

**Acquisition, Ownership and Use of Natural Resources in South Eastern
Zimbabwe, 1929-1969**

By

Noel Ndumeya

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Supervisor: Prof. I.R. Phimister

Co-Supervisor: Dr. C. Masakure

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Abstract

This study examines patterns of natural resources distribution and land use in south eastern Zimbabwe, originally known as Melsetter, and later Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. The study focuses on land utilisation, water, game and indigenous timber uses from 1929 to 1969. Prior to white occupation of this area, Africans owned and used these resources under precolonial communal tenure systems. The means by which these resources were seized, particularly in what became the white settler areas of the Melsetter and Chipinga Highlands, is traced from the mid-1890s onwards. Thereafter changing ownership and land use transformations are examined in detail among the diverse inhabitants of this region. African livelihood experiences during the Great Depression of c 1929-1939 are closely analysed, and their agency is brought out through the ways in which they challenged colonial policy. In the pre-1945 era, although the best land had already been alienated, Africans continued to use these resources as labour tenants. That the Melsetter District had great agricultural potential partly explains why it attracted white settlement as early as the mid-1890s. The study also analyses why, when compared to other white settled districts, for more than fifty years after colonial occupation, Melsetter remained an agriculturally backward and undercapitalised settler region. After the Second World War, parts of the region were transformed by the acquisition of land by corporate timber concerns. In the 1960s, coffee growers who arrived mostly from east Africa settled in parts of this region. By embarking on commercial coffee production, they had a significant impact on the agricultural history of the area. These secondary land acquisitions are explored at three levels; firstly, as a local reflection of changing global political and economic conditions; secondly, the intensive use of land resources, and how this had a direct impact on the Africans who formerly utilised this land as tenants and, thirdly; changing African reactions especially where this led to direct confrontation. These historical developments are examined within the broad context of the heterogeneous societies inhabiting this region.

Keywords

acquisition, ownership, land use, natural resources, livelihoods, agency, labour tenancy, reserves, plantations, coffee, conflict.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie ondersoek die verspreidingspatrone van natuurlike hulpbronne en grondgebruik in suidoos Zimbabwe, in die gebied oorspronklik bekend as Melsetter, en later as Melsetter en Chipinga Distrik. Die ondersoek fokus op die gebruik van grond, water, wild en inheemse hout tussen 1929 en 1969. Voordat hierdie area deur Europeërs beset is, het Afrikane hierdie hulpbronne binne 'n prekoloniale stelsel van gemeenskaplike besit, gebruik. Die manier waarop hierdie hulpbronne buitgemaak is, veral in die latere wit setlaararea van Melsetter en Chipinga Hoogland, word vanaf die middel-1890s ondersoek. Volgende word veranderende patrone van eienaarskap en grondgebruik onder die diverse bewoners van hierdie gebied deeglik ondersoek. Nadere ondersoek word na die bestaanservaringe van Afrikane gedurende die Groot Depressie van ca. 1929 tot 1939 ingestel, en daar word aangedui hoe hul agentskap veral in die manier waarop hulle koloniale beleid uitgedaag het, na vore kom. Alhoewel die beste grondgebied reeds voor 1945 onteien is, het Afrikane as huurarbeiders hierdie hulpbron aanhou benut. Die ryk landboupotensiaal van die Melsetter Distrik bied 'n gedeeltelike verduideliking vir waarom dié distrik reeds so vroeg as die middel-1890s Europese setlaars gelok het. Hierdie ondersoek analiseer waarom Melsetter, in vergelyking met ander wit setlaarsdistrikte, vir meer as vyftig jaar ná koloniale besetting steeds 'n landboukundig agterlik en onderkapitaliseerde setlaarstreek was. Ná die Tweede Wêreldoorlog is gedeeltes van die streek deur korporatiewe houtondernemings se verkryging van grond getransformeer. In die 1960s het koffieprodusente, meestal uit Oos-Afrika, hul in dele van die streek gevestig. Kommersiële koffieproduksie sou 'n belangrike impak op die landboukundige geskiedenis van dié area hê. Hierdie sekondêre prosesse van grondverkryging word op drie vlakke ondersoek: eerstens, as 'n plaaslike weerspieëling van globale politieke en ekonomiese toestande; tweedens, in terme van die intensiewe gebruik van grondhulpbronne, en die direkte uitwerking daarvan op die Afrikane wat die grond bewerk het; en, derdens, Afrikane se veranderende reaksies, veral waar dit tot direkte konfrontasie gelei het. Hierdie historiese gebeurtenisse word binne die breë konteks van die heterogene samelewings wat hierdie streek bewoon, ondersoek.

Sleutelwoorde

Grondverkryging, Eienaarskap, Grondgebruik, Natuurlike Hulpbronne, Agentskap, Afrikane as Huurarbeid, Reserwes, Plantasies, Koffie, Konflik.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABM	American Board Mission
ACF	African Coast Fever
AMEC	American Methodist Episcopal Church
APAs	African Purchase Areas
BSAC	British South Africa Company
BSAP	British South Africa Police
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
CONEX	Conservation and Extension
CSF	Chirinda Station File
ICA	Intensive Conservation Area
ICM	Independent Church Movement
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
IDAC	Industrial Development Advisory Committee
LAA	Land Apportionment Act
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NC	Native Commissioner
NLHA	Native Land Husband Act
NRB	Natural Resources Board
NSCS	Native Self Constructing Society
RBVA	Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association
RCGA	Rhodesia Coffee Growers Association
RFC	Rhodesia Forestry Commission
RLB	Rural Land Board
RMS	Road Motor Services
RNFU	Rhodesia National Farmers Union

RSS	Research and Specialist Services
RWC	Rhodesia Wattle Company
SRNLSC	Southern Rhodesia Native Labour Supply Commission
TTC	Tanganda Tea Company
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
USA	United States of America
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front

List of Place Names

Old Name	New Name
Belingwe	Mberengwa
Chipinga	Chipinge
Enkeldoorn	Chivhu
Fort Victoria	Masvingo
Inyazura	Nyazura
Marandellas	Marondera
Maranke	Marange
Mashaba	Mashava
Melsetter	Chimanimani
Northern Rhodesia	Zambia
Nyasaland	Malawi
Portuguese East Africa	Mozambique
Rusapi	Rusape
Sabi River	Save River
Salisbury	Harare
Shabani	Zvishavane
Southern Rhodesia	Zimbabwe
Tanganyika	Tanzania
Umtali	Mutare
Wankie	Hwange

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Chapter One: Introduction

Access to and contestations over natural resources, notably land, water, timber and game, have been central features of the history of south Eastern Zimbabwe.¹ This dissertation examines the politics and economics of access and use of these resources from 1929 to 1969. The issues are explored in the context of the political economy as well as cultural practices of all of the inhabitants of south eastern Zimbabwe. It begins with an overview of the process whereby natural resources were acquired by white settlers at the turn of the 20th Century. These resources were seized from people who already claimed ownership of them. The colonial acquisitions are examined in the context of four major historical landmarks. Firstly, during the 1890s, when the colonial occupation of south eastern Zimbabwe, which became the Mberemba District immediately following colonisation. Secondly, the discussion centres on the Great Depression and Second World War, when all communities had to deal with the challenges of these periods. Thirdly, it examines developments from the post Second World War period to the late 1950s, when the bulk of the land on the Mberemba Highlands were acquired by large scale plantation enterprises. Fourthly, the study focuses on the Chipinga Highlands, during the 1960s, when this area diversified into intensive commercial coffee production.

In the precolonial period, traditional authorities were central to land and natural resources ownership and allocation among Africans. Some scholars have argued that land was the individual property of chiefs who distributed it to everyone in need.² Other academics claim that chiefs held land not as their private property but as trustees of their followers.³ Though these perspective vary somewhat, they all place traditional authority at the centre of land ownership practice. Taking this as its starting point, this study examines the natural resources ownership patterns that followed colonial seizure of these resources. Equally crucial is an examination of how these resources were used, and how changing land use patterns fostered animosities where they departed from traditional practices. With colonisation came the commercialisation of natural resources which interfered with traditional use practices.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, this study uses the colonial place names used during the period under study. See pagevii for a list of colonial and post-colonial names.

² Herskovits, 'property concepts', *Junod*, 11, 6, 379, cited in J.K. Rennie, 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism among the Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia 1890-1935' (PhD Thesis, North-Western University, 1973), 50.

³ C. Bullock, 'Can a Native Make a Will? Concept of Testate Succession in Native Law', *NADA*, No.7, 1929, 107.

At the same time, this study is sensitive to the various communities inhabiting the Melsetter District. It explores how this diversity affected the processes of resource contestation. The indigenous Ndaou people of the broader Shona culture were by far the majority inhabitants of this region. So far as the white settler farmers inhabiting this region were concerned, they comprised a majority of Afrikaners, as well as farmers of English origin and missionaries of American descent. Nor were these farmers homogeneous economically and socially. For about the first 50 years of colonial occupation, the region was dominated by frequently undercapitalised white farmers but thereafter, it opened up to a greater degree of diversity with the entry of corporate organisations which invested in large scale plantations. Africans, who were by far the majority of the inhabitants, were also divided by social status, gender, age, religion and wealth.

The Melsetter District was closely settled by white settlers who admired its great agricultural potential. Yet, despite its considerable agricultural potential, throughout the first half century of colonisation, it remained one of the least developed but with a large percentage of a white settler community. This was not a static trend, however. This thesis explores the context within which patterns of natural resource ownership changed over time, and how this influenced development trajectories. Of particular concern are global and national developments after the Second World War and their impact on this region. It also examines how decolonisation processes impacted specifically on this region.

In all of this, access to land and natural resources is placed in the context of specific geographical, ecological and economic areas occupied by the various inhabitants of this region. For instance, the study asks how it was that after the 1930 Land Apportionment Act (LAA), some Africans acquired land in the African Purchase Areas (APAs), while others found themselves in the reserves, on crown lands, or ended up as tenants and labourers on white commercial farms and plantations. Crucially too, the reserves differed from one to the other with some being more productive than others. From the late 1920s, a minority of some Africans had access to better agricultural land, especially irrigation plots in dry lowveld reserves. The role of state is also examined as it was a significant player in land use interventions. It promulgated key legal instruments and put broader policy frameworks which influenced economic development or lack of it. No less important is the extent to which Africans were victims of colonial policy and economic marginalisation. By paying close attention to differentiation, this thesis explores the manner and means by which some people challenged colonial policy, and how these challenges influenced policy implementation.

There were heightened concerns about environmental degradation during the post Second world War period. The study explores how the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICA) Schemes unfolded in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. It explores the roots of environmental degradation, outlining problems that were unique to these particular districts. Basing on natural resources ownership and use practices characterising the Melsetter and Chipinga Highlands, the study further examines colonial perception about African and European natural resource uses and how these informed state intervention measures.

While this study is not directly concerned about borderland studies, the Rhodesia-Portuguese East Africa border features prominently throughout this study. The Anglo Portuguese settlement of 1891 formalised the border between Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa without clearly demarcating the border. When the border was finally demarcated in 1897, it left the Ndau people, sharing common culture and even blood bonds, across both sides of the border. An important dimension of this study is transnational agency and the significance of the border for African livelihoods and resistance against colonial domination.

From the late 1950s to the 1960s, Africans from the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts openly confronted the colonial system. This was characterised by incidents of murder, sabotage on white owned timber plantations as well as arson. This came as a surprise to officials who had all along considered Africans in Melsetter and Chipinga as particularly law abiding. The study uses changing land ownership and land use patterns as a window to view the range of experiences of Africans and how these contributed to the build up of tension and violence between growing numbers of Africans and the State.

About the Administrative System

Following colonial occupation of present day south eastern Zimbabwe in 1893, the settlers named it Melsetter, after a family estate of Thomas Moodie in Scotland.⁴ The original Melsetter Township was established in 1893, situated in the southern part of the district. However, in mid-1897, suffering from malaria, the settlers surveyed a new township 35 miles further north, carrying the name Melsetter with it to the new site. It became the location of government

⁴ S.P. Olivier, *Many Treks Made Rhodesia, Volume 6* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1975), 52.

offices, the gaol and the courthouse.⁵ For some years, the original Melsester Township was called South Melsester, but latter assumed the name Chipinga, after a local chief. Another emerging township, originally named North Melsester, became Cashel, after a local settler who owned the farm Thabanchu.⁶

While these three areas were originally administered as one, because of the size and rugged terrain of the Northern and Eastern parts of the district, and subsequent transport challenges, a Native Commissioner's (NC) camp and a police post was then set up at Chipinga in 1905.⁷ In 1913, Chipinga became the seat of a periodical court of the whole Melsester District, with an Assistant NC being appointed in 1915. In 1920, the main administrative centre was moved from Melsester to Chipinga, the latter becoming the district headquarters for the whole Melsester District, after which Melsester became a sub-division with an Assistant NC.⁸ In 1945, they were finally separated into Melsester and Chipinga Districts and thereafter each had a permanent Native Commissioner.⁹ With the attainment of majority rule in 1980, Melsester and Chipinga Districts were renamed Chimanimani and Chipinge respectively. For this dissertation, where the name Melsester is used before 1945, it refers to the whole district. Where the name Chipinga is used before 1945, it refers specifically to what became Chipinga District after 1945. After 1945, the names Melsester and Chipinga are used accordingly. Where appropriate, the term south eastern Zimbabwe is also used to refer to the whole area under study. Maps 1 and 2 below show the area under study.

⁵ D. Jeater, *Law, language and Science, the Invention of the "Native Mind" in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1930* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, NH, 2007), 37.

