Parliamentary Debates*, 12 December 1990, col. 1016, Joseph Msika.

their disposal to pray for rains, given the gripping drought facing Chief Chingaira's territory".[35] Chiefly cultural and spiritual ceremonies, for long overseen by junior personnel, became national showpieces attracting senior government and party officials. In 1996, Minister of Local Government, John Nkomo, led a delegation to a traditional cleansing ceremony at Chief Chiduku's Mutungagore Village. It was to seek "guidance" and "assistance" from ancestral spirits and chiefs. Nkomo situated Chief Chiduku at the centre of the process, and described him as "the father-figure in the chiefdom. He can speak directly with the ancestors and could intercede with them to ensure the coming of the rain".[36] Senior government officials, including the president, became regular attendees at chiefs' installation ceremonies. Chiefs, who for long were eager to be in good books of the state, appreciated these gestures. Explained Chief Makoni,

> It is true that ZANU leaders consulted chiefs when they decided to start the war. We thought after the war they would come back to thank us and the gods, but they never did. But now they are beginning to give us attention. This is a sign that the government is awakening to the importance of chiefs and culture.[37]

While it was not inclined to concede the centrality of political motivations, ZANU-PF sometimes let slip of the reasons for turning to chiefs. In 1996, in the midst of growing anti-government sentiment characterised by labour strikes, its election manifesto responded by stating that, "always in times of stress people return to their roots, to their culture, to look for the right path".[38] It had to invoke and deploy "tradition", "culture" and traditional leaders in order to legitimate its rule and to tame hostile political forces.

## 3. HALF-HEARTED RESTORATION OF CHIEFS' JUDICIAL POWERS

Government's advances towards chieftaincy were also evident on the judicial front. Since 1980, chiefs had explicitly expressed their desire to retain control of rural courts which had been displaced by primary and community courts.[39]

35 *Herald*, 17 October 1995.
36 *Herald,* 9 June 1996.
37 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of meeting to Makoni District chiefs, 12 May 1998, col. 1659.
38 ZANU-PF, *ZANU-PF presidential election manifesto: ZANU-PF and the 1996 presidential election* (Harare: ZANU-PF, 1996), p. 16.
39 In the context of the intensifying tide of nationalist politics, the Rhodesian government had, through the African Law and Tribal Courts Act (1969), boosted chiefs' judicial powers,

They had always claimed these as their exclusive domain in the pre-colonial era. In 1987 Chief Mangwende, invoking history, said in this regard,

> Before the coming of the white man […] [the chief] was the chief judicial officer […] the centre of every activity in his district. He passed sentences in the courts. Now one wonders who could have done this sort of job apart from the chief. It is obvious that it is the chief who could do this and that it was his responsibility and duty.[40]

Chief Tandi also reminisced about the judicial status of chiefs in the pre-colonial era, "Chiefs tried criminal and civil cases and their judgments were fair […] They may take the courts in towns, but those in rural areas should be ours".[41] Chiefs held that without control of grassroots courts, they were largely "figureheads".[42] Occasionally the concerns of chiefs assumed a political dimension. For example, in the late-1980s Katerere chiefs protested their loss of judicial powers to "wild" community courts and pronounced that this was "because of President Mugabe", and that "what the government did is unlawful".[43] Such sentiments unsettled ZANU-PF and forced it to react.

Unlike in 1980, the 1985 ZANU-PF election campaign highlighted the importance of chiefs to the Zimbabwean society.[44] This renewed interest was capped by the promise to return to chiefs their old courts.[45] In 1987 Mugabe announced that his government was "working on legislation so as to assimilate chiefs into the judicial system".[46] Indeed, in 1988 the Customary Law and Local Courts Bill was introduced ostensibly to give back to traditional leaders their jurisdiction over community and primary courts. As Moven Mahachi, Makoni West ZANU-PF legislator explained in 1990, this intervention was a "response to practical realities", a "giant step towards bringing our chiefs and headmen back into their rightful place", and an encouragement for people to "settle their differences in a system which they understand".[47]

Despite such legislative overtures, there was negligible change in the overall status of chiefs as regards their roles and powers. Alexander's assertion that chiefs officially regained control over grassroots courts in

particularly over civil and criminal cases. Chiefs attained a status higher than a police constable.

40 *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September 1987, col. 558, Chief Jonathan Mangwende.

41 Interview: Author with Chief Tandi, Rusape, 29 July 2014.

42 A Ladley, "Just spirits?: In search of tradition in the customary law courts in Zimbabwe", Paper presented at the *International Symposium on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism*, Ottawa, August, 1990, p. 15.

43 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 181.

44 ZANU-PF, *ZANU-PF 1985 election manifesto* (Harare: Jongwe Printers, 1985).

45 Alexander, "Things fall apart", p. 37.

46 *Herald*, 3 March 1987.

47 Chief Chipunza's personal file, Speech by Moven Mahachi at a ZANU-PF campaign rally, Rusape, 19 March 1990.

1990 should be qualified.[48] From the early days of the introduction of the Customary Law and Local Courts Act the sentiment in the chiefly ranks was that the powers given to them were more apparent than real.[49] For instance, they had no jurisdiction over many types of cases, including those involving incest, bride price, and child maintenance and custody, which were reserved for magistrates' courts. Chiefs raised both practical and cultural objections, particularly against restrictions in family law. In Makoni district, for instance, they queried how, in the case of incest, "young boys [magistrates] in Rusape, full of only book knowledge, could have the power to cleanse the culprits".[50] Ancestors, they claimed, would disapprove of magisterial processes in such issues. Chiefs could not also handle a wide range of criminal cases, including stock theft, rape, murder, assault, poaching, among others. In 1990 Chief Chipunza protested through the District Administrator (DA) that "magistrates, not chiefs, have now become more powerful", as the Local Courts Bill did not permit them to preside over those cases which "most of our people regard as falling under traditional law".[51] Even if a case was within the jurisdiction of chiefs, people were not compelled to initiate cases with them. As such, some village litigants by-passed the chiefs' courts to initiate their cases at higher courts.[52] They could also appeal chiefs' judgments at "modern" courts. Chief Chipunza recalled an incident in 1991 when a villager refused to be tried by his court, accusing the chief of targeting his livestock "to satisfy his insatiable appetite for meat".[53] The villager, instead, chose to be heard by the magistrates' court. Another one was told by a villager he had found guilty that his court was "full of uneducated people who do not know what they are doing". He told the chief's court that, as such, he was going to appeal against the judgement "at proper courts".[54]

The monetary jurisdiction was also restrictive for chiefs. In 1992, for example, they could not preside over cases involving a monetary value of

48 Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 166.

49 Makoni DA files, Minutes of a meeting between Makoni chiefs and RDC chairman, 22 September 1991.

50 Interview: Author with Chief Tandi, Rusape, 25 February 2015.

51 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of the Manicaland PDC meeting, 30 April 1990; Chiefs were already grappling with the Age of Majority Act (1982), which they wanted repealed for it challenged the broader patriarchal system by allowing marriages without the consent of in-laws and women to enter into legal contracts, and by reducing the age of majority from 21 to 18, aspects they claimed encouraged social decay.

52 Interview: Author with Chief Tandi, Rusape, 25 February 2015.

53 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014. At chiefs' courts, fines are usually paid in the form of livestock. While some of it goes to the complainant, some of it is retained by the chief. However, the guilty party sometimes have to provide a goat for consumption by the gathering.

54 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.

more than $1 000, either in property involved or in fines.[55] Such cases were the jurisdiction of magistrates' or higher courts. The fines were normally in terms of livestock. In 1992 the average cost of a cow in Makoni District was $600.[56] Chiefs could not, therefore, impose fines of more than one cow. While the government periodically reviewed such monetary limits in response to inflation, the process was highly bureaucratised. Figures set upon by a review would almost instantaneously be eroded by inflation. Consequently, the hamstrung chiefs' courts were forced to refer even petty cases to higher courts. According to Chief Chipunza, their courts were left "with no job to do" while magistrates' courts were "flooded with cases that belonged to us".[57] This situation continued throughout the 1990s.

It appears the government was reluctant to cede to chiefs any significant judicial powers. In addition to the factors mentioned in preceding paragraphs, there was a great deal of foot-dragging in passing or implementing even those pieces of legislation that only marginally enhanced the powers of chiefs. A relatively long period passed before each stage of a bill was cleared, that is, introducing the bill, debating and passing it, and getting the presidential assent. For example, when Mugabe promised chiefs new legislation in 1985, it took five years for the Customary Law and Local Courts Bill (1990) to be adopted by Parliament. Two more years lapsed before presidential assent could be obtained. As regards the Bill, Chief Rusambo of Rushinga District was concerned that "the pipeline seems to have got longer and longer".[58] It is in this vein that some frustrated chiefs unilaterally and illegally assumed some judicial roles in their areas. Said Chief Mangwende in 1991,

> Last year a bill was passed which enabled the chiefs to get back their powers, but up to now it is still in the pipeline […] When shall we get back our powers? Right now some chiefs are already practicing these powers, but if caught practicing before the powers are warranted, they will be sued.[59]

The bill only received presidential assent in 1992, seven years after the idea had been formulated.