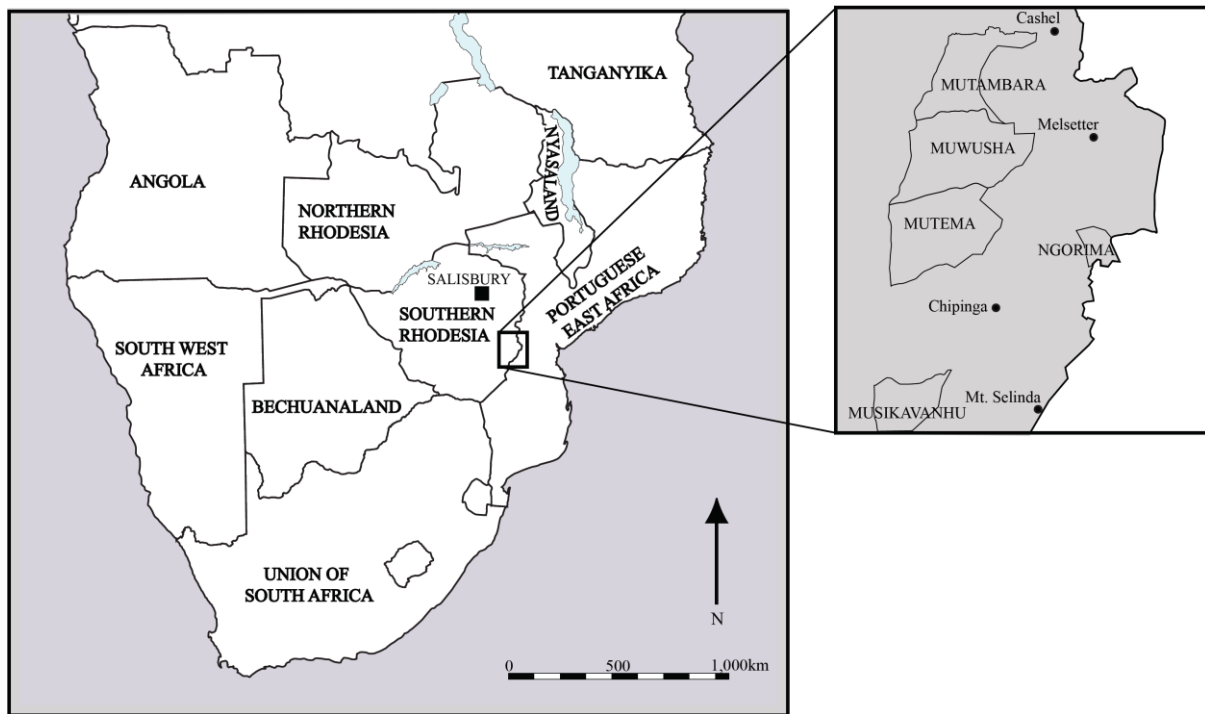
⁶ S. Sinclair, *The Story of Melsester* (Salisbury, M.O. Collins 1971). 11.

⁷ C.H. Mabulala, 'The Native Affairs Department in Melsester District: The Administration of L.C. Meredith 1895-1909 and P. Nielson, 1926-1936 (B.A. Honours Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1995), 2.

⁸ A. Bolding, 'In Hot Water, A Study on sociotechnical intervention models and practices of water use in smallholder agriculture, Nyanyadzi catchment, Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe' (PhD Thesis, Wageningen, 2004).

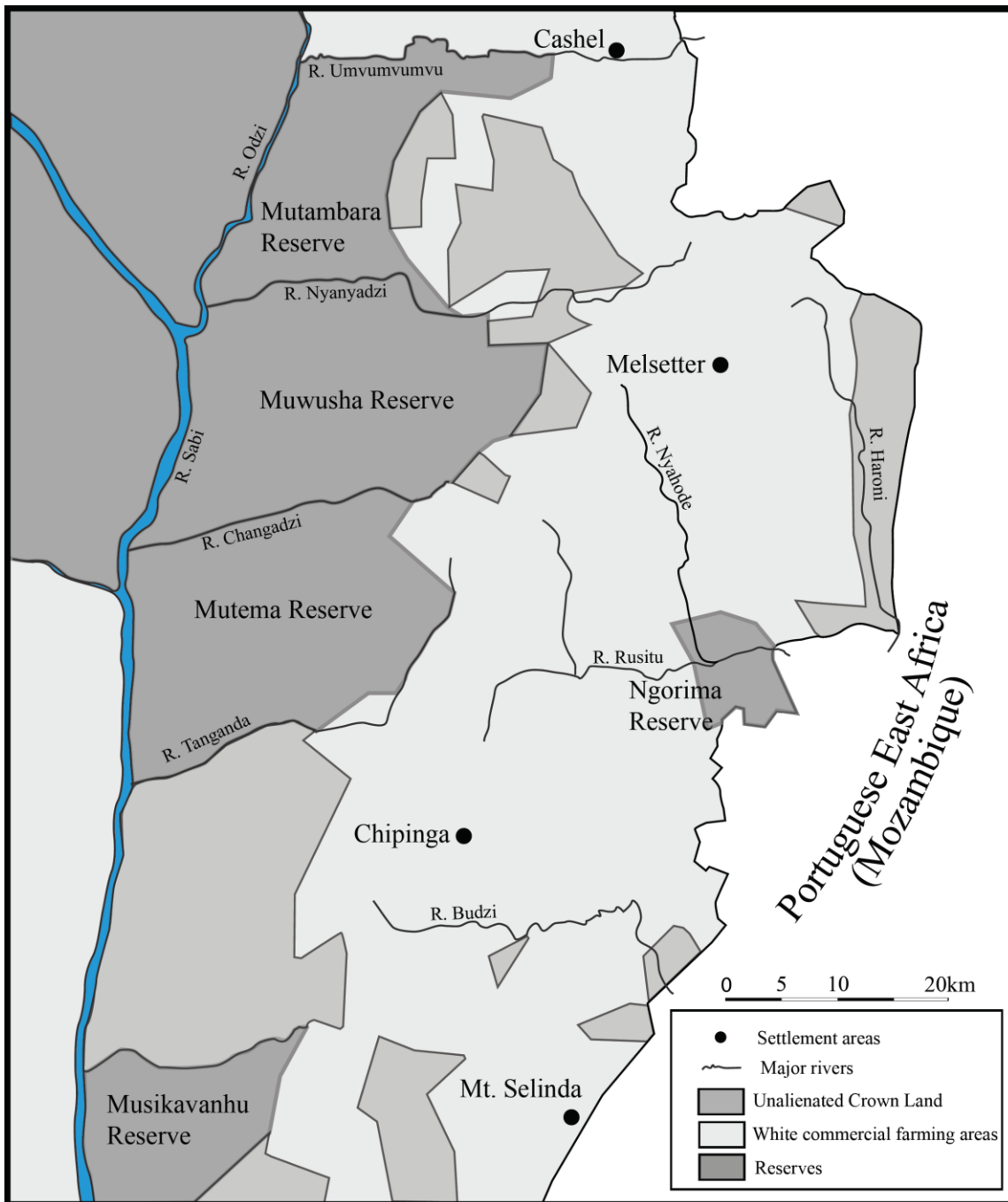
⁹ Mabulala, 'The Native Affairs Department in Melsester District', 3.

Map 1: Southern Africa and the Area of Study



Map by H. Garnett, (University of the Free State, 2015)

Map 2: Melsetter District during the 1940s, (excluding African Purchase Areas)



Source: Adapted from NAZ, L: 32.15.9F, B: 126949, Lands, Coffee Settlement Scheme, Vol.4.

South Eastern Zimbabwe: The Place and its People

Prior to colonisation, the Melsetter District was part of the Gaza state. As a result of colonisation, the Gaza State was divided into two, with western Gazaland falling under Rhodesia while south Gazaland became part of Portuguese East Africa. While this study is principally concerned with the Rhodesian side, it gazes across the border whenever this helps in understanding historical developments on the Rhodesian side.

The Melsetter District consisted of highlands and lowlands. The eastern side, bordering Portuguese East Africa, constitutes the highveld, with altitude ranging from 3000 feet, culminating in the Chimanimani mountain range at an altitude of 8 000 feet.¹⁰ The climate of this region is also determined by this geography. The highlands have cool temperatures, high rainfall and fertile soils. The highlands are also sources of rivers that flow to the east and west. Of these, Changazi, Nyanyadzi, Tanganda and Umvumvumvu Rivers flow west into the Sabi River while Haroni, Musapa, Rusitu, Budzi and Musirizwi flow eastwards directly to the Indian Ocean. During the colonial period, Zimbabwe was divided into six natural farming regions. In ascending order, region one comprises the best farming region suitable for intensive and specialised farming activities, while region six is unsuitable for any farming activities.¹¹ Endowed with these natural features and resources, the Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands is one of the best farming regions of the country, falling under natural farming regions one and two.¹²

The western part of the plateau drops away suddenly into the lowlands. This is known as the Sabi Valley, and its altitude lies between 800 and 1 800 feet. Being on the leeward side of the highlands, this valley forms a rain shadow; receives very low rainfall and is exposed to high temperatures. Though endowed with fertile soils, this lower region was classified under natural farming regions four and five, and its productivity was greatly hampered by high temperatures and lack of rainfall. In a testimony to the Lands Commission in 1925, one D.M. Stanley said about the Sabi Valley:

¹⁰ H.V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984), 108.

¹¹ G. Kay, *Rhodesia, A Human Geography* (London, University of London Press, 1970), 20.

¹² *Ibid.*

The Sabi Valley may well be called tropical, the temperature in summer is anything over 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. It is impossible for Natives to work there between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Otherwise a couple of days see them crippled. Even Europeans in boots suffer to a certain extent. It is malarious and the general climatic conditions are not favourable to the propagation of the Nordic European race, perhaps the dark Mediterranean races might make a practical success.¹³

As the white settler community confiscated land in the highlands, the Sabi Valley areas were set aside as African reserves. Reserves were first demarcated by NC Hulley in 1895, and this was continued by his successor, Meredith. The criteria used for selecting African reserves was that these should be “areas which did not attract whites”, as a result, “the greater part of these areas was rocky and mountainous”.¹⁴

There is no doubt about the existence of several well established and relatively compact chiefdoms in the district by the eve of colonial rule.¹⁵ The existence of these chiefdoms is an indication of permanently settled communities. Chief Mapungwana’s sphere of influence covered most of the Chirinda area of Chipinga Highlands, extending eastwards into what became Portuguese East Africa. To the south western part of Chirinda was Chief Musikavanhu, with his chiefdom covering the area to the north and west of Chirinda, extending into the Sabi Valley. Chief Mutema’s territory covered a large territory to the north of Tanganda River, bordering with Rusitu and Chipita Rivers to the east. Further north-east was chief Ngorima, Chikukwa, Mutambara and Muwusha.¹⁶ As elsewhere among Shona communities, these chiefs were central societal figureheads, who directed the socio-economic activities of their chiefdoms, among which were the allocation of land and the settlement of disputes.

Further to that, like most other Shona communities, the Ndau economy was based on subsistence agriculture, based on crop production, livestock production, hunting, gathering and limited manufacturing. The community believed in the power of the ancestors, whom they thought provided rainfall, enhanced soil fertility, and were responsible for good harvests and healthy livestock. This partly explains the presence of several sacred forests in the district, which were sites for ancestral worship and rain making ceremonies. There is ample evidence for a thriving agricultural economy right from the time of colonial occupation, with an agrarian

¹³ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 109.

¹⁴ Rennie, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism’, 179.

¹⁵ NAZ, S2929/1/7, Delineation Officer’s suggestions regarding the squatter problem, from J.L. Reid to secretary for Internal Affairs, 25 June 1966. Rennie, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism’ 68-78.

¹⁶ NAZ, S2929/1/7, Delineation Officer’s suggestions regarding the squatter problem, from J.L. Reid to secretary for Internal Affairs, 25 June 1966.

economy characterised by: "...growing mealies, poko corn, kaffir corn, millet, ground nuts, beans (five sorts), egg fruit, cabbages, tomatoes, peas, pumpkins of sorts, watermelons, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, chillies, tobacco, bananas and lemons and these all grow in perfection".¹⁷ Other crops were "tomatoes, small red papers, pineapples, lemons, cassava, tobacco and coconuts".¹⁸ Further to that, "Livestock included cattle, goats, sheep and fowls".¹⁹

Whites' perspective of the Melsetter area

The beauty of the eastern highlands and its agricultural potential were well captured in early colonial record and modern literature. It was obvious to the settlers that the equitable temperatures and rainfall of the highlands made them quite favourable for agricultural production. "We passed many streams, the rippling of whose water was a novelty to me who had heard nothing like it in Africa since I left England", wrote one of them.²⁰ Dunbar Moodie, who first visited south eastern Zimbabwe in 1891, and later organised the first group of settlers for its occupation, described it as follows;

The world was too lovely for words...the beautiful green trees, the green veld, the lovely waters, the flowers and everything one's heart would wish for...wheat, barley, oats seem to do well here, the cattle are in prime condition.²¹

He further compared it with "the best in Natal, Swaziland and Zululand".²² Among the earliest literature about the area is also the work of the Germany explorer, Carl Peters, who wrote that the area had one of the finest climates in the world, adding;

It is impossible to imagine anything like it in Europe. I can only recall certain September days in North Germany and nothing else. But how much more intense is everything here, light, colour, even the air. One cannot well describe it.²³

Rennie's work indicates that the Melsetter District was already thickly populated by Africans when the white settlers arrived. After touring a few chiefdoms: Mapungwana, Musikavanhu and Mutema in 1891, missionaries, Wilder, Bunker and Dr Thompson, estimated the

¹⁷J.K. Rennie, 'Settlers and Missionaries in Southern Rhodesia 1893-1925' (University of Rhodesia, Henderson Seminar Paper, 3 November 1966), 10.

¹⁸ Rennie, 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism', 46.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 'From Umtali to Gazaland, 1902', *Zambezi Mission Record*, 2, cited in Moyana, *Political Economy of Land*, 109.

²¹ S.P. Olivier, *Many Treks Made Rhodesia, Volume 6* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1975), 101.

²² Ibid, 101.

²³ C. Peters, *The Eldorado of the Ancients Volume 16* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1977), 244.

population of these 4000 square miles chiefdoms to be about 10 000.²⁴ This is a clear indication of the area's suitability for human settlement.

Literature review

Arguably, the most significant background study for this dissertation is J.K. Rennie's work on Christian missions and the origins of nationalism among the Ndau people. Rennie's focus was on activities of the American Board Mission (ABM), and its two main Mission Stations of Mt Silinda and Chikore, in the Chipinga District. Rennie identified three institutions that contributed to the development of African nationalism: the town, mission and farm. "...the most crucial factor of town life", he says, "...it gave to Africans their first real experience of the principles of segregation and privileges which underlay colonial society".²⁵ In these different ways, urban Africans from different ethnicities formed associations in struggle for their welfare. Secondly, he argued, "by teaching beliefs and values which supported colonial rule, as well as obedience to authority, Christian missions became closely identified with colonial rule".²⁶ At the same time, the mission provided the only opportunity for Africans to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for social mobility.

Christian Missions sometimes fostered African dignity and assertiveness by preaching equality in institutions where authoritarianism otherwise thrived. For this theme, Rennie devotes chapter seven to show how, one Kamba Simango was a victim of this hypocrisy.²⁷ A third catalyst for the development of nationalism was the farm, which clearly demonstrated evidence for African land dispossession, and "the creation of chronic feeling of insecurity among the Africans, no matter on what category of land they resided".²⁸ While Rennie's study ends in 1935, the institutions which were established before 1935 matured and were transformed during the latter period covered in this study. Therefore, Rennie's work provides a solid foundation for this study.

The heterogeneous nature of the white settler community in early colonial Melssetter District has again been partially discussed by Rennie. He began one of his papers as follows:

In the eyes of the Ndau, missionaries and settlers were of the same genus. All whites were settlers, some were vabunhu-Boers, some vangezi. Some were farmers, miners,

²⁴ Rennie, 'Settlers and Missionaries in Southern Rhodesia', 5.

²⁵ Rennie, 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism', 2.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 377-426.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

traders or “teachers”, i.e. missionaries. This view seems to have obtained particularly in areas where missionaries and farmers arrived more or less simultaneously. All Europeans were settlers, distinguished only by occupation.²⁹

Rennie then proceeds to show the nature and intensity of rivalry that developed between the majority Afrikaner farmers, particularly those who settled in South Melssetter, and Missionaries of the ABM who originated from the United States of America (USA) and established Mt Silinda and Chikore Missions. Conflict between missionaries and the Afrikaner settler community centred on the ownership and use of land and labour.³⁰ By focusing on the period from 1895 to 1925, Rennie’s paper provides a background for this study, which examines developments from the late 1920s onwards.

The indigenous communities of the Melssetter District were predominantly the Ndaue people of the broader Shona society. One of the more recent accounts of the history of this area is by Jocelyn Alexander. The central theme of her comparative study is land, race and authority in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe.³¹ Alexander’s study covers a 113 year period, from 1890 to 2003, within which she compares developments between the Chimanimani and Insiza Districts. Her case study of the Chimanimani District is confined to African reserves, leaving out Chipinge District, which is part of the same geographical, ecological and cultural zone with Chimanimani. Furthermore, Alexander does not examine the white commercial farming areas of Melssetter and Chipinga Highlands. These demand attention, not least because of their reciprocal and often inimical relations with the reserves. That Alexander’s study reveals more differences than similarities between Insiza and Chimanimani is not surprising considering that the ecologies, economies and cultures of Chimanimani and Insiza Districts are different. While most of Chimanimani district is in natural farming regions one and two, Insiza is in region four, and added to that, the indigenous inhabitants of the two districts’ are Ndaue and Ndebele people respectively. Nonetheless, her work provides a starting point for this study’s interpretation of the colonial history of south eastern Zimbabwe.

Equally salient is D.M. Hughes comparative study of state, chiefs and land dispossession in Chimanimani.³² Hughes compares the Vhimba area, a fraction of Rusitu Valley in Chimanimani, with Gogoi area of Mozambique. He identifies three historical trajectories in

²⁹ Rennie, ‘Settlers and Missionaries in Southern Rhodesia’, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

³¹ J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land, State-Making & the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2006).

³² D. M. Hughes, *From Enslavement to Environmentalism, Politics on a Southern African Frontier* (Seattle and London, University of London Press, 2006).

landholdings that progressively dispossessed the Africans and forced them into Vhimba Reserve. These were, firstly, the arrival of the Afrikaner trekkers during the mid-1890s; secondly the afforestation programmes of the 1950s; and thirdly, the extension of the Chimanimani National Park in 1965, which alienated half of the Ngorima Reserve, thereby crowding more people into Vhimba.³³ Hughes's approach here is similar to that of Alexander when comparing two geographically isolated areas. The fundamental difference is that, while Alexander studied two districts in the same country, Hughes compared two territories which were under different colonial and post-colonial powers.

By excluding reserves in Chipinge District and the whole of Chipinge and Chimanimani Highlands, both Alexander and Hughes omitted the history of white farmers, missionaries, and African tenants and their activities on the highlands. This study takes an alternative approach, keeping close track of the interplay between Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands acquired by the white farmers and the Africans reserves in the lowveld.

H.V. Moyana examined the political economy of land in Zimbabwe, from the 1890s to the 1970s.³⁴ His work was largely national in outlook. It traces key aspects of the colonial land system as well as theories of racism and segregation, and how the Land Apportionment Act became the basis for land acquisition and ownership. Moyana devotes Chapter Four to the Melsetter District, which he refers to as Gazaland and discusses the occupation and land alienation by early Afrikaner trekkers during the 1890s.³⁵ His study emphasises white and black conflict over land. But Moyana's case study of Gazaland barely goes beyond the 1930s, a gap which this study fills.

Throughout the period under study, Melsetter's white settler community was predominantly Afrikaner, many of whom had migrated from what was then the Orange Free State during the last decade of the 19th century. Examination of this community in Zimbabwe is scanty, and the only academic study by Richard Hodder-Williams focuses on the white farming district of Marandellas.³⁶ Hodder-Williams' examination of Afrikaner and English farmers traces their history from challenges of pioneer settlement, the growth of the agricultural industry, through the trajectories of the tobacco booms and Great Depression, World Wars and their impact, at the same time highlighting the role played by government in promoting white settler

³³*Ibid*, 45-74.

³⁴Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*.

³⁵*Ibid*, 108-126.

³⁶ R. Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, A History of the Marandellas District, 1890-1965* (London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1983).

agriculture. Hodder-Williams' study also revealed the underlying racial tensions between farmers of Afrikaner and English backgrounds, something reflected by the district's settlement patterns, with the former dominating northern Marandellas and the latter were in the south.

M. Rukuni studied the evolution of national agricultural policy in Zimbabwe between 1890 and 1990.³⁷ His study can best be described as a national survey of trajectories of colonial and post-colonial agriculture. He analysed policy measures implemented by various settler governments and the post-colonial government, and the impact of the interventions on the agricultural history of Zimbabwe. But missing from his study are the nuances and detail associated with case studies.

Zimbabwean agrarian studies at national level have largely focused on major agrarian activities. V.E.M. Machingaidze worked on what he termed "the three pillars of settler agriculture", namely maize, tobacco and beef.³⁸ Machingaidze examined the development of capitalist agriculture from 1908 to 1939. Striking in this development are the state intervention measures, covering all aspects of the agricultural business, including technical, financial and marketing support. This industry became significant to the Rhodesian economy, contributing no less than fifty per cent of total farming income at any given time during the colonial period. The story of the tobacco industry is taken further by Steven Rubert. Apart from chronicling a general history of tobacco growing in Zimbabwe, Rubert examined the capitalisation of this industry, its work processes and the relations between workers and employers.³⁹ I.R. Phimister examined the growth of the beef cattle industry, showing the relationship between the settler husbandry community and successive governments, as well as how it remained sensitive to global trends.⁴⁰ Related to Phimister's study is that of N. Samasuwo, whose examination of the Rhodesian beef industry during the Second World War focused on the production of war-time

³⁷ M. Rukuni, 'The Evolution of Agricultural Policy: 1890-1990', in M. Rukuni, P. Tawonezwi, C. Eicher and M. Munyuki-Hungwe and P. Matodi (eds.), *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution Revisited* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2006).

³⁸ V.E.M. Machingaidze, 'The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture with Particular Reference to the Role of the State, 1908-1980' (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1980).

³⁹ S.C. Rubert, *A Most Promising Weed, A History of Tobacco Farming and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1945* (Ohio University, Centre for International Studies, 1998).

⁴⁰ I.R. Phimister, 'Meat and Monopolies: Beef Cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938', *Journal of African History*, xix, 3, 1978.

supplies.⁴¹ Similarly, E. Mufema's study of the impact of the Second World War on Rhodesia specifically examined tobacco, maize and cattle.⁴²

Studies on the growth of capitalist agrarian systems have been done elsewhere within the region. Allan H. Jeeves and Jonathan Crush examined the transition from sharecropping economies to large scale commercial agriculture on the South African "Maize belt".⁴³ Among issues to note are the deliberate measures taken by the state to promote white commercial agriculture during the inter-war years. Jeeves and Crush identifies 80 Acts that were promulgated between 1910 and 1933 in support of white commercial agriculture. Key among these was the May 1913 Land Act, which proved to be a great obstacle to African progress, condemning them to landless cheap labourers, while creating opportunities for white society by availing the most productive land to them. Collin Bundy makes similar observations, noting that the 1913 Act contributed to the fall of the South African peasantry, which had earlier on responded quite progressively to the market opportunities brought about by the Minerals Revolution.⁴⁴ Considering the close economic and political links between colonial South Africa and Zimbabwe, this study also examines the extent to which trends in South African agrarian systems influenced developments in Zimbabwe, particularly the Masetter and Chipinga Districts. Jeeves and Crush further noted that within the same white farming community, there was disharmony and conflict of interests, for instance, between the more prosperous and poorer farmers.⁴⁵ While, more often than not, the former could pay more for their labour, the latter could not, leading to conflicts over labour and labour supply policy. These contestations are also examined in this study.

The role of the South African state in promoting white agriculture was also examined by Kevin Shillington.⁴⁶ Following the discovery of diamonds at Kimberly, African farmers around

⁴¹ N. Samasuwo, 'Food Production and War Supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29:2:2003,

⁴² E. Mufema, 'The Impact of the Second World War on Rhodesian Agriculture with Particular Reference to Tobacco, Maize and Beef' (Seminar paper presented to the Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe, 1992). Scholars worked on other agricultural industries are Mlambo and Pangeti. Their work on the sugar industry chronicles its rise and development. The study also shows the significance of the industry in face of the sanctions that were declared on Rhodesia following Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965.

⁴³ A.J. Jeeves and J. Crush, 'Introduction' in Reeves and Crush (eds), *White Farms, Black Labour, The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910-1950* (Pietmaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1997).

⁴⁴ C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, David Phillip, 1979).

⁴⁵ Jeeves and Crush, 'Introduction' in Reeves and Crush (eds.), *White Farms, Black Labour*, 22.

⁴⁶ K. Shillington, 'Irrigation, Agriculture and the State: The Harts Valley in Historical Perspective' in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting a plough to the Ground, Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986).

Kimberly showed considerable initiative and determination in responding to new business opportunities. They established small scale irrigation projects, grew a variety of food crops to supply the expanding minerals induced food market. They also supplied fuel and building material to the extent that Kimberly labour recruiters complained about the unwillingness of the Tlhaping of Griqualand West to supply labour at the mines.⁴⁷ But due to deliberate state action after 1896, most of the 2000 Africans, with their 3000 and 5000 large and small stock respectively, were forcibly removed to give way to the Harts Valley irrigation scheme, which became the biggest single irrigation project in Southern Africa.⁴⁸

Shillington also examined the relations which then developed between poor white farmers and black stock owners in the Harts Valley. He documents how some undercapitalised white farmers developed strategies to fleece neighbouring black communities of their stock, impounding African owned cattle whenever they “strayed” beyond some ill-defined farm boundaries. Others designed unscrupulous strategies such as fencing their farms on three sides, leaving an open one side adjacent to African settlement to encourage cattle trespass, which they instantly impounded. Others employed men who drove African owned cattle across white farms, so that they could confiscate them for trespass.⁴⁹ This study also examines nature of relations that developed when Africa and European coexisted in agrarian economies.

Aspects of sharecropping and proletarianisation have been explored by T. Kanogo’s in his study of colonial Kenya.⁵⁰ Settler occupation of Kenya’s “White Highlands” rendered thousands of Africans into labour tenancy and sharecropping, while others continued staying on the farms as “squatters”. When, from 1929, the state adopted a concerted effort to reduce “squatter” owned stock, Africans devised several evasive tactics to circumvent state destocking measures. Taking advantage of heterogeneity among white farmers: for instance between more prosperous and poorer farmers, Africans moved from one farm to another, in search of employers who were more tolerant of tenant communities. When Government officials conducted inspection tours, Africans hide their stock by riversides, or on farms which either had already been inspected or were scheduled for later checks, thereby avoiding de-stocking.⁵¹

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 315.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰ T. Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-63* (Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya, 1987), 63.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

Still on aspects of sharecropping and proletarianisation, T. Matsetela made informative contributions about agency during the 1930s in South Africa.⁵² In the pre-1930 northern Orange Free State, sharecropping was mutually beneficial to both the undercapitalised white farmers and the landless black peasantry. However, as white agriculture became more commercialised towards the end of the 1930s, there was rising demand for permanent wage labour, which led to the demise of sharecropping and labour tenancy. Refusing to reduce the number of their stock, or to become full time labourers, a number of African moved from one farmer to another, in search of better terms of tenancy.