55 *Herald*, 24 March 1992; All currency mentioned is in Zimbabwe dollars.
56 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.
57 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 26 August 2015.
58 *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August 1989, col. 151, Chief Patrick Rusambo.
59 *Parliamentary Debates*, 5 July 1991, col. 755–756, Chief Jonathan Mangwende.

## 4. THE "TECHNOCRATIC" STATE AND CONTINUED EXCLUSION OF CHIEFS FROM LAND ADMINISTRATION

Chiefs' relations with the post-independence government were also defined by their desire to retain effective control over rural land. At independence in 1980, ZANU-PF divested chiefs of all the authority they had over land. In 1967 the Rhodesian state had, through the Tribal Trust Land Act, returned to chiefs the power to allocate land in "communal" areas.[60] The appeasement was not least in order to entice chiefs to help ward off the forces of African nationalism. So chiefs' demands for power after independence were two-fold. Short of the restoration of their pre-colonial era powers, they demanded a return to, at least, their 1967 position.

Yet, the independence land administration strategy introduced by Eddison Zvobgo, the Minister of Local Government and Housing, barred chiefs from allocating land, whether for grazing, ploughing or settlement. Chiefs could not also dispossess villagers of their land or shift them around. In this respect, as David Lan opined, the government subjected traditional leaders to more rigorous and hostile legislation than "they had ever experienced in the past."[61] The Tribal Trust Land Act was replaced by the Communal Land Act (1981), which transferred their land responsibilities to Rural District Councils (RDCs). The District Councils Act (1980), whose main import was to consolidate the 220 African Councils into 55 district councils, further curtailed the role of chiefs in rural administration.[62] For chiefs who participated in RDCs, their status was merely *ex-officio*.

This administrative philosophy was within the framework of VIDCOs and WADCOs. Being "on the ground", they became the basic unit of administration in rural areas. They were important in mobilising the grassroots for development projects largely drawn by technocrats and the party hierarchy. Beyond this, VIDCOs and WADCOs, composed mainly of ZANU-PF cadres, were partly a product of the party's quest to substitute individuals and institutions that previously worked against it. But ZANU-PF preferred referring to their emergence as a fulfilment of its promise of grassroots democracy.[63]

60 See, P Nyambara, "Immigrants, "traditional" leaders and the Rhodesian state: The power of "communal" land tenure and the politics of land acquisition in Gokwe, Zimbabwe, 1963–1979", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27 (4), 2001, pp. 778–781.

61 D Lan, *Guns and rain: Guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985), p. 228.

62 V Thebe, "New realities and tenure reforms: Land-use in worker-peasant communities of south-western Zimbabwe, (1940s–2006)". In: D Moore *et al*. (eds.), "*Progress in Zimbabwe?": The past and present of a concept and a country* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 113.

63 *Herald,* 23 June 1984.

Referred to by Ranger as the new "chiefs", VIDCO and WADCO leadership appropriated many of the responsibilities known to belong to traditional leaders.[64] Consequently, chiefs did no more than, for example, ensuring that land identified for settlement did not contain graves or was not sacred.[65] As their recommendations to district councils were disregardable, chieftaincy was largely rendered titular.[66]

Chiefs never hid their disdain for the "exclusionary" land policy of the government. They had always claimed to be the "autochthonous owners" of the land.[67] In 1988 Chief Tandi told the Manicaland Development Committee's (MDC) Provincial Strategic Review Workshop that "you cannot be a chief without the powers to administer and allocate land, these two go hand in hand. Without these powers we are reduced to nothing".[68] In 1995 Chief Mangwende, mobilising his peers to protest their diminished status in land affairs, told an RDC meeting that "the chief is the soil and the soil is the chief. It is wrong to separate the two, why are you removing us from issues of land".[69]

However, while the government was not keen to enhance chiefs' authority over land, and insisted on a technocratic approach to rural governance, political imperatives demanded that it responds to chiefs' concerns. But it had to win chiefs through little more than promises. This generated within government ambiguities and contradictions between policy, practise and rhetoric. Pro-chiefs and largely populist rhetoric by ZANU-PF politicians continued to sit side by side with the rejection of chieftaincy-based claims to land.[70] ZANU-PF Senator Adam Wenyimo lamented that without land powers,

> It is going to make it very difficult for any chief to function. At installation processes, the chief is made to handle the soil. You hold the soil, but you cannot administer it [….] You will have to stop calling an area [for instance] Mutasa's area because it means that is where chief Mutasa administers.[71]

64 Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*, p. 340.
65 Interview: Author with Chief Chiduku, Rusape, 22 July 2014.
66 Interview: Author with anonymous former Mukuwapasi VIDCO secretary, Rusape, 27 July 2014.
67 J Alexander, "Modernisation, tradition and control. Local and national struggles over authority and land: A case of Chimanimani District, Zimbabwe", Manuscript, Oxford University, 1990, p. 2.
68 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of the Manicaland PDC, Provincial Strategic Review Meeting, March 1988.
69 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of the National Chiefs' Council meeting, 18 May 1995.
70 Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 115.
71 *Parliamentary Debates*, 5 December 1989, col. 909, Adam Wenyimo.

However, chiefs' land aspirations had to continue to contend with the government's insistence on planning led by "trained and knowledgeable people".[72] In addition to rural land, chiefs also demanded authority over resettlement land adjoining or near their areas. As regards Makoni District, soon after independence the government acquired land in Mayo and Romsley areas for resettlement purposes.[73] When Chief Makoni tried to assume jurisdiction over these lands, the government declined, insisting on "planned and organised" management of land.[74] As early as 1981 the Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development had advised that it was "not in the interest of sound administration to cede such processes to chiefs. The government already had the best machinery to do that".[75]

When the Rural District Councils Act Bill was tabled in the late-1980s, it reignited chiefs' hopes of enhanced participation in land administration. They believed that since their relations with the state were on the mend, the reworking of various legislation governing land would be in their favour. As Chief Mangwende stated in late 1986, "I would like to thank President Mugabe for listening to us. As soon as this new Act they are working on is passed, these boys [councillors, land committees and technocrats] will know who the real owners of the land are".[76] However, they were disappointed when they discovered that the subsequent Rural District Councils Act (1988), with its emphasis on technocratic planning, continued to place them at the periphery of land administration, behind councillors and resettlement officers. This provoked a sharp reaction from Chief Charumbira,

> We are surprised to know that this resettlement is carried out without the help of chiefs. The chief no longer has any rights over the people whom he used to guide. Do you think that our ancestors are happy about this, that now we have taken over the land, you still refuse us the right? The Resettlement Officer now has power over the chief who is the sole owner of that area. He tells me that "this area is no longer yours".[77]

72 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Makoni RDC chairman, Minutes of the Manicaland PDC, 30 April 1990.

73 J Karumbidza, Fragile and unsustained miracle: Analysing the development potential of Zimbabwe's resettlement schemes, 1980–2000 (PhD, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2009), p. 248.

74 Interview: Author with anonymous former deputy DA, Makoni District, Rusape, 27 August 2015; N Mutizwa-Mangiza, "Local government and planning in Zimbabwe: With special reference to the provincial/regional level". In: N Mutizwa-Mangiza and A Helmsing (eds.), *Rural development and planning in Zimbabwe* (Sidney: Averbury, 1991), p. 389.

75 Interview: Author with former deputy DA, Makoni District, Rusape, 27 August 2015.

76 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Independence Day speech, Murehwa, 18 April 1986.

77 *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 July 1990, col. 791–792, Chief Zephania Charumbira.

At the 1991 Makoni District Development Coordinating Committee (DCC) meeting Chief Tandi appealed to the government to revise the hierarchy of land administration in resettlement areas. Read the minutes,

> The Resettlement Officer should not have the sole right to allocate land. He should ask the chiefs what to do. He urged Agricultural Extension officers to respect the ancestors by involving chiefs instead of just planning things without them. The government should educate the officers and councillors about who the chiefs are and what the land means to them.[78]

Similar sentiments emerged from elsewhere across Zimbabwe. Chief Mangwende of Murehwa District suggested that the Rural District Councils Bill "be torn into pieces"[79] while chief Sogwala of Lower Gweru lamented that "it fell short of what we expected".[80]

Chiefs' protests against their weakened status in land affairs were not only expressed in rhetoric. Some stopped supporting government-sponsored development projects in their areas. Makoni DA reported in 1989 of chiefs who took a "deliberately apathetic position to development initiatives" and seemed to have "a strong attitude against councillors and politicians involved in land planning and allocation".[81] Consequences of such a posture by some chiefs were evident. The DA observed that, as regards environmental protection, some chiefs "had stopped reprimanding villagers or causing their arrest for cutting down trees and other environmental transgressions".[82] If chiefs did reprimand or punish villagers, a former aide to Chief Tandi reported of the situation in the mid-1990s, "it was mainly to boost their status in the eyes of their subjects", not a demonstration of fervent support of government's environmental policy.[83] Chiefs also stopped encouraging villagers to come to development and planning meetings. Others disregarded the state's restrictions on their participation in land processes by continuing to allocate land. According to Chief Chipunza, there were good reasons for their "illegal" acts,

> We do not need anyone to tell us that this is our land. We know it very well because it has been ours for ages. People always come to us with their social problems and we help them. Why is it that they do not go to the police or the councillors for help?

78 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of the District DCC meeting on the drought situation, 14 November 1991.
79 *Midlands Times*, 11 February 1991.
80 *Midlands Times*, 11 February 1991.
81 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, DDC minutes on the district's food security status, 11 March 1989.
82 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, DDC minutes on the district's food security status.
83 Interview: Author with anonymous former aide to Chief Tandi, Rusape, 26 July 2014.

> They know that chiefs are the real owners of the land and they govern better than anyone else.[84]

As regards Chief Makoni, in 1995 he unilaterally extended his chieftaincy to Mayo, where he resettled people and appointed headmen. This prompted Makoni RDC Chief Executive Officer, Edward Pise, to advise people

> not be fooled by so-called chiefs or headmen who were persuading them to move with them to resettlement schemes and at the end make them suffer humiliation after being evicted. There is no one called a chief or headmen we recognise [in Mayo].[85]

Indeed, there was no legal provision for traditional leaders in the administration of resettlement schemes in the 1990s. These were acts of disgruntled chiefs.

Chiefs' anger was also directed at those above them in the hierarchy of a highly technocratic land administration system, especially councillors, resettlement officers and DAs. They accused them of disrespecting them, added to general incompetence. The 1992 minutes of the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) reported thus, "Some chiefs queried their status in the community *vis-à-vis* VIDCO chairmen and councillors. They complained that when VIDCO chairmen convened meetings […], they were not informed. They were also worried about councillors who looked down upon them".[86] In Makoni, they accused councillors of land fraud, wastage of resources, lack of appreciation of grassroots aspirations, and for staying in, and operating from, Rusape town, far from the villages. Concerning the last point, Chief Tandi advised that as the district council was located "some 30 miles away" from his area,

> [T]hese people can never see what happens here in the night. They can only see after the damage is done. I know it is government's policy that such powers be given to councils, but do you not think that it is better to give some of the powers to the local leadership in those areas rather than to conferring powers to men who live in remote areas.[87]

At the other end, councillors, averse to chiefly involvement in key land matters, pointed to chiefs' limited technical capabilities.[88] In 1992 one Makoni District Council member had observed,

---

84 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.
85 *Herald*, 17 October 1996.
86 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of Manicaland PDC Minutes, 30 April 1992.
87 Interview: Author with Chief Tandi, Rusape, 29 July 2014; *Moto*, 6 July 1982, p. 6.
88 N Kriger, Struggles for independence: Rural conflicts in Zimbabwe's war for liberation (PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985), p. 448, notes that a significant number of

> Relations between chiefs and councillors are very strained. The two have no direct link with each other. Chiefs seldom appreciate the administrative thrust of the government. They do not want to work with their DAs, councillors or other people engaged in the development of their areas.[89]

Occasionally, such tensions elicited the intervention of the central government.

Seeking to please both sides, government's intervention was ambiguous and contradictory. At the 1995 meeting of RDCs in Kariba, Minister of Local Government, Nkomo, castigated councillors for excluding chiefs from broader council affairs. He said, "For RDCs to be worried about the inclusion of chiefs into civic matters suggests that there is a lot they want to keep to themselves".[90] In another message that resonated with chiefs' interests, in 1998 ZANU-PF's Binga Member of Parliament, Sikajaya Muntanga argued that,

> Instead of honouring the chiefs, we have created VIDCOs [….] VIDCOs have power which cannot be challenged by chiefs [who] were there before the whites came in. There is now a councillor [….] When the chiefs give advice they do not accept. They say the land and everything else should be solved by councillors.[91]

Nkomo presented another of the by now typical government responses,

> The days are long gone when VIDCOs and WADCOs first chose the best fruits out of food relief, fertiliser supplies and settlement land for themselves and their kith and kin. The [chief-led] village assembly must now overtake these corrupt tendencies. We are […] moving away from the system where mere political committees of an elective nature can lay exclusive claim to being representatives of the people.[92]

Despite such pronouncements by senior ZANU-PF officials, little changed about the situation of chiefs as regards their claim to enhanced roles in land administration.

The foot-dragging that affected the reworking and implementation of legislation that was touted by the government as seeking to enhance chiefs' judicial powers also characterised the issue of chiefs and authority over land. Throughout the 1990s chiefs doubted the state's interest in translating rhetoric into practice. In 1992 Chief Chiduku told a DDC meeting that, "We are told that powers are being restored to the chiefs but we do not see where these

---

councils in Melsetter District resisted the participation of chiefs in their operations.

89 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of Makoni District Council meeting, 11 February 1992.

90 *Sunday Mail*, 5 May 1995.

91 *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 March 1998, col. 4029, Sikajaya Muntanga.

92 *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 October 1998, col. 924, John Nkomo.

powers are. Although they persist in saying that […] we the chiefs who are supposed to exercise these powers do not see them".[93] Frustrated by the delays, chiefs sometimes exercised authority over land outside the dictates of the law. In Makoni District, Chief Chipunza was threatened with prosecution in 1992 for illegally allocating land and for charging allocation fees.[94] As with the Customary Law and Local Courts Bill (1990), they had hoped that the Chiefs and Headmen (Amendment) Bill, introduced in 1992, would eventually restore their land powers. However, the bill was only adopted by Parliament in 1995. It was never signed into law as it was overtaken by the Traditional Leaders Bill (1998), another piece of legislation whose tenets were not different from those of the previous bills. In 1998 ZANU-PF legislator, Moses Mvenge, expressed his frustrations over his government's failure to expedite the processing of laws relating to chiefs,

> Up to this day in 1998 it [the Chiefs and Headmen (Amendment) Act] has not seen the light of day. I do not want to say this is criminal, it is unparliamentary [….] This is really ridiculous when we get bills that were supposed to be debated in 1995, in 1998 they are still outstanding, and the president puts them on his speech year in, year out.[95]

Indeed, year in, year out chiefs were fed promises than actual power. In 1998 opposition parliamentarian, Margaret Dongo, observed that, frustrated by being restricted to "ritual functions", some chiefs began to reminisce that "Smith was better".[96] For them, Smith enhanced their authority over land and broader rural administration in the late-1960s in a much substantial manner than, as Chief Chiduku lamented, "we are experiencing today".[97] Such sentiments were certain to unsettle ZANU-PF.

## 5. OPPOSITION POLITICS AND THE RETURN OF CHIEFS

As hinted earlier, the state's realignment of its relations with chiefs had a political context. It had to contend with various hostile political forces and needed all the support it could muster, including from chiefs, to repel them. The political factor in this regard had two dimensions. First, the disgruntled chiefs could potentially shift their support away from ZANU-PF to opposition politics. As political opposition and challenges from Civil Society Organisations (CSO) gained momentum, there was need by the government to tame the

93 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Speech by Chief Chiduku on the occasion of World Environment Day, 5 June 1992, p. 2.
94 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.
95 *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 July 1998, col. 59–60, Moses Mvenge.
96 *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 May 1998, col. 4747, Margaret Dongo.
97 Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Minutes of Makoni District Council meeting, 3 March 1992.

chiefs. Second, chiefs sometimes considered using their perceived grassroots social clout to make claims on the politically anxious state. As early as 1987 Chief Mangwende cautioned ZANU-PF that if it continued to ignore chiefs' concerns, "sooner or later, you will hunt for us in our little huts" begging for political support.[98] This became chiefs' refrain in their dialogue with the state throughout the 1990s.

At different moments since taking over power in 1980, ZANU-PF was challenged in different ways by various political and social movements. For instance, up to the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987, the government was anxious of the presence of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) on the Zimbabwean political landscape. ZAPU had Matabeleland regions as its electoral stronghold as reflected by both the 1980 and 1985 elections.[99] From another angle, the government also accused ZAPU of being behind dissident activities that mainly afflicted Matabeleland and Midlands regions between 1980 and 1987.[100] Many other constituencies operated outside, or were not fully within, ZANU-PF politics. Some felt excluded from the state-making project. Added to chiefs were, among other groups, war veterans, with their demands for war gratuities, land-hungry peasants, and labour unions.[101] As the 1980s progressed, and as the risk of these interest groups joining hostile politics increased, it became imperative for the state to make overtures to them. With their widely-acknowledged devotion to social stability and law and order, ZANU-PF reckoned, if well-mobilised, chiefs would be vital not only for wider state security considerations but also as an electoral instrument for the party in rural areas. It is in this respect that Minister of Home Affairs, Enos Nkala, conceded in 1987 that "Chiefs [are] the eyes and the ears of the government".[102] This was a narrative also previously used by the UDI government.