Charles van Onselen documented the life of one Kas Maine who, throughout his lifetime, avoided wage employment despite the decline of sharecropping arrangements on the South African agrarian landscape.⁵³ Sharecropping first emerged on the South African Highveld during the last third of the 19th century, as white settlers, who were rich in land, but poor in capital, oxen, tools, and labour, encouraged black peasants who were land hungry but possessing cattle herds, harrows, ploughs, and the labour power of family members to work their farms. As sharecropping declined in the premier grain producing regions after the South African war, it spread north and west, into more arid regions, where less capitalised white landowners and reasonably affluent black tenants continued mutually benefiting from this arrangement. From the mid-1930s onwards, white farmers began mechanising, acquiring, for instance tractors, thereby reducing their dependence on African sharecroppers. This forced modestly prosperous sharecroppers into labour tenancy, wage labour or to abandon white owned land altogether. It is within this changing landscape that Charles van Onselen traces the history of Kas Maine as he navigates this changing agrarian landscape, migrating from one landlord to another, entering into sharecropping arrangements with 25 landlords in eight different districts from 1920 until his death in 1985.⁵⁴

The Melsetter and Chipinga Highlands experienced secondary land purchases in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Coffee Settlement Schemes of the 1960s. This brought in anew class of settlers who now co-existed with the earlier, predominantly Afrikaner community. Shirley Brooks examined a similar development, involving the settlement of

⁵² T. Matsetela, "The Life Story of Mma-Pooe: Aspects of Sharecropping and Proletarianisation on the Northern Orange Free State, 1890-1930", in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930* (London, Longman Group, 1982).

⁵³ C. Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1895* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1996).

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 543.

hundreds of former British and South African soldiers in the Ntambanana area of KwaZulu-Natal.⁵⁵ Brooks found that the resettled ex-servicemen had their hopes shattered, founding themselves in a web of social and ecological forces as their farming pursuits were hampered by cattle diseases, particularly nagana. Plans to eradicate the disease involved exterminating game in the nearby wildlife reserve, which was a major breeding ground for tsetse fly. It plunged the resettled soldiers into conflict with the more established white settler community, determined to preserve the game reserve for its aesthetic, leisure and economic value as a holiday resort.⁵⁶ This study too investigates the nature of relations that prevailed when settlers of different background and ideological orientations had to co-exist.

As is clear from the preceding pages, studies on Chipinga and Melsetter region have pursued various approaches, ranging from the selective study of some reserves to an emphasis on colonial exploitation of Africans. With the exception of Hughes, these studies have been characterised by approaching the past on a national basis, focusing only on the Zimbabwean side of the border. Largely ignored in these studies is the significance of the border for African experiences of colonial domination and marginalisation, which this study explores. This study also attempts a comprehensive regional study, which treats south eastern Zimbabwe as an economic and social whole.

Methodology

This study is based on a broad spectrum of primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include academic literature found at institutions in South Africa and Zimbabwe. These include the University of the Free State's main Library and the University's International Studies Group library. In Zimbabwe, I made use of the University of Zimbabwe main library, the Economic History and History Departmental Libraries, as well as the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) Library. I made three research trips from South Africa to Zimbabwe. The first trip ran from 24 March to 31 May 2013, the second from 2 December 2013 to 28 February 2014 and lastly from 15 December 2014 to 13 February 2015. I spent most of the period doing archival research at the National Archives of Zimbabwe, and it was during the last trip that I

⁵⁵ S. Brooks, " 'Ropes of Sand' Soldier Settler and Nagana in Zululand", in A. H. Jeeves and J. Crush, (eds) *White Farms, Black Labour, The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa* (Pietmaritzburg, University of Natal Press).

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 105.

carried out the bulk of my interviews. NAZ records in Harare were key primary sources, and the documents which I consulted for this study can be divided into six categories. These include, NC Reports, Criminal Records, Reports on Official Tours of the Eastern Districts, reports of the Internal Affairs Department, Intensive Conservation Area (ICA) reports, and reports and minutes of the Rural Land Board and the Coffee Settlement Schemes.

I also consulted NC reports for the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts, mostly covering the period from 1934 to 1957. These have detailed information about the interactions of the NCs office and the Africans in the respective districts, covering African agricultural practices, health, population growth, crime and protest. The major challenge encountered, however, was that the staff at the National Archives could not locate reports for the period after 1957, which should be very insightful about African agency from this period onwards. Nevertheless, oral interviews were quite useful in supplementing information for the period from 1957 onwards. Equally useful were annual reports of the Chief Native Commissioner. Though these were not as detailed as district reports, they were useful in revealing developments that took place at national level. Closely linked to these reports were the NC's criminal and civil records, as well as the civil registers. These records deal with criminal and civil offenses, ranging from "squatting", stealthy hunting excursions to crimes like theft of fowls, fruits and livestock. Criminal records contain both the official versions of allegations and personal pleas and testimonies from the accused. The civil and criminal cases provides a window through which we can view African grievances over natural resources ownership patterns and the means by which contestations played out over time. On the other hand, civil records contain cases that went to the NC, often when the traditional authorities failed to deal with them. Closely examined, most of these are also a commentary on the manner in which resources were shared within the communities. The major weakness of relying on these record, however, are, as Hagan reminds us, not all offences committed are discovered; not all crimes detected are reported; and not all crimes for which reports have been made to the police are recorded.⁵⁷

There were also a variety of minutes and reports produced after official tours of the Melsetter and Chipinga District by senior government officials. These tours were made throughout the period under study. The subsequent reports and minutes reveal official perspectives regarding this region, which thereafter became instrumental in influencing policy and history of this area.

⁵⁷J. Hagan, *Research Methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 116.

Most of the material for chapter four came from records of the Eastern Districts Group ICA files, covering ICA activities on European Land in the seven Eastern District ICAs. My special focus, however, was on three of these seven, consisting of Cashel, Chipinga and Melsetter ICAs. The files provide primary information on the efforts of the NRB in enforcing natural resources conservation measures. There was both cooperation and conflict between this board and the white commercial farmers, the ABM, African tenants and Tanganda Tea Company's (TTC) over conservation of land, water, game and timber on the three ICAs. These issues were discussed at cluster and ICA levels and then passed on to the NRB. It is interesting to note that there were sometimes conflicts among the white farmers over the allocation of resources that were meant for conservation activities. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that the African voice is rarely captured in these documents.

Material for chapter five came from the minutes and reports of the Rural Land Board (RLB), a state organ which was responsible for the settlement of white farmers in various parts of the country. From the early to late 1960s, most of those who were settled in Chipinga Highlands went into commercial coffee production. There are several files dealing with Chipinga Coffee Settlement Schemes, covering the roles played by government, subdivision of farms, and the subsequent expulsion of tenants from this land. However, most of these documents have not yet been processed for public use, despite the fact that they are already declassified since they are well over 25 years old. Officials at the NAZ cite lack of funding as the reason for failing to process this material for public use. Therefore, most of these are still in the Records Centre Section of the NAZ. I was fortunate to be given permission to consult these, and therefore confident the material I present in chapter five is new.

During the 1970s, the National Archives of Rhodesia embarked on an extensive oral interview project intended to capture the fading memories of pioneer settler experiences in Rhodesia. This project targeted elderly members of the settler community. The interviews were then transcribed, and it is from these sources that I acquired valuable information on land, agriculture, game as well as political and social experiences of the white communities of Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. Related to this, I carried out oral interviews in these districts, from which I managed to capture the African voice which is silent in the archives. I carried out most of these interviews from 15 December 2014 to 3 January 2015, and managed to interview 23 informants. I targeted those who were old enough to be privy of experiences from the early 1950 to the late 1960s. This is a crucial period of my study, when the highlands was transformed with the entry of timber, tea and coffee plantations, one result of which was the

demise of labour tenancy as families either became full time labourers or drifted into the reserves. A life history approach was used as part of the interviewing technique. This involved a general conversation during which the informants provide details of their historical background, work experiences including those of family members. Each interview proceeded through unstructured but focused questions. Unfortunately, I could not interview a single white farmer, as literally all had since left the district following the Fast Track Land Reform programmes that saw a massive acquisition of farms by the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government. Considering that each of the sources outlined has its own strengths and shortcomings, the multi-dimensional approach facilitated the cross checking of data.

Finally, I utilised newspapers from the NAZ and The Herald House, home to *The Herald* newspapers, (previously *The Rhodesia Herald*). Most of the newspapers covered the 1960s, and were utilised particularly for chapter five. The newspapers examined a wide range of issues which included government agricultural regulations, debates on land ownership and land tenure policy, reports on the developments in the coffee industry and contestations between coffee growers association and government over coffee support network and policy. However, these newspapers were primarily meant for a settler audience. African voices are almost silent and when they spoke, it was almost invariably from colonial perspectives. In an effort to address these shortcomings, this study utilised a broad range of sources, not least interviews, from which African voices, especially regarding African agency, were captured.

Thesis Structure

This study is divided into five chapters, with Chapter one being the introduction. It also covers background information, such as literature review, research methodology and the structure of study. Chapter Two begins by briefly tracing white occupation of south eastern Zimbabwe. It explains who these settlers were, and how they ended up in what became the Melsetter District at the end of the 19th century. It then outlines their contact with the local Ndaue people who inhabited this area, and the nature of relationship that existed thereafter. The chapter thereafter explores the impact of both the Great Depression and the Second World War on the economies and lives of the white and black communities in the Melsetter District. Examined in this chapter is also the stress and strain that the white community encountered due to the Great Depression and the Second World War. These are explored alongside the measures adopted by the state to alleviate these, and how the war shaped the economies and social relations within the white

community. With the onset of the Great Depression, tension between state and Africans mounted, particularly over the access natural resources like game. The legal instruments curtailing African access to natural resources are discussed. African reactions to repressive laws are explored, like the 1904 Native Ordinance that forbade Africans to look for jobs outside their districts without the authority of the local NC.⁵⁸ By the outbreak of the Great Depression, an almost equal number of Africans occupied the reserves, while others were tenants on the white commercial farms. While hard hit by the depression and the recurring droughts which often affected the drier Sabi Valley Reserves, Africans had to meet their usual sustenance needs, just as they were required to fulfil their financial obligations as tax payers. The chapter explores the legal and illegal avenues which Africans adopted to traverse this challenging and uneven economic landscape.

Chapter Three explores how the post Second World War global economies impacted on the Chipinga and Melsester Districts. It explores developments which influenced secondary purchase of land in this region, and the subsequent land use transformations. This is discussed in the context of shifting national and international economic and political landscapes that followed the end of the Second World War. Among the issues that are explored are circumstances that contributed to the tobacco boom in Rhodesia, and how it impacted on the Melsester and Chipinga Highlands, which were hundreds of kilometres away from the tobacco regions of Mashonaland. A significant aspect of this development was the welfare of the Africans who, for long, had continued accessing fertile land on the Melsester and Chipinga Highlands as tenants. Their fate is discussed alongside their livelihood strategies, particularly in the reserves, where the majority relocated to.

Chapter Four overlaps in part with Chapter Three. Starting with Inyazura District, the NRB embarked on a massive state sponsored ICA schemes, meant to rehabilitate land and conserve other land resources in the white commercial farming areas of the country. Chapter Four explores this effort with reference to Cashel, Chipinga and Melsester ICAs. The main reasons for environmental degradation are discussed just as the nature of contestations that unfolded between the NRB as a government arm and its publics: Africans, white farmers, the ABM and TTC.

The focus for Chapter Five is largely on the Chipinga Highlands, and documents the development of intensive commercial coffee production in this area. While coffee had been

⁵⁸ Southern Rhodesia, *Native Labour Ordinance*, No. 10, 3 June 1904.

produced in this and other areas of the country since the arrival of white settlers, it was not until the 1960s that special attention and support was paid towards its commercialisation. The chapter discusses circumstances surrounding this development, in which geo-political circumstances partly provide an answer. As coffee producing East African State got independence, Rhodesia became a home to some of the white coffee producers, especially Kenya, some of whom settled in Eastern Zimbabwe, bringing with them the expertise to produce, process and market coffee. With more land coming under intensive production, Africans increasingly became dispossessed, thereby becoming full time wage workers or had to continually relocate to the reserves. The chapter ends with the earliest signs of nationalist opposition characterised by heightened political activism and sabotage of white plantations and other colonial landmarks. The concluding Chapter Six pulls together the main argument about colonialism, policy, processes, and contestations on the ownership and use of natural resources in Melssetter and Chipinga Districts. It also contextualise the conclusion within the historiography of agricultural and conservation history of this region and the country at large.

Chapter Two

“Of the Least Progressive Farmers and the Most Law Abiding Natives”: State, Settlers and African Relations, 1929-1945⁵⁹

Introduction

This chapter analyses the impact of the Great Depression and the Second World War on the agricultural and race relations in the Melsetter District. It begins by an overview of white occupation of the district during the mid-1890s, and traces how the settlement transformed traditional land and natural resources use practices up to the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. It then examines the repercussions of both the Great Depression and Second World War on white farmers in the district, and how this influenced their relations with the state and the majority African communities of the region. There have been studies already on the Great Depression and its consequences on the Rhodesian society but these have remained largely national. Phimister devoted a chapter on the impact of the Great Depression on the Rhodesian society in which he examined how it affected the agriculture, mining and manufacturing sectors of the colony.⁶⁰ Similarly, Ranger devoted a chapter on the effects of the Great Depression on peasant farmers in Manicaland and Mashonaland provinces of Zimbabwe.⁶¹ Equally illuminating is C.F. Keyter’s work which examines government’s effort to cushion white maize producers through the Maize Control Acts of 1931 and 1934.⁶²

This chapter contributes to this discourse through a detailed assessment of the impact of the Great Depression on both white and black communities of the Melsetter District. It also highlights the survival strategies unique to this part of the country that were used by both black and white farmers. Platforms for African struggles, such as the activities of chiefs, headmen

⁵⁹ This title is formulated from two contrasting views about the inhabitants of the Melsetter District. Firstly, Dane Kennedy’s assertion that Afrikaner community in this district lived in “appalling indigence”, see Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White, Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1987), 20 and Secondly, the British South Africa Police (BSAP) claim that Africans in Melsetter were “among the most law abiding in the colony”, See NAZ, S246/796, Melsetter Farmers Association, Withdrawal of Certain Civil Servants from Melsetter, Station Officer, BSAP to Secretary, Law Department, 12 November 1930.

⁶⁰ I.R. Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle* (London and New York, Longman, 1988), Chapter 4.

⁶¹ T.O. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (London, James Currey, 1985), Chapter 2.

⁶² C.F. Keyter, ‘Maize Control in Southern Rhodesia 1931-1941, The African Contribution to White Survival’, *Rhodesian History*, Vol. 8, 1977.

and the educated Africans who voiced their concerns through the Native Board Meetings, which were active from 1931-1938, are explored here. The chapter also analyses the nature of Government response and the subsequent legal and illegal options that were available to the Africans. These include opting for farm labour, resorting to labour tenancy, drifting into the reserves, illegal hunting excursions, relocating to the Portuguese East Africa and clandestine migration to the South African mines.

Colonial occupation of the Melsetter District

Though Portugal was the first country to penetrate southern Africa, it failed to set up a permanent settlement until the late 1880s. In the process to acquire what became Portuguese East Africa, she signed the Anglo-Portuguese treaty with Britain on 3 July 1891, which defined the border with what became Rhodesia as “the crest of slope of the Manica plateau as far as the confluence of the Sabi and Lundi”.⁶³ Because, thereafter, this boundary remained ill-defined, tension with the British South Africa Company (BSAC) over the exact position of the border remained.⁶⁴ To thwart Portuguese efforts to bring the whole Gazaland under their control, Rhodes offered this area to Dunbar Moodie, a South African of Scottish origin, to occupy. Acting as agents of the BSAC, the Moodie families and other settlers trekked from South African and settled in Melsetter between May 1892 and October 1895, bringing what became Melsetter part of the BSAC territory.

There is a striking contrast between the Pioneers Column of 1890 which occupied Mashonaland and the white community which occupied Melsetter District. The BSAC advertised widely for the recruitment of the column, with Rhodes making clear that his dream was to see “homes, more homes”, established by people of British stock to make land north of the Limpopo a “great white dominion”.⁶⁵ The 200 members of the Pioneer Column, selected mostly from the British Empire, included “farmers, artisans, miners, doctors, lawyers, engineers, builders, bakers, soldiers, sailors, cadets of good family and no special occupations, cricketers, three persons

⁶³ P.R. Warhurst, *Anglo-Portuguese Relations in South-Central Africa, 1890-1900* (London, Longmans, 1962), 71.

⁶⁴ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 110.

⁶⁵ F. Clements, *Rhodesia, The Course to Collision* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1939), 75.

and a Jesuit'. There were some two thousand applicants and less than a tenth was chosen".⁶⁶ The objective was to create a colony which would be as self-sufficient as possible.⁶⁷

As gold was the prime motive for the occupation of Mashonaland, land ranked second to mineral speculation. Thus while each of the 200 pioneers was promised a free farm of about 3 175 acres and 15 gold claims, it was gold claims which were more prized. According to Palmer "many pioneers sold their land rights for about £100 to speculators like Frank Johnson and Sir Willoughby while still on the march to Salisbury",⁶⁸ and when it became clear by 1892 that the "Second Rand" did not lie in Mashonaland, "many pioneers trekked disconsolately back to South Africa".⁶⁹

Unsurprisingly, Rhodes changed the criteria when selecting settlers who occupied Melsetter District, this time prioritising the Afrikaners from the then Orange Free State. He believed that they were "excellent settlers" as "they always took their wives with them".⁷⁰ For this task, he engaged Dunbar Moodie who was assisted by his uncle, Thomas, to organise 100 white families to trek northwards.⁷¹ A second prominent leader was Marthinus Jacobus Martin, to whom Rhodes emphasised that all the Afrikaners' rights and customs would be respected and "until his death, Rhodes honoured these promises".⁷² The agricultural depression that hit the then Orange Free State during the 1890s, characterised by constant subdivision of farms, thereby creating uneconomic small holdings, also acted as a push factor.⁷³ As a result, 9 treks migrated from South Africa to Melsetter between May 1892 and October 1895. The settlers' prime motive was "to get enough land once and for all, land on which one could make a decent living without debt..."⁷⁴

The migrations were long and odious, taking between 4 and 8 months. They entailed movement of whole families and property; ranging from agricultural equipment, food, seeds and a wide range of livestock.⁷⁵ The Moodie Trek, with 29 families of between 60 and 70 people, set off from Bethlehem in May 1892,⁷⁶ and arrived in January 1893. The Martin Trek departed from

⁶⁶ R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 67.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶⁸ R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London, Heinemann, 1977), 26.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁰ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 110.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷³ Rennie, 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism', 170.

⁷⁴ Olivier, *Many Treks Made Rhodesia*, 32.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

Fouriesburg in April 1894 with 104 members and 24 wagons, and arrived in October the same year.⁷⁷ The other seven were Moolman-Webster (1894), Martin (1894), Du Plessis, (1894 and 1895), Mynhardt-Utrecht (1894) and Krugger-Bekker (1895) which all arrived and seized land on the Melsetter Highveld. The last of these was the Henry-Steyn trek of 1895 which acquired the last patch of North Melsetter, thereby concluding white occupation of this district.⁷⁸

The migrations were characterised by serious challenges. Wild animals like lions, leopards and hyenas attacked both livestock and the trekkers. For instance, towards Fort Tuli, the Moodie trek lost 27 dogs to snake attacks, lions killed eight donkeys while another eight cattle succumbed to foot and mouth disease.⁷⁹ Similarly, apart from losing three people, one to animal attacks, the Martin trek lost several of its stock to Texas fever, dust disease, gall sickness and splenic fever, forcing it to barter wagons for oxen.⁸⁰ The Edinburg trek bought extra cattle from the Ndebele communities after the original herd succumbed to a lung disease.⁸¹

Upon arrival, it became obviously clear that trekkers' determinations were worthy. Ernst du Plessis was overwhelmingly happy upon seeing the "Promised Land" as he explained,

The rain had started and to see these hills with green plains as far as your eyes could travel was indeed ample reward for all the hardships and struggle we had with the bush, river and mountain. It was indeed a land of promise and could not help feeling relieved and grateful that we were not deceived or misled in any way.⁸²

The confession by Martin was equally revealing. Describing his new homeland, he said;

...a plentiful supply of water, an ideal climate, wood in abundance and grass which proves admirably suited for cattle and sheep... In all my travels in Southern parts of Africa, I have never yet seen a more beautiful stretch of country than Northern Gazaland. I have never had a moment's regret that I did not stay in the Free State and am completely satisfied.⁸³

These migrations and hardship are a commentary about the gravity of land shortage within the South African white rural community that forced these people to migrate northwards.

⁷⁷*Ibid*, 67.

⁷⁸*Ibid*, 25-98.

⁷⁹*Ibid*, 34-36.

⁸⁰*Ibid*, 69-73.

⁸¹*Ibid*, 58.

⁸²*Ibid*, 51.

⁸³*Ibid*, 107.

The trekkers encountered several challenges both during travel and upon settling. These were characterised by unfamiliar climate, attacks and death from malaria and fever, inadequate medical facilities, livestock disease and death, poor infrastructural facilities, as well as danger from African and Portuguese antagonists. Therefore, they felt justified appropriating land from the Africans, believing that it was the ultimate reward for their endurance. This became the source of eternal conflict with Africans who claimed hereditary ownership to the land.

Much has been said about unscrupulous land seizure that followed white penetration of what became settler colonies. Palmer traced these to 1654 when Dutch settlers at the Cape first seized land to supply fresh produce for the Cape refreshment station. Thereafter, a tradition quickly developed whereby after defeating Africans in warfare, settlers parcelled out land of the conquered among themselves.⁸⁴ The same happened following white occupation of the Melsetter District. According to Rennie, lawlessness and total absence of independent administrative supervision enabled settlers to make land seizures which later administrative systems found powerless to change.⁸⁵ This was done with disregard to the needs of the Africans. According to Rennie, “the very spots, on which the Natives were most thickly situated, were, to a great extent, selected as farms”.⁸⁶ Thus, upon arrival, Dunbar Moodie acquired eighteen best farms amounting to 108 000 acres, allocating half to himself and the others to members of the Moodie clan.⁸⁷ No wonder why the Moodies soon fell into conflict with other settlers who were allocated second best land.⁸⁸

Land seizures and political networks can be illustrated through the case of W. Longden, the first Magistrate for Melsetter who was appointed in 1895. Satisfied by his services, including finally fixing the boundary between Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa as well as the tactical handling of the possible spread of the 1896-97 Shona Ndebele uprisings, the administrator, Earl Grey, offered him a 20 acre plot in Melsetter as reward.⁸⁹ However, by 1921, Longden had become “King of Melsetter,” as;

On the virgin earth of that small plot of ground given to him by Earl Grey, he had built a residency, beautiful gardens and orchards, and in course of time he became the owner of many thousands of herd of cattle. He had become a man of means and many interests

⁸⁴ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, 19.

⁸⁵ Rennie, Christianity, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism’, 172.

⁸⁶ Rennie, ‘Settlers and Missionaries in Southern Melsetter’, 10.

⁸⁷ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 111.

⁸⁸ Rennie, ‘Settlers and Missionaries in Southern Melsetter’, 7.

⁸⁹ H.W.D. Longden, *Red Buffalo, the story of Will Longden, Pioneer, Friend and Emissary of Rhodes* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, Juta and Co., LTD, 1950), 188-189.

and was probably the biggest individual landowner in the country with a total of several hundred thousand acres covering his many farms.⁹⁰

This is a commentary about the extent to which settlers could acquire land indiscriminately.

Nevertheless, the majority settlers' living conditions remained poor by Rhodesian white standards. The district's remoteness remained a key hindrance to economic growth. Rennie's description of the community's livelihood experiences a decade after settlement is illuminating:

Their way of life differed hardly at all from the Africans among whom they settled. They lived in mud huts, bartered food with Africans, grew enough mealies and grazed enough cattle for their needs. They were quite marginal to the cash economy. They produced their own wheat, bread, milk, tea, coffee, rice, tobacco, fruit and vegetables and their only cash purchases were clothes and certain foodstuffs.⁹¹

To help these farmers consolidate their position, the BSAC gave substantial support. It replenished cattle lost after the 1896-97 rinderpest disease by procuring livestock from Northern Rhodesia which it resold at highly subsidised prices; it assisted the farmers again after the red water fever of 1902; the Beit Trust distributed Merino sheep to the farmers from 1904; from 1912, the Land Bank started assisting with loans for capital investment.⁹² It is not surprising that cattle became most highly valued by this society, as *The Rhodesia Advertiser* noted:

Cattle to eat and trample down the long rank grass: Cattle, to break the land and carry their transport: Cattle, whose diseases and nature they understood better than those of any other animal tried in Africa. Cattle was the secret password which promised success in African agriculture to their children if not to themselves. No wonder, therefore, if for ten years every shilling these farmers made has gone into the purchase of stock, and every other form of farming has been regarded as, for the present, a waste of time. Cattle have been to them the one thing worth putting money into and all the other methods of farming seen in the neighbourhood have only provoked a smile from the quiet grim faces of these men whose forefathers have farmed in Africa for generations. Cattle first, wheat, corn, fruit afterwards.⁹³

By 1914, the Resident magistrate-cum farmer, Longden, had "excellent breeds of livestock" which he loaned to other farmers.⁹⁴ When the secretary for the Department of Lands' toured

⁹⁰*Ibid*, 223.

⁹¹ Rennie, 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Rise of Nationalism', 174-175.

⁹² *Ibid*, 176.

⁹³ *Rhodesian Advertiser*, 3 July 1902, quoted in Jeater, *Law, Language and Science*, 40.

⁹⁴ Longden, *Red Buffalo*, 187, 219-220.

the district in July 1925, he noted that, “the Dutchmen... a strong, hardy, virile race...” have established comfortable homes, and “...families brought up and the people thrive under the natural conditions which the country offers...they breed large herds of stock”.⁹⁵

There was also an effort to grow crops. After Peters’ tour, he reported about “beautiful orchards, which are splendidly arranged, European fruits, including grape-vine, are planted here, and oranges, lemons, pine apples, and the tropical fruits”. He further noted that land around Melsetter has inexhaustible fertility and can produce anything.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the Moodies family “had all kinds of European fruit and vegetables...coffee, tobacco, oranges, and bananas as well as wheat and cattle”.⁹⁷ But market challenges remained as by 1925, only about 600 and 400 bags of maize was purchased by government departments at Melsetter and Chipinga respectively.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, within this community laid racial, class, and political tension. Blacks contested racial marginalised, were perturbed by loss of the best land; cattle confiscation; taxation; and forced labour. While some refused to work, others emigrated from the white farming areas. Some of those who challenged the system were violently dealt with, as one farmer confessed, “I have tried every way to get the boys...I have been obliged to fire on 2 of them, but not with the intention of shooting them”.⁹⁹ Another area of conflict centred on the overlap between traditional and western culture. What was viewed as an offence in European code of law, like tax evasion, infringement of the Masters and Servant Act and setting grass on fires, were not viewed so in African culture.¹⁰⁰ Even when Africans pleaded guilty for offences committed, they preferred traditional systems of compensatory justice to the Roman Dutch Law.¹⁰¹ This made conflict between Africans and the state inevitable. Jeater illustrated this well:

Makuza, the circular claimant to the Musikavanhu succession, was sentenced to two weeks in prison in 1895 for refusing to supply 100 labourers for the mines in Salisbury; in 1896, Mutambara, who was distrusted by the state officials, was fined two head of cattle and 10 bags of corn for disobeying an order from Meredith to come to his office (some 55 miles distant) and was kept in custody until it was paid; and in 1904, Ngorima

⁹⁵ NAZ S1193/L5/1, Agricultural Potential and Development of the Melsetter District: 1925 September-1926 May.