For a brief moment, as the 1980s drew to a close, it appeared key political formations that sought to unseat ZANU-PF were either collapsing or increasingly weakening. This was particularly signified by the merger between

98 *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September 1987, col. 564, Chief Jonathan Mangwende.

99 For example, while ZANU-PF scooped 64 of the 94 common roll parliamentary seats in the 1985 election, ZAPU claimed all 15 Matabeleland seats on offer. See, M Sithole and J Makumbe, "Elections in Zimbabwe: The ZANU-PF hegemony and its incipient decline", *African Journal of Political Science* 2 (1), 1997, pp. 126–127.

100 M Htun, *The struggle for political hegemony and a one-party state in Zimbabwe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University International Relations, 1991), p. 89; While it did not instantaneously end dissident activities, which continued but with waning potency, the Unity Accord appeased many of Nkomo's supporters.

101 N Kriger, "ZANU-PF strategies in general elections, 1980–2000: Discourse and coercion", *African Affairs* 104 (414), 2005, pp. 1–34, for instance, considers the evolvement of war veterans from being uneasy bedfellows with the government to being reliable electoral partners.

102 *Herald*, 16 September 1987.

ZANU-PF and ZAPU in 1987, after seven years of deep acrimony. Indeed, the development was important for the ruling party as it eliminated its most substantial challenge to its hegemony.[103] Yet, other political formations still emerged with verve and enthusiasm to contest Mugabe's rule. Most notable was Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), formed in 1989 and led by former ZANU-PF Minister Edgar Tekere.[104] With its politics primarily anchored on confronting growing corruption, human rights violations and authoritarianism, it presented ZANU-PF with an electoral scare in the 1990 elections. In an era that also signified the rise of post-independence "urban associational life",[105] ZUM mobilised students, churches, labour and human rights activists, among other constituencies, to gain 18 per cent of the national vote.[106]

While ZANU-PF resoundingly won the 1990 election, public disgruntlement over the worsening national socio-economic outlook was clear. From the early 1980s, the struggling economy was bedevilled by widespread company closures, increased job cuts, and acute inflation, among other indicators.[107] It is in this context that some people began to talk nostalgically about "*Makore a*Smith – the years of Smith – when money had value and a secondary-school education would almost certainly lead to employment".[108] Government's adoption of the Bretton Woods-prescribed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991,[109] and the food and labour riots that afflicted the country between 1996 and 1998 significantly revealed the depth of the unfolding economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The disgruntlement was also expressed by, among other groups, labour movements, intellectuals,

103 Other political formations such as UANC and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Ndonga (ZANU-Ndonga) seemed to be falling further out of relevance, particularly judging by their poor electoral performances or failure to field candidates in some constituencies.

104 For ZUM politics see, Kriger, "ZANU-PF strategies", pp. 13–20.

105 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 210; Kriger, "ZANU-PF strategies", p. 14.

106 In some areas ZUM scored as high as 30 per cent of the vote; Despite not winning any parliamentary seat in the 1990 election, and largely failing to penetrate rural areas, ZUM clearly mounted a considerable electoral challenge to ZANU-PF; See, S Chan, *Robert Mugabe: A life of power and violence* (New York: Michigan University Press, 2003), p. 44.

107 C Sylvester, *Zimbabwe: The terrain of contradictory development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) gives a more nuanced analysis of Zimbabwe's political economy in the first decade of independence.

108 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 178.

109 The concept, predicated on government austerity, largely entailed cutbacks on public expenditure. For an in-depth examination of the impact of ESAP in Zimbabwe see, A Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: The case of Zimbabwe, 1990–1995* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1997); N Kanji, "Gender, poverty and economic adjustment in Harare, Zimbabwe", *Environment and Urbanisation* 7 (1), 1995, p. 39; For example, upon the implementation of ESAP, substantial user fees were either increased or introduced in public health and educational institutions, the cost of living for low income families increased by 45 percent between mid-1991 and 1992, and 60,000 mainly parastatal workers were retrenched by the end of 1993.

churches, students, war veterans, and the broader "sinking middle class".[110] The political dimension was also emphasised by CSOs such as the International Socialist Organisation's (ISO) slogans such as "Smash ESAP, Smash ZANU-PF",[111] and its characterisation of its efforts as a struggle "against poverty, ZANU-PF lies and […] the land issue".[112] The 1990s, described by Joseph Sutcliffe as "a decade of activism", further alerted ZANU-PF to its growing unpopularity in urban areas.[113]

While dominated by ZANU-PF, the political terrain in rural areas was not entirely in favour of the ruling party. Rural areas were not immune to the growing economic challenges. They also bore the brunt of general maladministration, corruption, policy shortcomings and failure by the government to deliver development. In a small way, they occasionally made known their feelings by such acts as resisting payment of various fees and taxes. To cushion themselves from the harsh economic environment they resorted to, among other things, poaching, illegal tree cutting, and illegal gold panning. Maxwell observed that the majority of Katerere youths supported ZUM, while Judith De Wolf established in 1996 that many Ruwange villagers "display[ed] apathy towards everything concerning ZANU-PF".[114] ZANU-PF was dicing with losing "its most valuable electoral constituency".[115] It ill-afforded to.

ZANU-PF's situation in rural areas was further complicated by the fact that, in some instances, the concerns and aspirations of chiefs coincided with the issues raised by some opposition parties. In 1989 ZUM bemoaned that the question of chiefs' powers, particularly over land, "has been an area of disappointment for our traditional leaders".[116] Its 1990 manifesto promised to "restore and secure the dignity of chiefs" and invited them to "contribute [...] to the running of our country".[117] Tekere's 1992 tour of Mhondoro "communal" lands and parts of Manicaland, his home province, was largely meant to mobilise the rural vote through establishing rapport with chiefs.[118] He met several chiefs throughout Manicaland and other provinces. In fact, during the period under study, several other chiefs across the country had been linked

110 Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 183.
111 National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) Resource Centre, *Flyer* by ISO, 1995.
112 NCA Resource Centre, ISO and ZCTU poster, 1998.
113 J Sutcliffe "'Shinga mushandi shinga! Qina msebenzi qina!" (Workers be resolute! Fight on!): The labour movement in Zimbabwe'', *Journal of Politics and International Studies* 8, 2012, p. 9.
114 Quoted in Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 178.
115 Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 182.
116 *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 July 1989, col. 335, Edgar Tekere.
117 ZUM, *The manifesto: Towards a democratic Zimbabwe* (Gweru: ZUM, 1989), p. 7.
118 Chan, *Robert Mugabe*, p. 44.

to opposition parties. Earlier, in 1985, Chief Mugabe of Masvingo District was linked to the United African National Congress (UANC).[119] In 1991 Mutoko Districts' Chief Mutoko was linked to the Zimbabwe Democratic Party.[120] In 1993 Chief Maduna Mafu of Insiza District was forced to publicly declare his allegiance to ZANU-PF after being linked to the newly-established Forum Party.[121]

In 1998, in the context of unfavourable political conditions to ZANU-PF, Chief Makoni suggested that if the government continued to exclude them from land administration, this would have implications on their electoral mobilisation efforts. He warned, "you will not win without us".[122] This was during the period Zimbabwe was experiencing a spurt of invasions of white-owned farms by thousands of land-hungry people frustrated by the slow pace of land redistribution. Chief Svosve is one of the chiefs who in the period 1997 to 1998, delved into populism and supported the invaders. His people invaded farms near Marondera town, arguing that the government was taking long to respond to their plea for land they lost through colonial processes.[123] Beyond identifying with the struggle of the landless, chiefs saw in the invasions opportunity to create or strengthen constituencies of support and to seize the initiative in the battle over broader land processes, without which, Maxwell had observed, they struggled for authority.[124] In 1998 in Makoni District Chief Makoni encouraged people to claim land adjacent to commercial farms such as Romsley and Mayo, not least for historical reasons.

These local strategies not only demonstrated the ambition of chiefs as regards power and authority but also provoked concern in ZANU-PF and other elements within the land administration hierarchy.[125] ZANU-PF became concerned that land-hungry people and chiefs would form a hostile alliance that would open the way further for opposition politics in rural areas. As Eric Cabaye wrote in the case of Cameroon, those in control of land and land processes also control the politics of those tied to it.[126] The state had to strike a delicate balance between ensuring that it did not lose the initiative over land to chiefs and that chiefs firmly remained on its side. This was particularly so as

119 *Herald*, 2 June 1985.
120 *Herald,* 28 June 1991.
121 *Herald,* 17 April 1993.
122 *Parliamentary Debates*, 30 July 1998, col. 68, Chief Naboth Makoni.
123 *Sunday Mail*, 21 June 1998; *Herald*, 29 June 1998.
124 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 179.
125 Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 174.
126 E Cabaye, *Land use in eastern Cameroon* (Yaounde: Institute of Natural Resource Policy, 1999), p. 11; In Makoni District, interviewed villagers acknowledged the centrality of chiefs to land allocation and that they are, to an extent, bound to them by their fear of losing access to land.

political opposition and civil society organisations had begun to speak strongly against ZANU-PF's failure in social reform, including land redistribution.[127]

ZANU-PF's political concerns continued to worsen as the 2000s approached. The emergence and instant popularity of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 to challenge ZANU-PF's hegemony radically transformed Zimbabwe's political landscape. It presented ZANU-PF with its most formidable electoral challenge since 1980.[128] This was a culmination of what Alexander and De Wolf observed of ZANU-PF in the 1990s, that the party was rapidly declining at a local level, including in rural areas.[129] The vibrancy which characterised its politics in the 1980s gradually decreased, so were turnouts at local rallies and election victory margins, a consequence of a mix of exhausted independence euphoria and nationalism, growing economic challenges, and more confident opposition politics. In this respect, ZANU-PF had to turn to chiefs for a base of political mobilisation in rural areas.

## 6. THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL CONTROL AND STABILITY

While political motivations were central to the government's advance towards chiefs, the desire to enhance social stability also came into play. After all, chiefs'-led social stability would enhance political control. Even councils and technocrats, despite their general disdain for chiefs, would sometimes seek to tap into the local influence of traditional leaders. They often struggled with villagers in the implementation of development plans, including the collection of levies, which in 1993 the Makoni RDC conceded, was "rather disappointing".[130] A former Mayo councillor remembered how villagers hated both councillors and resettlement officers for compelling them to pay levies. Council coffers, he said, "were often depleted because villagers simply refused to pay. They threatened violence, and to stop supporting ZANU-PF".[131]

Councils also faced challenges in enforcing environmental conservation measures, as some villagers claimed that the independence Zimbabwe

127 See, for example, NCA Resource Centre, flyer by ISO.

128 That MDC's launch rally, attended by an estimated 20,000 people, was one of the biggest by an opposition party in many years is revealing. Furthermore, MDC successfully campaigned for a "No" vote in the constitutional referendum of February 2000 against the government's wish for a "Yes" vote, inflicting on ZANU-PF its first major electoral defeat since 1980. In June of the same year, MDC won 57 of the 120 contested parliamentary seats. Yet in the previous two elections ZANU-PF had won 117 and 118 seats, respectively.

129 Cited in Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, pp. 183–184.

130 Makoni District Council minutes, quoted in I Dande, Changing oral memory, identity and chiefly politics in Makoni District, 1850–2004 (BA, University of Zimbabwe, 2005), p. 50.

131 Interview: Author with anonymous former Mayo Resettlement Scheme councillor, Rusape, 19 February 2015.

attained in 1980 entailed unrestricted access to, and exploitation of, the country's resources. In Mayo in the 1980s, as Ranger noted, there was widespread overgrazing, riverbank cultivation and indiscriminate felling of trees by villagers.[132] Attempts at intervention were sometimes met with the response that these resources were "the gifts of our ancestors", "fruits of our independence" and that no one could stop them from enjoying them. Another former Mayo councillor corroborated, "We were not effective because chiefs were not in good terms with us. Also, the government was afraid of using a heavy hand against the villagers for fear of losing political support. To villagers, independence meant doing as they pleased with the land, the trees and the rivers".[133] In Makoni district areas like Bingaguru, Bamba and Nyahawa suffered extreme deforestation in the 1980s and 1990s, and rivers like Bonda, Chikobvore and Magokwa were exposed to intense siltation.[134] Protesting chiefs blamed the government for preferring "young men [who] think the chief is not capable of doing anything".[135] Sometimes chiefs sided with their villagers on rejecting fees for, among other things, land, school and cattle dipping, and they became reluctant to punish environmental offenders.[136]

Such challenges compelled the government to consider bringing chiefs closer as an administrative ally. It was sometimes argued by both chiefs and those sympathetic to them that the social problems that afflicted rural areas, including crime, child delinquency, divorce, abortions and extramarital affairs, were due to the fact that chiefs had been stripped of most of their powers. In making this connection, Gara reflected in 1995,

> It was a mistake to take away some of the powers of chiefs […] we have watched the general decay of traditional society over time and we have come to the realisation that the loss of cultural identity of our people, the absence of Africanness among our younger generation is partly traceable to our downgrading of traditional leadership structures at independence.[137]

In 1996 he lamented thus,

> Today's chief is a mere figurehead who has no real leadership responsibilities and powers […] he has been sidelined to watch processes of government from afar while society under him falls apart. The ordinary person is left with no focal point of loyalty, obedience and protection.[138]

132 Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*, p. 311.
133 Interview: Author with anonymous former Makoni RDC member, Harare, 2 February 2015.
134 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.
135 *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September 1987, col. 565, Chief Jonathan Mangwende.
136 Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 163.
137 *Herald*, 19 August 1995.
138 *Herald*, 8 June 1996.

Bringing chieftaincy back in, he added, would "avert what may lead to a complete breakdown of law and order in the rural countryside".[139] As van Binsbergen observed in independent Zambia, chiefs were "an indispensable part of the ideology that defines social order".[140] As regards Makoni District, Chief Chipunza believed that they needed to play a more direct role in, among other things,

> [T]he maintenance of useful traditional customs, control the use of land and natural resources and generally to maintain law and order in the society. If nothing is done about it our people will not understand us and there will be chaos which will not spare even the politicians.[141]

Evidently, both chiefs and ZANU-PF politicians were aware of the interplay between social and political forces in rural areas.

As the 1990s came to a close, there was little doubt that chiefs had to be brought back in to help with social control and to avert costly political consequences. The Minister of Local Government acknowledged the nexus,

> The stability of the state cannot be assured unless the elective governance structures that govern people at the local level are made to pay due respect to the traditions and institutions that distinguish us as Africans and have bound local communities together since time immemorial [...] The people are demanding a leadership that attracts their traditional respect, not one that demands respect with no corresponding positive return for society [...] We must therefore acknowledge the existence of traditional institutions [...][142]

As ZANU-PF Member of Parliament for Pumula-Magwegwe, Norman Zikhali, warned his party,

> If we do not do something [about the chiefs] now, our people will not understand us. If our people do not understand us the next thing is chaos, chaos which will [...] threaten the rulers who are Ministers and perhaps members of Parliament [...] We cannot afford that.[143]

As in the colonial period, the idea that customary leaders were a base for social stability and policy implementation, and a buffer against the invasion of hostile politics, was beginning to gain traction. In the hope of appeasing the disgruntled chiefs, in 1998, the government repealed the

139 *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 October 1998, col. 914, John Nkomo.
140 van Binsbergen, "Chiefs in independent Zambia", p. 14.
141 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.
142 *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 October 1998, col. 921, John Nkomo.
143 *Parliamentary Debates*, 30 July 1998, col. 74, Norman Zikhali.

Chiefs and Headmen Act and enacted the Traditional Leaders Act. It touted it as an offer of "respect, status and responsibility to our traditional leaders who were humiliated and marginalised before [...] independence".[144] It simultaneously amended the Rural District Councils Act, which now placed occupiers of resettlement land under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders.[145] For example, the Mayo resettlement area was placed under Chief Makoni, so that "those people are answerable to the chief".[146] It is partly in this respect that the Traditional Leaders Act gave chiefs enhanced roles in environmental protection. Government officials "celebrated" this development, particularly as "it does not take time for the chief to know what has happened" in his area.[147] Clearly, there was a shift in the attitude of ZANU-PF politicians, councillors and DAs towards chiefs. However, it was only minimal for they still could not allow chiefs advanced roles in land and broader administrative affairs.

Despite new and revised legislation, and a flurry of pro-chiefs rhetoric, chiefs continued to complain that they were still emasculated.[148] Innocent Dande and Kurebwa's respective contentions that the Traditional Leaders Act intended "to give back to chiefs the power to allocate land"[149] and that it restored "most of the powers of the institution"[150] are rather overstated. As was the case over the years, despite the 23 functions granted by the Act, chiefs remained on the fringes of the state with "Rhodesian-era-like list of duties".[151] Their roles still did not go beyond basic environmental policing and reporting crime. They were limited to, for instance, helping to identify those in need of land, ensuring that land permits generated by RDCs and DA-led land committees reached successful land applicants, and identifying sacred and burial sites.[152] The Act demonstrated enhanced state recognition of chiefs but there still was little space for cultural and spiritual sentimentality in a technocratic state. ZANU-PF preferred winning chiefs over by means other than returning to them effective authority over rural judicial and land affairs. In its modest responses to chiefs' concerns, the government's hand was forced by the changing and pressing political circumstances. Key was the desire to

144 ZANU-PF, *The people's manifesto. The Third Chimurenga: Land for economic empowerment* (Harare: ZANU-PF, 2001), p. 48.
145 *Rural District Council Act*, 1998.
146 *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 October 1998, col. 1314, Tony Gara.
147 Speech by DA Makoni, on the official installation of Rivai Mbaimbai as Chief Chiduku, 22 March 2000; Uncatalogued Makoni DA file, Speech by Deputy Minister for Local Government, Rural and Urban Planning, Tony Gara, on the official installation of Rivai Mbaimbai.
148 Cited in Karumbidza, Fragile and unsustained miracle, p. 206.
149 Dande, *Changing oral memory*, pp. 49–50.
150 Kurebwa, "The capture of traditional leaders", p. 207.
151 Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 183.
152 Interview: Author with Chief Chipunza, Rusape, 23 September 2014.