⁹⁶ Peters, *Eldorado of the Ancients*, 243.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ NAZ S1193/L5/1, Agricultural Potential and Development of the Melsetter District: 1925 September-1926 May

⁹⁹ J. K. Rennie, ‘White farmers, black tenants and landlord legislation: Southern Rhodesia 1890-1930’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 1 1978, 90.

¹⁰⁰ Rennie, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Rise of Nationalism’, 228.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

fought with a policeman when he was (wrongly) accused of harbouring a woman to whom he had no right and refused to be handcuffed.¹⁰²

One of the key mandates of the NC was “to assist miners, farmers and others to procure labour at the same time seeing that natives are fairly and justly treated”.¹⁰³ Therefore, NCs intervened in matters between Africans and farmers. Nevertheless, when farmers were penalised for ill-treating labour, they often cried foul against “the English Government”. In 1900 one farmer threatened to go back to the Orange Free State after the South African War, citing labour shortage for that decision. He further accused “the English Government” of “pampering blacks”, thereby making the country, “impossible for the whites... [as] the black man, under the Union Jack, becomes lazy, arrogant and boorish.”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, racial prejudice was part of this colonial landscape.

The NC, Piet Nielson, fell in numerous conflicts with farmers during his 10 year tenure in Melsetter District, from 1926 to 1936. Dissension mostly rested on ‘the native question,’ which, according to Nielson, was built on the Whiteman’s misconceptions about white and black races. Nielson criticised colonial prejudice against the Africans, arguing that, all other things being equal, the African is as intelligent as the European. He wrote:

I have lived among the Bantu for nearly thirty years and I have studied them closely, and have come to the conclusion that there is no native mind distinct from the common human mind. The mind of the Native is the mind of mankind; it is not separate or different from the mind of the European or the Asiatic any more than the mind of English is different from that of the Scotch or Irish people.¹⁰⁵

With this perspective, dissension with most white farmers over ill-treatment of blacks; lowwages, job colour bar and travel restrictions was inevitable. The Great Depression set in in 1929, and the Second World War broke out in 1939. These posed more challenges to both the state as well as white and black inhabitants of the district. It is their experiences which forms the gist of the next section.

¹⁰²Jeater, *Law, Language and Science*, 39.

¹⁰³ Rennie, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Rise of Nationalism’, 225.

¹⁰⁴ Peters, *Eldorado of the Ancients*, 252.

¹⁰⁵ P. Nielsen, *The Black Man’s Place in South Africa* (Cape Town, Juta and CO., 1922), 75.

The Depression and War: Reflections on the Settler community, 1929-1945

The white farming community of Southern Rhodesia at large suffered from the severe stress and strain owing to the Great Depression. The white community's suffering during this period was exacerbated further by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in March 1931. Consequently, the cattle market plunged as neighbouring countries prohibited entry from Southern Rhodesia of all animal and vegetable products. According to Phimister "hundreds of farms went out of production" while many farmers "drew the appropriate conclusion and abandoned the struggle entirely".¹⁰⁶ As a result, from 1925 to 1938, there was approximately 26 per cent reduction in white owned cattle and "anything from one million to two million pounds was lost or withdrawn from the industry".¹⁰⁷ These challenges were consistent with the sub-region. John McCracken notes that in Malawi, the number of white farmers fell from 324 to 171 between 1926 and 1945. Of these, 71 quit the Shire Valley and Namwera region between 1929 and 1931.¹⁰⁸ Similar trends prevailed in the Chipata District of Zambia, where, according to A. M. Kanduza, the number of white planters dropped from 161 in 1927 to about 60 for most of the 1930s.¹⁰⁹

The Great Depression worsened the position of white farmers in Melsetter, who were already vulnerable due to the remoteness of the district. In September 1932, the local NC expressed this predicament to a Senior Government Official:

I suppose it is realised now that the cattle in this district, whatever they may be like, are actually a liability and not an asset; so that we who have some are very hard put to it to know what to do with them.¹¹⁰

A month later, he informed the same officer that:

As I have pointed out before, it is literally true that cattle in this district are no longer an asset but a liability. A few weeks ago I saw some very nice cattle of improved breed and in good condition passing here on their way to the Umtali market; yesterday I saw their owner who told me he had to accept 20/- a piece for them. To rear and keep cattle till they are four and five years old and then to sell them for £1 a piece simply does not

¹⁰⁶ Phimister, *Economic and Social History*, 172-175.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 176.

¹⁰⁸ J. McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859- 1966* (Suffolk, James Currey, 2012), 171.

¹⁰⁹ A. M. Kanduza, 'Land and Peasant Politics in Chipata District', 1890s – 1980', in A.M. Kanduza, (ed.), *Socio-Economic Change in Eastern Zambia: Pre-Colonial to the 1980s* (Lusaka, Historical Association of Zambia, 1992), 61.

¹¹⁰ NAZ, S112/23, P. Nielson, Application for Land, letter from P. Nielson to Bagshawe, 28 September, 1932.

cover the cost of the combined payments that have to be made for them during that time.¹¹¹

The impact of the Great Depression is here inferred as having led to this drastic plunge in the price of cattle. According to Jeater, from the 1900s onwards, cattle changed hands for between £4 and £5.¹¹² The price seems to have remained relatively stable because, on the eve of the Great Depression, prices for African cattle hovered around £6, and, in the Bulilima Mangwe District, they were changing hands for an average of £5.¹¹³ Furthermore, the fact that white farmers generally favoured better quality exotic breeds¹¹⁴ meant that their cattle would have fetched more. Therefore, a crash to less than £1, as the NC reported above, was a huge economic catastrophe within the white farmer community of the Melsetter District.

Dane Kennedy makes a crucial observation regarding the Afrikaner community in Rhodesia. He notes that poverty, geography and culture were three related factors that contributed to the isolation and closed nature of this society.¹¹⁵ Though economic conditions in Marandellas and Enkeldoorn Districts which were heavily settled by Afrikaners were not as bad, these communities generally regarded themselves as “islands of Afrikanerdom in a sea of alien people”.¹¹⁶ Therefore, even before the outbreak of the Great Depression, the Afrikaner community from Melsetter lived in poverty, which Kennedy describes as “appalling indigence”.¹¹⁷

It is difficult to fully quantify the extent to which the Melsetter farmers were affected by the Great Depression. Nevertheless, gleaning through the districts’ civil registers, there is evidence of the farmers’ failure to honour costs of basic subsistence goods. The records reveal that the period from the early 1930s witnessed retailers, such as Meikles Stores, Pearams and Shell Petroleum suing dozens of defaulters each year for failing to settle accounts whose values ranged from £10 to more than £100. Patently, these were accounts for basics like groceries, clothing, fuel, agricultural inputs and sometimes motorcycles. In 1933, 32 such cases went

¹¹¹ Ibid, letter from Nielson to Bagshawe, 15 October, 1932.

¹¹² Jeater, *Law, Language and Science*, 44.

¹¹³ M.C. Steele, ‘The Economic Function of African Owned Cattle in Colonial Zimbabwe’, *Zambezia*, ix, 1, 32, 1981, and 43.

¹¹⁴ F. Dube, ‘In the border regions of the Territory of Rhodesia, There Is the Greatest Scourge...’: The Border and East Coast Fever Control in Central Mozambique and Eastern Zimbabwe, 1901-1942’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41: 2, 2015, 220.

¹¹⁵ D. Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1987), 20.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

through the Chipinga magistrate court alone.¹¹⁸ Typical cases include that of T.E. Serfontein, who, in January 1933, was sued by Meikles, and a week later by Mangle and Madley for £92 and £22 respectively.¹¹⁹ Some farmers were also sued by their employees over unsettled wages, as was the case with J. Wayle who was sued by one Munyati for £1-8-0 wage.¹²⁰ Some landlords were sued by their tenants for unhonoured trade transactions as noted in the September 1933 case where William was sued by his tenant Manongwa for £7 which was the cost of 10 bags of maize sold to him by Manongwa in April 1931.¹²¹ During the same court, William was again sued by Mandifura for £3 for the cost of 4 bags of maize sold to him more than two years earlier.¹²² Similar cases were being heard throughout the district, as noted in cases that went through the Melsetter Assistant Magistrate's Court and the Cashel Periodical Court.

Unlike trends elsewhere within the sub-region, farmers from Melsetter rarely abandoned land due to this Great Depression. This should be understood from the primary motive for white settlement in this district. A majority of the region's Afrikaners perceived the farm as primarily a home: a place to stay, raise children and eke out a living. Reflecting back on the impetus for migrating to Melsetter, J.A. Kok said his parents "emigrated for the sake of their children, foreseeing the day when land in South Africa would be scarce and taking the opportunity when it was still there".¹²³ Therefore, despite the crisis, quitting the district was not an option: the community remained resilient, eking out basic living from the land.

During his career as a civil servant, Nielsen made efforts to acquire a farm of his own but to no avail. An examination of his experiences in this endeavour is significant for it shows challenges associated with land acquisition and use values during the period of the Great Depression. Nielson could not acquire a farm of his choice in the district. Having unsuccessfully applied for farms Stratmore in Hartley,¹²⁴ and Dronfield in Belingwe,¹²⁵ where he previously served as NC, Nielson served as NC for Melsetter from 1926 to 1936. Noting that the Melsetter Highlands had been virtually taken up, he applied for the unalienated

¹¹⁸NAZ, S1066, Civil Register, Chipinga.

¹¹⁹Ibid, Meikles Umtali vs Serfontein, 10 January 1933. And Mangle and Mandley vs T.E Serfontein, 17 January 1933.

¹²⁰Ibid, Munyati vs J. Wayle, 29 November 1932.

¹²¹Ibid, Manongwa vs William, 20 September 1933.

¹²² Ibid, Mandifura vs William, 20 September 1933.

¹²³ NAZ, Oral/KO 1, Interview with Johan Andries Kok, 30 April 1971.

¹²⁴ NAZ, S112/23, P. Nielson, Application for Land, letter from P. Nielson to the Director of Lands and Settlement, 20 April 1920.

¹²⁵ Ibid, letter from Assistant Director of Lands Department to P. Nielson, 10 April 1923.

Krympfrie Farm in the lower Sabi Valley,¹²⁶ where he wished to keep a 300 herd of cattle. However, the state could not offer Krympfrie Farm because of an irrigation scheme that was in the pipeline. Instead, it offered him the farm Maparoma, thereby ushering some protracted war of words between the two parties. Nielson responded that Maparoma was unsuitable for livestock production, as, “Literally not a bucketful of water” could be filled on this farm. He described its top half as “exceedingly broken ground with dense leafless scrub and thorn bushes”, concluding that it was “absolutely of no use” for anyone intending to venture into livestock production.¹²⁷ At the same time, he was indignant about the state’s decision, as noted in his statement that:

we have received your letter...it came as a great shock to us because we had no doubt that the government will let us have the piece of land, which we thought had been surveyed for us... My wife and I, as I have mentioned before, have been in this country from its early days; we have helped to build it up, and it is only now that our children have finished their education that we have got a chance of paying for a piece of ground on which to raise some cattle to eke out my pension which will be a very small one.¹²⁸

As government was resolute not to release Krympfrie, it advised Nielson to apply for any other Crown Land in the district. After touring the district, Nielson responded:

We have now seen most of the land shown as available... Besowata is already occupied by Mr H. King and Redwood has hardly any grass. There are few small patches of grass on some of the farms shown near Murari River in the Northern part of the district but none of them is sufficient for more than a hundred herd of cattle all year round. It is also very difficult to get at these places and for these reasons; we do not wish to apply for those farms.¹²⁹

A week thereafter, the Crown Lands Officer confirmed that the only remaining farms in the district “were very poor”.¹³⁰ Ultimately, Nielson was only allowed to lease and keep his cattle

¹²⁶ In February 1932, the Secretary for the Department of Lands and Agriculture identified that there were about 7 unalienated farms in the Sabi Low veld. Though these had very fertile soils, being on the leeward side of the Melsetter Highlands, the area was very dry and could only be profitably farmed under irrigation. Government, therefore, insisted its reservation to allocate these farms before developing the irrigation potential of the area. See, NAZ, S112/23, P. Nielson, Application for Land, letter from Department of Agriculture and Lands, to Minister of Agriculture and Lands, 2 February 1932.

¹²⁷ NAZ, S112/23, P. Nielson, Application for Land, letter from P. Nielson, to Chief of Clerk, Department of Lands, 20 February 1932.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, letter from Nielson to Chief Clerk, Department of Lands, 22 April 1932.

¹³⁰ Ibid, letter from Crown Lands Officer to Chief of Clerk, 28 April 1932.

on Krympetri on yearly leases from 1932 to 1936. NC Nielson's effort to acquire a commercial farm in Melsetter is illustrative of two things. Firstly, it consolidates the contention that despite the Great Depression, most landowners in Melsetter remained on the land, thus making farm land a relatively scarce commodity. Secondly, it shows that the contestation over access to land was not just between black and white communities, but also among the settler community.

Meanwhile, the heavily suffering Rhodesian farmers looked up to government for intervention. In 1935, Government promulgated the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act which cancelled several debts accrued by farmers "through no fault of their own". This was buttressed by "no less than nine other special concessions", most of which abolished or suspended farmers' financial commitments to the state.¹³¹ Government also deliberately sacrificed the African peasantry for the economic survival of white farmers. Phimister has shown how the Cattle Levy Acts of 1931 and 1934 fleeced African cattle owners while subsidising white cattle exporters.¹³² Similarly, Keyter demonstrated how the Maize control Acts of 1931 and 1934, blatantly discriminated against African maize producers for the benefit of the white maize growers.¹³³ African labour also suffered heavily. Palmer notes that many farmers paid African workers "extremely low wages", while others simply stopped paying and some more unscrupulous ones raised cash by unilaterally changing tenancy contracts into rent terms.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, the Great Depression also brought opportunities for the more innovative. It was during this period that tea and cheese industries in Melsetter took off, rode the storm and ultimately changed Melsetter's economic landscape. G. Phillips, who had vast experience from Indian tea sector, pioneered this sector in Melsetter. Upon settling in the district, he went into partnership with Ward, who owned New Year's Gift Farm.¹³⁵ Thus, with time, the district's agriculture sector that had lagged behind because of transport challenges, tea, being low weight and high value commodity, became a viable alternative as it withstood transportation costs to distant markets.

The role of the state during the formative stages of the tea industry has to be fully appreciated. The sector benefited from government policy seeking to assist those enterprises that ventured into import substitution activities. Rhodesian tea imports which stood at 466, 820lbs in 1926

¹³¹ For a detailed discussion of this, see Phimister, *Economic and Social History*, 174-175.

¹³² Phimister, *Economic and Social History*, 184.

¹³³ Keyter, 'Maize Control in Southern Rhodesia'.

¹³⁴ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, 211.

¹³⁵ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 104.

rose to 620 885 lbs in 1929.¹³⁶ The 1929 import bill stood at £67 000, which Ward and Phillips were anxious “would be circulating here, instead of overseas parts of Empire and foreign countries”.¹³⁷ Thus, from its pioneer acres at New Year’s Gift, Ward and Phillips, formed the Rhodesia Tea Company, later becoming TTC, which produced the initial 400 lbs in 1930, and in the same year, started another plantation at Ratelshoek Farm, along the Border with Portuguese East Africa. The latter was more promising, considering its more fertile soils and a higher annual rainfall.¹³⁸ Finding this convincing, Government offered the TTC a £5000, 00 loans in 1932.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, the fact that the tea industry is labour intensive meant that profitability partly depended on reliable cheap labour, especially during the plucking season. In no time, the TTC rose to become a significant employer of labour, employing approximately 300 Africans by 1936.¹⁴⁰ Towards the late 1930s, it started what became known as the *earn and learn* system, where children worked for the company in lieu for education.¹⁴¹ When the Industrial Development Advisory Committee (IDAC) delegation visited the district in 1944, touring among other sites, Ratelshoek and New Year’s Gift Tea Estates, it was impressed by “the high quality organisation of tea growing”, further remarking that “It is obvious at New Year’s Gift that the school and clinic facilities provided by the estate contributed greatly to labour stability”.¹⁴² Therefore, education was significant and innovative bait used to lure and retain ultra-cheap labour for the emerging labour intensive tea sector.

Equally significant was the diversification from beef production into dairy, cheese and butter processing.¹⁴³ This development was a result of the local farmers’ initiatives seeking to circumvent challenges associated with transporting fresh milk to distant markets. With longer shelf lives, cheese and butter, like tea, were also high value and low weight products, which withstood the high transport costs.

¹³⁶ NAZ, S1215/1233/1, Messrs Ward and Philips Ltd, Tea Industry; Mesletter, from Government Statician to the Chief, Division of Plant and Industry, 7 November 1931.

¹³⁷ Ibid, from Ward and Phillips to the Minister of Agriculture, 30 September 1931.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid, from the Secretary to the Treasury to the Department of Agriculture and Lands, 18 August 1932.

¹⁴⁰ NAZ, S1563/2, NC Report, Chipinga, 1936.

¹⁴¹ M.F.C. Bourdillon, Child Labour and Education: a case study of south-eastern Zimbabwe, *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 15, 2, 2000.

¹⁴² NAZ, F341/59/7/69, Eastern Districts Development, Summary of the Minister’s Visit to the Eastern Districts 13 October 1943.

¹⁴³ Ibid, Memorandum on the Eastern Districts of Southern Rhodesia arising from visit and investigations by the IDAC, May 1943.

The rise of dairy products manufacturing in the region was associated with the activities of J. Martin's who owned Rocklands Farm. Martin pioneered cheese making which he began as domestic industry during the 1920s. He was subsequently joined by farmers such as J. Parks and C.J. Kruger of the Nest and Morgenson farms respectively. Though the industry encountered hardships during the early years of the Great Depression, it remained the most promising alternative.¹⁴⁴ The maintenance of links between Melsetter and the South African white farming community aided the Melsetter dairy industry. For instance one van Riet's acquisition of Tilbury farm in Melsetter was followed by the importation of 150 pedigree dairy stocks: Friesland heifers, cows, bulls as well as merino ewes from the Free State Province of South Africa.¹⁴⁵ Subsequently, J. Martin, then a local legislative assembly member, sought assistance for the improvement of dairy and wool breeds for farmers in his constituency. In 1929, van Riet donated 13 bulls and 20 rams towards that cause¹⁴⁶ and a further donation of 10 bulls in 1932.¹⁴⁷ Acknowledging that the donation was "a very public spirited one", government met the costs of transporting the donations from South Africa to Umtali. Subsequently, a three member committee consisting of the magistrate, veterinary officer and legislative assembly member coordinated the distribution of the donation; minimising interbreeding by exchanging the bulls every three years and rams annually.¹⁴⁸ The scheme therefore, enhanced dairying in the district and contributed to the diversification into butter and cheese production.

The mid 1930s saw the transition from domestic to factory processing. This follows the establishment of two cheese processing factories in 1935: the Excelsior and the Eastern Border Cooperative Cheese Factories at Chipinga and Junction Gate respectively. A merger subsequently took place in 1944,¹⁴⁹ and though it is not clear how many they were initially, total membership of both cooperatives factories stood at 51 by 1946.¹⁵⁰ As in the tea industry, the state was clearly visible in the development of the dairy industry. On one hand, farmers

¹⁴⁴ G.M. Phillips, 'Cheese making in the Chipinga Area', in *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 62, 6, 1965, 123.

¹⁴⁵ NAZ, S1215/180/A.I.M/1, Rams and Bulls Presented to Melsetter District by G.J. Van Riet, 1929-1934, letter from G.J. van Riet to the Secretary for Agriculture, 11 March 1929.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, from G. van Riet to Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 25 March 1929.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, from Secretary for Lands, to J.L. Martin, 23 August 1932.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, from Secretary, Department of Agriculture to Magistrate, Melsetter, 23 April 1928.

¹⁴⁹ NAZ, L: C.32.15.9R, Box: 126946, File Lands, Chipinga Area Vol.2, Confidential Report, Dairy Problems, August 1970.

¹⁵⁰ NAZ, S2563/3, Chipinga Farmers, General, 1946 November 13 to 1948 June 11, List of Members of Gazaland Co-Operative Cheese Factories, Ltd.

were closely advised by the Government Dairy Officer, J. Cory, and, on the other, the state offered each firm a £1 500 loan from the Land and Agriculture Bank in September 1935.¹⁵¹

The state remained visible up to the end of the Great Depression. In 1937, farmers encountered challenges emanating from the 1937 poor winter pastures. The problems were exacerbated by the farmers' inability to procure supplementary feeds, which led to reduced milk supplies.¹⁵² By October 1937, the companies were so financially stressed that they sought an extra £1 500 loan facility each. The government, however, first requested financial statements from each firm, after which it noted "managerial inefficiencies",¹⁵³ and, when, in December 1937, it approved £750 loan for each, it attached stringent conditional ties that: each company was to come under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture; that a suitable Business Manager would be appointed; and half yearly statement of accounts would be rendered to the Agriculture and Lands Department.¹⁵⁴ The companies protested the conditions, including the size of the loan; interest rate; sale on cash basis; single office; and the appointment of a Business Manager.¹⁵⁵ As a result, they sent a delegation to Salisbury for an audience with the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, the outcome of which is however, unclear. However, after the IDAC's tour of the district some five years later, it recommended that the state should intervene through, "urgent financial aid and provision of dairy stock on easy repayment schemes, to any farmer progressive enough to look after and feed good dairy stock".¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the industry thrived. Centralised cheese manufacture greatly enhanced economies of scale, as larger equipment was procured and trained cheese makers were engaged. The years 1937 and 1938 witnessed the production of cheese amounting to 75 000 lbs, which represented 30 per cent of the cheese produced in Southern Rhodesia.¹⁵⁷ Remarkably, "a large proportion of the output was disposed on the London market".¹⁵⁸ Like the tea sector, the cheese

¹⁵¹ S1215/1361/3 Cheese factory Chipinga, 1937 July-1939 November, Memorandum, The Excelsior Cooperative Cheese Factory Ltd. The Eastern Border Co-operative Cheese Factory Ltd, 11 September 1937.

¹⁵² NAZ, S1215/1362/3, Cheese Factory Chipinga, 1937 July – November, Memorandum, The Excelsior Cheese Factory Ltd. The Eastern Border Co-operative Factory Ltd, by Jacklin, Registrar of Cooperative Companies, 11 September 1937.

¹⁵³ Ibid, from Director of Marketing to Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, 15 November 1937.

¹⁵⁴ NAZ, S1215/1361/3 Cheese factory Chipinga, 1937 July-1939 November, letter from Director of Marketing to D.P.J. Odendaal, Excelsior Cooperative Cheese Factory Ltd, 30 December 1937.

¹⁵⁵ NAZ, S1215/1361/3 Cheese factory Chipinga, 1937 July-1939 November, letters from Reading, Secretary Excelsior Cooperative Cheese Factory Ltd, to Director of Marketing, 5 January 1938. Letter from J.A.C. Kruger, Eastern Border Cooperative Cheese Factory Ltd to Director of Marketing, 6 January 1938.

¹⁵⁶ NAZ, F341/59/7/69, Eastern Districts Regional Development Committee, Memorandum on the Eastern Districts of Southern Rhodesia arising from visit and investigations by the IDAC, by A.C. Soffe, May 1943.

¹⁵⁷ G.M. Phillips, 'Cheese Making in Chipinga Area', 124.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

industry is a unique case of an innovation during an economic crisis, which operated for decades. In August 1970, a Government Agricultural Economist, W.V. Lacey, described this industry as “the sheet anchor of farming in the area”.¹⁵⁹

A turning point in the fortunes of the beef sector was in the late 1930s. With a constrained internal market, and dependent as it was on the electoral support of white farmers, the Huggins administration intervened directly in this sector. The administration which had set up the Electricity Supply Commission to provide power at a subsidised rate in 1936 also intervened in the beef sector.¹⁶⁰ After protracted negotiations, Government acquired the Bulawayo Cold Storage facility from the Imperial Cold Storage Company of South Africa in 1938, at a cost of £286, 930.¹⁶¹ Thereafter it became a parastatal under the title, Cold Storage Commission, and was regulated under the Cold Storage Act. The Act empowered the Cold Storage Commission “to run the industry for the export of frozen and chilled meat”. Prime Minister Huggins assured the farmers that government did not wish to make money from this venture, but that profits should go to the producers, emphasising that, “the government must step in lest the pastoral industry should suffer”.¹⁶² Cecil John Gifford of Wolverhampton Farm in Chipinga expressed the opinion that the opening of the Cold Storage in Bulawayo was the biggest gain that Chipinga farmers ever had as it coincided with a rise in cattle prices. As he explained, “the rise in the price of cattle started about ’36, ’37, and ’38. We went from bed-rock 45 bob a head up to about £5 or £6 per head, and then from there, there was a gradual gain”.¹⁶³ Thus, the Cold Storage Company unlocked a lucrative beef market for the Melsetter farmers, some of who had more than 1200 cattle.¹⁶⁴ Cattle were driven on the hoof to Umtali, from where they were railed to the Bulawayo Cold Storage facility. A Mrs Webster of the Meadows Farm in Chipinga recalled how the family drove 100 herds to Umtali, then railed them to Bulawayo where they sold “at quite a good price”, of £6. 10. 0.¹⁶⁵

Closely related to this was the improvement in road and transport facilities in the district. By 1938, the Road Motor Services (RMS), introduced in the Colony in 1927, operated 44 lorries

¹⁵⁹ NAZ, L: C.32.15.9R, Box: 126946, File Lands, Chipinga Area Vol.2, Confidential Report, Dairy Problems, August 1970.

¹⁶⁰ L.H. Gann and M. Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia, the Man and the His Country* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1964), 123.

¹⁶¹ Phimister, ‘Meat and Monopolies’, 412.

¹⁶² Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, 124.

¹⁶³ NAZ, Oral/GI 4, Interview with C.J. Gifford, 26 April 1973.

¹⁶⁴ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 144.

¹⁶⁵ NAZ, Oral/WE3, Interview with S.C.J. Webster, 25 April 1973.

and trailers over 1 600 route miles, several of which were subsidised by Government.¹⁶⁶ Though it had been serving Melsetter since 1928, its service had not been reliable. Farmers transporting perishables like milk, cream, vegetables and fruits complained of service interruptions following heavy rains, which left roads slippery, gullied and bridges washed away. More often than not, the RMS struggled with one service a week, instead of the scheduled two.¹⁶⁷ As Hodder-Williams has noted, Southern Rhodesian Railways and Roads did not follow development, they fostered it.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the opening of the Sabi Valley Road which linked Chipinga with Umtali, further enhanced transport service.¹⁶⁹ Thereafter, farmers avoided the winding and steep road through Melsetter and Cashel valley. When, in 1935, the Berchnough Bridge was opened, for the first time, farmers from Melsetter had direct access to pedigree stock from Fort Victoria, though the latter remained economically more aligned to the Midlands Province than to Melsetter.¹⁷⁰ With the end of the Depression in 1939, Melsetter's economic landscape was more diversified and better linked to the rest of the colony than it had been ten years earlier. As will be demonstrated shortly, the Second World War is equally a window through which we can view productive and race relations within the district.