tap into chiefs' mobilising capacity and to deploy them in a manner observed and described by Mamdani as "decentralised despotism".[153] Save for the endearing rhetoric by the state, their position with regards to the powers they craved for remained largely as it was in the first five years of independence.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The political, economic, social and security challenges that converged in the mid-1980s to threaten ZANU-PF's hegemony forced the party to reconsider its strategies. After five years of restricting chiefs to the fringes of the state on account of their being "backward" and "undemocratic" "agents" of the UDI regime, the government made a *volte-face* and began to make overtures to traditional leaders. This new direction was underscored by enhanced attention to, and revival of, notions of "tradition", "Africanness" and "culture". Throughout the rest of the 1980s and through to the end 1990s, the government realigned its rhetoric, legislation and policies in order to re-establish and strengthen relations with chiefs and the rest of the traditional leadership hierarchy. The most fundamental promise carried by these overtures was the restoration of their land and judicial powers. Building on literature that has considered the state's motivations for turning to chiefs, this article has examined the extent to which the government lived up to its promise to give chiefs back their land and judicial powers. It has established that despite adopting a pro-chiefs posture, the government never ceded any substantial powers to chiefs. It does appear it never intended to. It walked a delicate line of seeking to co-opt them, and to tap into their legitimating power and proven grassroots mobilising capabilities, while simultaneously rejecting their "excessive" claims on the state. By the end of the 1990s, proclaiming itself to be a technocratic government, it practically kept chiefs out of land processes, and only gave them restricted judicial powers, a situation chiefs consistently protested about.

Politics, rather than a desire to address chiefs' concerns, was central to the state's rejuvenated interest in chieftaincy. It never went beyond seeking to use chiefs as an accessory in the context of waning political fortunes, and the need to protect rural areas from the invasion of hostile politics which largely originated in urban areas. If chiefs thought endearing themselves to the state would regain them their powers, it was an exercise in futility. Continuing to be fed promises, as in the 1980s, their status remained largely unchanged by the end of the 1990s as they still struggled with regaining authority over land and enhanced judicial powers. The various overtures made to chiefs by the state

153 L Hadzoi, Continuity and change in the powers of chiefs, c.1951–2000: A case study of Gutu District (BA, University of Zimbabwe, 2003), p. 8; Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 109–137.

were, in borrowed parlance, “winds of small change” as the state continued to emphasise land planning and allocation on a technocratic basis, with chiefs as mostly implementers of state-drafted programmes.

AUTHOR:
Itumeleng Masiteng[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Lecturer, Heritage Studies, School of Humanities, Sol Plaatje University

EMAIL:
itumeleng.masiteng@spu.ac.za

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.8

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):181-185

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch




# BOOK REVIEW

A Nettleton and MA Fubah (eds.), *Exchanging symbols: monuments and memorials in post-apartheid South Africa,* Stellenbosch, African Sun Media, 2020, e-book ISBN: 978-1-928480-59-4.

World over, monuments and memorials, remain at the forefront of discussions, debates and public ire from sectors of society. As we finalise this review in mid-2020, the past few months, in the wake of anti-racist protests of "Black Lives Matter" sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis (United States of America), have seen the resurgence of calls for the removal and or destruction of monuments associated with those tragic aspects of history (i.e., slavery, colonialism, apartheid), ranging from Theodore Roosevelt; Christopher Columbus; King Leopold II and Edward Colston to Cecil Rhodes in Oxford and Kimberley, South Africa, and many others. The agency and persistence of the role of monument-making in post-colonial Africa have been seen as a central part of heritage making in the post colony. Daniel Herwitz wrote that these processes, in the post colony, are "heritage at the moment of agency, poised between heritage practices of the past and the desire, need, or inevitability of breaking away from them to make something new.[1] In an aptly titled book; "*Monument, Ruin, and Redress in South African Heritage*", Herwitz advises us that "South Africa is a country in search of a national narrative that can articulate and bind together official state culture and citizenry …. in response to the inheritance

1 D Herwitz, "Monument, Ruin, and Redress in South African Heritage", *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 86 (4), 2011, pp. 232-248.

of colonial and apartheid cultures of monument and ruin, terror, violence, control".[2]

This edited volume by Anitra Nettleton & Mathias Alubafi Fubah contributes to the ongoing discussions on the complex role and place of monuments in independent Africa, where states make attempts to create a balance between living with the past (old and offensive monuments to some), and creating a new, inclusive visual iconography in public spaces. The book has eight essays that eloquently look into the genesis and dynamics of the #RhodesMustFall campaign that started in 2015. It explains, in detail, the narrative of the subsequent removal of the Rhodes Statue at the University of Cape Town. At the heart of this book, the dichotomy between Politics and Heritage are credibly exposed. The book looks into the political influences that are exerted on heritage in South Africa. Politics have played a role in how heritage is seen, how it is perceived and interpreted within a post-apartheid context. The book takes cognisance of people's opinions and perceptions as far as Colonial and Apartheid-era monuments and memorials are concerned. It dissects the impact that Colonialism and Apartheid had on representation, identity and memory of ordinary South Africans when it comes to monuments and memorials. The statues are a visual reminder of a bygone era, but there is some form of a co-existence with newer ways of commemoration and remembrance within the same post-democratic context and space. The book exposes the deficiencies of the *National Heritage Resources Act no.25 of 1999* (NHRA). It demonstrates how the practicalities of the act proved to be difficult when dealing with Colonial and Apartheid monument and memorials. From observations, there is no blueprint coming from the NHRA legislation that guides the removal of Colonial and Apartheid-era monuments and memorials. But according to the NHRA act, these Colonial monuments and memorials are seen as forms of heritage, and that should have been emphasised in the book. This does create a conundrum within the Post-Apartheid South African heritage landscape narrative. The implications would be that post-democratic South Africa's Heritage sector is still dealing with some dynamics of transformation, social justice and the matter of redress.

The introduction of the book explores the history of South Africa, as a country, specifically what it has gone through when it comes to cultural representation that was largely one-sided. The book argues that the demise of Colonial and Apartheid South Africa showed pitfalls within the complexities of cultural landscapes that has become problematic. But South Africa is evolving socially, politically and culturally, this does bring about a rethink into the country's cultural representation and aesthetic practices. The

2 Herwitz, "Monument, Ruin, and Redress in South African Heritage".

introduction sets the tone as to why statues and memorials are seen as forms of cultural representation of colonialism and apartheid. The first chapter details a study about public perceptions and opinions that were brought out by the #RhodesMustFall campaign. Chapter 1 takes a closer look into the perceptions of people from different races have about colonial and apartheid-era memorials and statues being removed. This chapter does raise an important issue of restitution but it does not fully explore the many sides of restitution and the implications to the South African public.

In chapter 2 Anitra Nettleton gives a western overview of memorialising in bronze statues and how that plays out in commemoration in public spaces. Nettleton does look into theoretical frameworks of Alois Reigl and Jürgen Haberma in the functionality and definition of monuments in public spaces. Nettleton talks about decoloniality and the ways to implement it. The Rhodes must fall drama is used as an example by Nettleton is able to show that within a post-democratic South Africa there is a need for inclusive memorial spaces despite the discourse and legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

In Chapter 3 of the book, Alude Mahali looks into what is commemorated in South African when it comes to memorials. This chapter touches on the debate that surrounds where commemoration takes place. This is illustrated in the chapter by engaging the framework that concerns the discourse of pain, place, and memory. Mahali also takes the opportunity to look at contestations and the establishment of monuments in South Africa. He takes an in-depth look into how memorial and monumental connotations found in buildings and public spaces could be transformed from their colonial past. The chapter explores ways on how to have inclusive access to memorialisation post-democracy.

In Chapter 4, Sipokazi Madida gives a different perspective to the debates into understanding post-apartheid heritage practice as constituting exhibitionary complexities that are almost pageantry in behaviour. In this chapter, an effort is made to better understand knowledge and meaning that lie within practices. The role and influence of the public is explored and that brings forth an important view about heritage practises being compromised in the process. The chapter critically probes post-apartheid monumentalism between 1990 and 2015. However, having had a closer look into post-apartheid monumentalism it is complex because of continued old traditions being used to understand historical narratives. But according to the NHRA, the same Colonial monuments and memorials are seen as forms of heritage, and that should have been emphasised more in this chapter. This does create a problem within the Post-Apartheid South African Heritage Landscape narrative.

Chapter 5 explores the matter of Apartheid-era monuments that can play a role in the transformation of heritage here in South Africa. This chapter delves into the issue of political practices that influence the criticism into past monuments. Thabo Manetsi looks into the dichotomy of denunciation and the enunciation of heritage resources in South Africa. At the same time, this chapter also drives the argument about how politics can be utilised in the post-colonial discourse of heritage resources management. Manetsi does expose the views that are held by the government when it comes to liberation heritage which informs the rewriting narratives and this is seen on how public spaces are reclaimed allegedly for the people.

Chapter 6 is filled with photographs and it gives a visual narrative and the author started writing it in Johannesburg in 2016 just after the #RhodesMustFall. This chapter gives a different perspective and perception from someone who does not live in South Africa. It details the journey of Guy Königstein's perceptions of commemoration in South Africa. The chapter raises issues on the visualisation of the seen and unseen when it comes to monuments. It discusses how monuments could be contributing to presences as well as them not being seen in edited digital photographs. This chapter was a response to the removal of monuments in archival photos after the #Rhodes must fall campaign.

Chapter 7 explores the debate between exhibitionary and the visual. The chapter showcases South African artists who use modern and contemporary ways to deal with matters of memory and trauma, using a built environment tactic of *verfremdung*. This points out that monuments could be seen as representations of Colonialism and Apartheid and hence artists, through their work, form responses to those monuments. Nancy Dantas deliberately chose specific artists to bring her point across. The chapter gives a different perspective of trauma histories through the chosen artists' works. This shows the interplay between cultural perceptions and the landscape we leave in.

In Chapter 8, Fubah and Catherine Ndinda study the dynamics of the newly constructed anti-colonial and anti-apartheid statues that are located at the Groenkloof nature reserve. The two authors argue that statues in the nature reserve are just a duplication of colonial memorialisation. The chapter shows how politicians have extended their grip into heritage spaces. This is highlighted by how the ruling party the African National Congress responds to redressing socio-cultural injustices of the past in the South African landscape. However, post-democratic memorialisation using statues can be problematic if it only carries the narrative of only one political movement, and that is not inclusive.

The book addresses the complexities of decolonisation, identity and memorialisation in a post-apartheid Heritage landscape. It adds to debates on

the complex issues around what to do with monuments and statues. It makes a key reading for policymakers, but it is also useful as a text to introduce the intricacies of memory and heritage making through apartheid and post-apartheid eras in South Africa. The book's writing style is accessible, and some chapters are beautifully illustrated. The theoretical rigour and critique was enjoyable and that made this book fascinating. The provocative visual questioning and reckoning as well as the provocative artistic interventions that were proposed in the book were thought provoking. The book could, however, have benefited from a robustly argued concluding chapter tying together the complex issues raised by the case studies. Yet this book remains a timely intervention.

AUTHOR:
Eric Kushinga Makombe[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Senior Lecturer, History, Heritage and Knowledge Systems Department, University of Zimbabwe

EMAIL:
ericmakombe@gmail.com

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.9

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):186-190

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch




# BOOK REVIEW

HP Dlamini, *A Constitutional History of the Kingdom of Eswatini (Swaziland), 1960–1982*, African Histories and Modernities, Cham, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2019, e-book ISBN: 978-3-030-24777-5.

This work sets out to give a critical account of the history of Swaziland's constitutional development. It focuses on the history of the constitution-making processes during the reign of King Sobhuza II and deals with colonial and post-colonial Swaziland from 1960 to 1982 (p. 17). The writer, Hlengiwe Dlamini, insists, with some justification, that this is a novel historical study of this nature. The book is nonetheless similar, in some respects, to Luise White's, *Unpopular Sovereignty* which examines contestation about the African franchise in federal and territorial franchise commissions and debates covering five constitutions in colonial Zimbabwe.[1] The breadth and depth of Dlamini's historical study and her use of wide-ranging sources is impressive. Research for this book spanned over two continents (Africa and Europe) and was carried out in four countries (Swaziland/Eswatini, South Africa, Ghana, and the United Kingdom) to access several repositories that include the Eswatini National Archives at Lobamba, the libraries at the University of Eswatini and the University of Pretoria, the Ghana National Archives in Accra, the National Archives in the United Kingdom, and the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford. Beyond the archival sources and secondary literature, a veritable source that emerges in this book is the writer's reliance on oral interviews that are neatly and tactfully fused

1 L White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

into the narrative of the book. The author has done a remarkable job amassing and assessing research material from the various archives consulted for this work. The outcome is a truly outstanding body of work that is executed in an accomplished manner. The research displays originality, and the presentation is lucid, crisp, compelling, and shows scholarly maturity.

The book is divided into 8 chapters, of which Chapter 1 serves as the introduction. Chapter 2 identifies the major participants in the making of the independence constitution and outlines their political viewpoints. The participants were the monarchists, the white Swazis, and the leaders of modern political parties (or the Progressives) while South Africa was an engaged and interested interloper. Chapter 3, which is perhaps the best, brings out the dialectics in the constitution-making process. The emerging contestations set as rivals, the conservative Swazi monarchy and their White allies against Swaziland's emerging political parties who espoused liberal democratic ideals and radical nationalist viewpoints. Chapter 4 continues with the discussion from the preceding chapter by highlighting the backroom manoeuvres by Apartheid South Africa and White Swazis leading to a coalition between King Sobhuza II and the White Swazi Party to participate in the 1964 elections. The coalition produced an electoral whitewash but, more importantly, side-lined the liberal and radical voices from the constitution-making process thereafter. Chapter 5 traces the processes leading up to the adoption of Swaziland's 1967 independence constitution. The writer notes that fundamental disagreements between the Swazi monarchy and white Swazis were only resolved when Britain assumed the role of final arbiter and declared Swaziland a constitutional monarchy. Chapter 6 proceeds to explore the five-year lifespan of the constitutional monarchy until it was repudiated in 1973. Chapter 7 considers the political scenario in Swaziland in the aftermath of King Sobhuza's 1973 repeal of the constitution. The writer refers to this period as a "constitutional void" up to the point when the King introduced what he referred to as the *tinkhundla* system of governance. Chapter 8 is the conclusion of the book. Beyond the 8 chapters, two appendices serve to provide a wider context and understanding of issues raised in the main text.

Dlamini, in my view, has successfully presented a new perspective to the decolonisation story of Africa and in the process complicated existing grand narratives. Often some revisionist narratives have tried to present King Sobhuza II of Swaziland and King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho, among other post-independence leaders, as trailblazing founding fathers of post-colonial states in Africa. However, even though Dlamini does not overtly set out to challenge these narratives, the work under review counters histories that present a linear transition from the colonial to the post-colonial state. In examining Swaziland's constitutional history, Dlamini consistently

stresses that white and black interests often overlapped or were entangled. Dlamini's emphasis on the input of "side-line" diplomacy from South Africa adds an interesting dimension to the process of decolonisation in Southern Africa. Indeed, it shows that the Apartheid state played a midwife's role in bringing about Swaziland's independence. In all, such detailed discussions of the constitution-making processes in Africa are a welcome addition to the historiography and help discredit or challenge accounts that compress history and reduce it to channels that privilege certain political voices while silencing others.

However, while the stated objective of the book is to capture the "complexity and specificity of Swaziland's constitutional history from 1960" up to 1982 this sense of Swazi "exceptionalism" is overstated to the point of masking more than it reveals. Several countries in Southern Africa share many similarities with Swaziland, and these include Botswana and Lesotho. Both these countries are dominated demographically by a single ethnic group, i.e. the Tswana and Basotho respectively (making up around 80 per cent of the total population in each country) just as the Swazi make up 84 per cent of Swaziland's total population. So the Swazi ethnic homogeneity, that the writer points to does not make Swaziland unique but similar to Botswana and Lesotho. Again, historically both countries were British protectorates (along with Swaziland), and they were granted independence at around the same time as well. Botswana, for instance, had an influential royal family in the paramount chieftainship of the *Bamangwato*.[2] But, unlike in Swaziland, the leading *Bamangwato*, Seretse Khama, paradoxically "used his prestige to reduce the powers of the traditional chiefs and transfer these powers to the new democratically elected central government".[3] Khama also "encourage[d] the people to identify with the new nation-state rather than continue the parochial tribal loyalties".[4] If we are to transfer the writer's line of argument to Botswana, could this have been because Khama himself, unlike Sobhuza II, was western educated and less enamoured to the "very considerable but essentially mundane day to day duties which went with chieftaincy"?[5] Suffice to say, such comparisons to account for why Swaziland, and not the other former British protectorates, developed into an absolute monarchy would have added an extra layer of nuance and texture to the narrative which has been drowned in overdrawing Swazi exceptionalism. Additionally, an exploration of

2 W Henderson, "Seretse Khama: A Personal Appreciation", *African Affairs* 89 (354), 1990, p. 27.
3 JA Wiseman, "Botswana: The achievement of Seretse Khama", *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 70 (280), 1980, p. 409.
4 Wiseman, "Botswana: The achievement of Seretse Khama".
5 Wiseman, "Botswana: The achievement of Seretse Khama".

the mind-set or psychology of the major actors or stakeholders identified in part 2 of the book, beyond economic or political interests, would help in further appreciating the competing standpoints in the constitution-making process in Swaziland.

Secondly, the author presents a false analogy by lauding King Sobhuza as a benevolent and paternal despot because unlike his African contemporaries such as Macias Nguema and Idi Amin, he had a lower (dead) body count (see Chapter 7).[6] However, since the central focus of this book is to do with matters constitutional, Sobhuza arrived at this post-1973 "void" after "slaughtering" the constitution itself and all the independent institutions that acted as safeguards against the King's excesses. An easy example of this can be seen in the stalemate between the King and the judiciary over the Ngwenya Affair, in which Sobhuza insisted on deporting a political rival, Thomas Ngwenya, despite the court's ruling (pp. 285-288). The *tinkhundla* system that replaced the repealed constitution in 1978 can hardly be celebrated because the electoral constituencies only rubber-stamped royal nominees to the Legislature and Cabinet. The lack of strong independent institutions has been identified as the bane to Africa's development by many scholars but more compellingly by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson.[7] So rather than applaud the fact that Sobhuza hardly incarcerated political opponents there is room here to assess the short to long-term implications of weak institutions in Swaziland.

Last, the author is too modest in confining the book's purview too narrowly on how the constitution shaped or influenced political developments in Swaziland. While the point is plainly spelt out on how successive constitutions were important in describing and delimiting political power there is still considerable latitude, that has been left unexplored, on how the constitutions (and the process of making them) regulated societal norms, public life, and the economy more so in the post-colonial order. Also, questions arise on what rights were accorded or extended to women and minority ethnic groups in Swaziland such as the Zulu and Shangane people? The answers to these questions have to do, in part, with the writer's working definition of what a constitution is. Indeed, there is some discussion in the introduction about this in which both the narrower definition to do with a body of laws governing the country and the wider definition that encompasses the country's social code and foundational principles are outlined (pp. 7-8). Unfortunately, we are left wondering which definition Dlamini adopted for this

6 I counted two instances where this name was misspelt as "Ngeuma" in the book i.e. p. 280 and p. 330.

7 See, D Acemoglu and JA Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown, 2012).

book? As such, as far as this work goes, the ensuing discussion only holds for a particular context leading up to 1982 and mostly around the politics of the nation. This, in itself, leads to further questions on whether King Sobhuza II's benevolent and preservation norms were maintained after his death under King Mswati III? A postscript would have been in order here or at least some fleeting attempt to address these concerns in the introduction. Put differently, what type of society (not just political) emerged out of the intrigues, conflicts, and contestations that characterised the constitution-making processes in Swaziland? Perhaps these are questions that Dlamini seeks to develop in a sequel to this book? If that is the case, I certainly can't wait.

AUTHOR:
Neil Roos[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Professor of History, Department of History, University of the Free State, and co-lead implementer, Future Professors' Programme, Department of Higher Education and Training

EMAIL:
RoosND@ufs.ac.za

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.10

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History
2020 45(2):191-193

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch




# PROFILE: DR ADEWUMI DAMILOLA ADEBAYO

Damilola Adebayo is a historian on the rise. With a recent PhD from Cambridge, he began his scholarly journey at the University of Ibadan, followed by an MA in Geneva. And with an interest in histories of infrastructure, he stakes his place on the frontiers not only of African history but other historiographies too. Coming out of the directions championed by the African Economic History Network (AEHN), his doctoral thesis was titled "A socioeconomic History of Electricity in Southern Nigeria, 1898-1972".

Tracking the influence of theorists like Bruno Latour, his work connects with growing global interest, crossing many disciplines, in the history of networks. It also ties in with questions of development, and it spans the colonial and post-colonial periods of Nigerian history. In short, his PhD topic was exceptionally well-positioned.

When Damilola set out on his PhD journey, he wanted to work in the broad field of African economic history, or the history of technology. He discovered a reference to major investment in electrification in Jos during the 1920s, and his interest was piqued. He read more and discussed the question of electrification with his PhD supervisor Gareth Austin as a possible area of study. Damilola's supervisor encouraged his historical and historiographic interest in electrification but cautioned that he needed to make sure that he could secure access to an adequately broad spectrum of archival material. Austin is a leading figure in African economic history, and this vignette emphasises how important the role of a supervisor is in navigating

an academic career towards promising horizons at that critical stage marked by the beginning of the doctoral study.

Damilola is the oldest of four children and like many African scholars (including this author) the first in his family to enter university. The potential pitfalls in the way of first-generation students are innumerable, but Damilola negotiated these on his way to the prized Cambridge doctorate. And in October 2020 he received news that his dissertation had secured final, formal approval from Cambridge. In addition to his academic work, Damilola is a family man, married and proud father to one son.

He has plans to publish journal articles and chapters out of his PhD. While much of his energy is currently devoted to building this collection of articles, he is also beginning to concentrate on another staging point along the way to a career as a professional historian, preparing a first monograph, tentatively titled *Electric Urbanism: Technology and Socioeconomic Life In Nigeria*.

Many early-career scholars have difficulty in imagining a research project beyond the PhD, the cluster of articles and the first book which emerges out of the doctoral thesis. Damilola has already given thought to this second phase of his research career and drawn some of the outlines for a new project that begins in the field where he undertook his doctoral research – what he is *known* for - but which progresses to broader historiographic, methodological and archival fields. In this phase of his research, Damilola intends to investigate the socio-cultural and economic life of western technologies in Nigeria since the mid-nineteenth century. He is keen to explore the political, intellectual, environmental, social and economic contexts within which western energy, communication and transportation technologies were introduced, hybridised, reinvented or discarded by Nigerians, all the while paying attention to the changes these technologies wrought upon Nigerian society.

When asked about the historical text which has most influenced him, Damilola did not hesitate to cite Anthony Hopkins' classic, *An Economic History of West Africa*.[1] Since the 1970s, this text has been massively influential in energising various waves of African economic history, and for Damilola, what is especially compelling about the text is Hopkins' capacity for synthesis. He remarked too on the extent to which it has informed his doctoral research, including sections of his thesis dealing with economic agency, planning, industrialisation and even technological developments that came decades after Hopkins published his book.

1 AG Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973).

Outside of academic work, Damilola likes to read biographies. He enjoys taking long walks, sometimes by himself and sometimes with his family. And he likes old sitcoms and he is currently watching *Desmond's*, which he finds fascinating for its insights into the everyday lives of the Windrush generation, people who migrated to Britain from the West Indies between the late 1940s and the 1970s.

In 2021 Damilola will be taking up a post as an assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington (UNCW). We can expect his ongoing work to contribute substantially to the idea of Southern history, notably what modernity, "development" and technology meant for Nigerian people and how people in that society defied, re-configured or re-purposed these trajectories as they made their nineteenth- and twentieth-century worlds. UNCW is fortunate to have attracted a scholar of such promise. But it is also an indictment of persistent inequalities in global higher education that we are not able to retain a historian of Damilola's potential in an African university.

AUTHOR:
Ngwabi Bhebe[1],

AFFILIATION:
[1]Emeritus Professor, Founding Vice Chancellor of the Midlands State University, Former Professor of History, University of Zimbabwe

EMAIL:
bheben@staff.msu.ac.zw

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH45.v2.11

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)
Southern Journal for Contemporary History

2020 45(2):194-195

PUBLISHED:
30 December 2020

Published by the UFS
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/jch




# OBITUARY FOR PROFESSOR CHENGETAI ZVOBGO

Professor Chengetai Zvobgo will be remembered as a conscientious and hardworking scholar of history, who devoted himself to scrupulous research in archives to understand the social development of Africans in Zimbabwe in response to the western impact. He used the Christian missionary penetration of Zimbabwe at the beginning of the 20th Century, starting with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, under the tutelage of the redoubtable Professor George Shepperson of Edinburgh University, as the launch pad of his lifetime intellectual pursuit. That journey soon broadened to cover all the missionary organisations that laboured in Zimbabwe and also embraced all their three ministries of teaching, healing as well as evangelisation.

Professor Zvobgo shows that the primary objective of the missionaries was to win African souls for Christ and to expand the Kingdom of God into the country. Western education and medical science were the twin tools the missionaries employed to demolish what they believed to be the superstitious basis of heathenism in order to prepare the mind for the Christian faith. Professor Zvobgo indeed demonstrates that missionary education, which in time received grudging support from the colonial state, was broad to include industrial training covering carpentry, building, agriculture and domestic science. All those trades contributed to transforming the material way of life of Africans. Thus, what was initially intended simply to be a basis for planting the Christian faith ended up producing Africans equipped with different skills, professions and other modern occupations. With time Professor

Zvobgo matured into researching into Zimbabwe history in general, where he was able to show how the mission trained Africans developed to occupy the different sectors of modernising Zimbabwe society and economy.

At the same time as Professor Zvobgo was researching and writing history, he was also devoting himself to teaching and training students from undergraduate to PhDs. He was a renowned teacher, known for his witty humour and much loved by his students.

# CONTENTS

2415-0509 (online)
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509



HUMANITIES
GEESTESWETENSKAPPE
UFS·UV



Published by the University of the Free State
Production by SUN MeDIA