Reflections on War and White Settler Relations

As has been demonstrated earlier, it was through Rhodes' manoeuvres that a majority of the Afrikaner community accessed land in the Melseter District. For a long time thereafter, this community remained indebted to Rhodes. In 1971, one J. A. Kok lamented that Rhodes "died too soon... He had the imagination and drive to carry out his schemes".¹⁷¹ Hence, this community felt increasingly insecure and isolated from the rest of the colony after Rhodes's death in 1902.

Inherently, the post-Rhodes governments were visibly sceptical of this society. Their scepticism was discernible during periods of crises, when Government demanded greater political allegiance from all its citizens. Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the government was visibly worried about the loyalty of Afrikaners in Melsetter district. Therefore, it quickly replaced Longden as Magistrate and Civil Commissioner because, despite

¹⁶⁶ Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia', 66-67.

¹⁶⁷ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 110.

¹⁶⁸ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 40.

¹⁶⁹ NAZ, Oral/GI 4, Interview with C.J. Gifford, 26 April 1973.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ NAZ, Oral/KO 1, Interview with Johan Andries Kok, 30 April 1971.

having served in this capacity since 1894, he was considered too close to the Afrikaner community.¹⁷² This apprehension was not unfounded. Culturally, ideologically and economically, this society had great inclinations to the Afrikaners in South Africa. Thus, in the run up to the 1923 referendum, Smuts toured the district, visited places like Chipinga, Melsetter and Mount Silinda to persuade these communities to vote for Union.¹⁷³ At the invitation of the Melsetter Farmers Association, the South African Minister of Mines and Industries, F.S. Malan, also toured the district in August 1923, with the same agenda.¹⁷⁴ In addition, an inherent feeling that they were victims of state neglect resulted in many being enthused by these visits, with some being hopeful that the Melsetter District would get a railwayline if a referendum went in favour of Union”.¹⁷⁵

However, some Rhodesian officials were blunt about this animosity. While the Prime Minister Huggins was fully aware of the challenges confronting the Afrikaner community in Melsetter he, at the same time, felt that it was burdensome to keep on the map, at one time saying, “A pity it didn’t remain in Portuguese territory”.¹⁷⁶ Further reflecting on these relations, another informant traced the racial animosity to the 1899-1902 Anglo Boer War. He explained, “There was some ill-feelings during the Second World War”, especially from Afrikaners who experienced the war, and still had memories of life in the concentration camps. Most of them were “opposed to their sons fighting for the British in 1939”.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps the case of Jan Hendrik Serfontein is significant in illuminating this animosity. Called up for active service in the Second World War, Serfontein travelled from Chipinga to Salisbury in August 1940. However, upon arrival at the KG VI Army Headquarters in Salisbury, he refused to take the oath of allegiance, as he explained:

...you know, we were brought up right in the veldt, and I can remember my dad always telling us about the old Boer War – how they were treated and how the U.K. Government did it and everything, which I thought was very very unfair, and with the bit of experience that I’d seen with my dad on the farm and how the government treated him, as a kid I thought, No, this is not on. And I never, never had any desire, even to this day, to help the U.K. I haven’t got it.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² NAZ, Oral/CO 1, Interview with L.D.M. Condy, February 1969.

¹⁷³ NAZ, Oral RE/2, Interview with A.C.H Reading, 15 November 1973.

¹⁷⁴ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 99.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Oral/GI 4, Interview with C.J. Gifford, 26 April 1973.

¹⁷⁷ NAZ, Oral/OD 1, Interview with John Odendaal, 25 April 1973.

¹⁷⁸ NAZ, Oral/223, Interview with J.H.B. Serfontein, November 1977.

Gann and Gelfand also confirm this acrimony. They add that throughout the war, “Government firmly clamped down on small groups of Afrikaner nationalists nicknamed *Suikerbossier*, who said they would defend Southern Rhodesia itself against foreign attack but not put on Khaki to fight England’s wars overseas”.¹⁷⁹ Consequently, Sersfontein and more than a hundred others who refused to take the oath of allegiance were forced into the labour corps. Up to the end of war, they did all sorts of menial work, such as constructing and repairing roads and aerodromes, chopping and stumping trees, loading timber onto wagons. When they were eventually tried at the KG 1V, the Afrikaner community in Rhodesia hired a renowned South African lawyer, T.E. Donges, to defend them. Though, finally, Serfontein was not imprisoned, he lost his civil rights.¹⁸⁰ Thus, quite a few Afrikaners from Melssetter took an active role in the war and of the Rhodesians born in the district, Gifford remembered only three, Bindy, Klein his own brother.¹⁸¹

On the economic front, the war reinforced the state’s pre-war role as a key player in regulating food production. As a British Colony with an ideal climate, and being further away from the active front, Rhodesia became an active front for training the Royal Air Force. She was again used as a territory to keep prisoners of war and refugees. Therefore, the first year of war saw an influx of approximately 15 000 Royal Air Training Personnel under the Empire Training Scheme, and by August 1940, 1 800 pilots, 240 observers and 340 air gunners had been trained.¹⁸² The influx of military personnel and prisoners of war resulted in an approximately 20 per cent increase of the white population.¹⁸³ Apart from being Rhodesia’s greatest contribution to the war effort, the hosting of the Empire Training Scheme also proved to be a major economic windfall, as Gann and Gelfand explain: “Farmers and industrial firms suddenly found an insatiable market, and Guest calculated that Imperial Expenditure on the scheme alone almost equalled the indirect benefit which the country derived from its entire gold-mining industry”.¹⁸⁴

For the Rhodesia farmer overall, the war proved to be a blessing in disguise. Weary of an imminent food shortage, the state ordered most farmers, right from the outbreak of the war, to stay on the land. One farmer, Gifford explained that while he and several others from Chipinga

¹⁷⁹ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, 159.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Oral/GI 4, Interview with C.J. Gifford, 26 April 1973.

¹⁸² N. Samasuwo, ‘Food Production and War Supplies: Rhodesia’s Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939–1945’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2, 2003, 492.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 492.

¹⁸⁴ Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, 153.

were called up immediately following the outbreak of war, this decision was quickly annulled on grounds that farmers' best contribution to the war effort should be through food production.¹⁸⁵ Sinclair confirms this, adding that the country kept key men and women on the land and in industry, and that in Melsetter; all married farmers stayed behind thereby becoming active members of the Food Production Committee. Furthermore, when rationing was implemented, fuel for farming purposes was exempted.¹⁸⁶ War, therefore, opened up market opportunities for Melsetter farmers. It has been demonstrated that the white community survived both the Great Depression and Second World War partly because of both local initiatives and state support. Africans, nevertheless, were in a less favourable position. How they fought to manoeuvre this uneven landscape is the focus of the next section.

African Land Rights and Use Systems: an Overview

The Melsetter Highlands was one of the few regions in Rhodesia that was virtually appropriated by settlers within a few years of European colonisation. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the Melsetter Highlands was seized between January 1893 and October 1895.¹⁸⁷ As the land remained largely underutilised, it was hoped that this would cease with promulgation of the LAA of 1930. It was envisaged that absentee landlords would be forced to sell or develop their land and labour tenancy would cease thereafter. However, because the district remained cut off from markets, the farms remained underutilised. When the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC), C.L. Carbutt, realised the difficulties associated with a drastic implementation of the LAA in Melsetter, he rescinded the decision to evict Africans from European Land. African settlement patterns in Melsetter District are as indicated on Table 1 below.¹⁸⁸

Table 1: African Population Distribution in Melsetter and Chipinga, 1934.

¹⁸⁵ Oral/GI 4, Interview with C.J. Gifford, 26 April 1973.

¹⁸⁶ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 130-131.

¹⁸⁷ Olivier, *Many Treks made Rhodesia*, 51 and 96.

¹⁸⁸ NAZ, S138/11, from Native Commissioner, Melsetter to Chief Native Commissioner, 13 June 1931.

	Chipinga	Melsetter	Total	Percentage
On African Reserves	5 400	4 173	9 537	23.3
On Unalienated Crown Lands	7 340	867	8 207	20.4
On Alienated Lands	7 110	5 010	12 120	30.2
On Native Purchase Areas	9 300	297	9 597	23.9
In Towns	205	360	565	1.4
Total	29 355	10 601	40 062	

Source: NAZ S1563, NC's Annual Report, 1934

As the table clearly demonstrates, more than 52 per cent of the African population continued to stay on European Land either as rent or labour tenants. Rent tenants stayed on unalienated Crown Land in exchange for a rent paid to the state. However, this land was less productive, thus explaining why it remained unalienated all along. In addition, Africans on this land were insecure owing to the fact that their status changed at any time once the land had been alienated. Many Africans were also labour tenants on alienated farms. Serfontein recalled how, as a youth growing up on Umzelezwe Farm in Chipinga, the family farming enterprise depended solely on labour tenancy:

We never employed any African. They were all squatters. We had about 60 Africans staying on the farm. It was a big place - there were over 5000 Acres. I don't know if the law is still the same, but in those days you were entitled to three months of their labour for staying on the farm. My father had an arrangement with them that they would work a week every month. He divided them up into four gangs, and every month one gang would come and work a week, so we always had a different gang every week, and so that was how they worked off the time he was entitled to.¹⁸⁹

This view about ready availability of African labour tenancy in the district was also confirmed by a Mrs Webster of the Meadows Farm. Asked about the labour situation during this time, she said labour was not a challenge at all, because the farm always had access to:

...the boys on the farm...No, oh no, good heavens, they knew that otherwise they'd have to leave the farm. We used to work them weekly you know - one span would come and work one week, the next they'd stay at home.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ NAZ, Oral/223, Interview with J.H.B. Serfontein, November 1977.

¹⁹⁰ NAZ, Oral/WE3, Interview with S.C.H. Webster, 25 April 1973.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that although these African tenants stayed on the best land, their livelihood options were severely curtailed. The labour tenants were not expected to compete with landowners on the agricultural markets. Furthermore, their agricultural productivity was curtailed as they were obliged to work for the land owner. Other practices also undermined the livelihood of African tenants. For instance, at Groenvlei Farm, all tenants were paid only £1 a year, just enough for them to pay hut tax.¹⁹¹ Also, despite the fact that livestock was considered the basis for storing wealth, some landowners prohibited their tenants from keeping cattle, fearing that this would lead to mix ups and increase cases of cattle thefts by the Africans.¹⁹² Other white farmers perceived African owned livestock as pathogenic and therefore feared that African owned cattle would spread disease on theirs. Arguably, this was a highly flawed perception and just an alibi. As noted by Francis Dube, there were more outbreaks of African Coast Fever (ACF) among settler owned cattle than Africans cattle because settlers favoured exotic breeds which were less adjusted to local conditions.¹⁹³ While the more liberal farmers allowed their tenants to keep livestock, a limit of 10 head per tenant was set. Yet Africans were not allowed to dispose their cattle without the knowledge of the landowner, who always cunningly demanded the first option for purchase at a price that he determined.¹⁹⁴

The other option available to Africans was to move into the reserves. Land assigned for African reserves in Melsetter was roughly equal to that assigned for whites, but, it was of poorer agricultural potential. There was also a concern over the black-white land ratios which were vastly disproportionate. During this period, a total white population of about 750 owned 900 000 acres of the most productive highlands, while the African reserves, Garahwa, Mutambara, Mutema, Musikavanhu, Muwusha, Ndowoyo and Ngorima with a population of 40 000 had a total of 960 000 acres. This represents a ratio of 1: 1200 acres for the Europeans and 1: 22.5 acres for the Africans. Interestingly, although they were drier and less productive, Africans continued drifting into these reserves. This relocation picked momentum during the Great Depression, as Africans hoped to evade greater financial obligations imposed by the

¹⁹¹ Interview, Nisbert Masirande, Ndima area, 19 December 2014.

¹⁹² Interview, Jameson Sobona, Chirinda Area, 30 December 2014.

¹⁹³ Dube, 'In the Border Regions of the Territory of Rhodesia', 220.

¹⁹⁴ Interview, Chengetai Mutidye, Chipinge, 26 December 2014.

landowners.¹⁹⁵ Admittedly, by staying in the reserves, Africans had the least obligations, which were confined mostly to the payment of hut and dog taxes and the purchase of food.

It has been demonstrated in table 1, that although the best lands had been apportioned as 'European Land', more Africans continued utilising this land as labour or rent tenants. This clearly illustrates the limits of colonialism in the Melssetter District. In other words, the full impact of colonialism and economic marginalisation of the Africans in this district was somehow postponed.

In the meantime, government embarked on some initiatives to enhance productivity in the reserves. Envisaging the migration of more Africans into reserves after 1930, the 1925 Morris Carter Commission recommended the adoption of western methods of farming. As a result, the "Office of the Agriculturist for the Instruction of Natives" was set up and its first Director, E.D. Alvord, was appointed in 1926.¹⁹⁶ Eira Punt argues that the prime consideration behind the agricultural development policies was to prevent deterioration of soils and enable reserves to accommodate more Africans without the need to resort to Government famine relief.¹⁹⁷ It was also hoped this would avoid the necessity to acquire more land for the Africans. The Rhodesia Official Year Book summarised this as follows:

the aim of farming demonstrators in the native reserves is not to stimulate production of staple cash crops, but to teach the native farmer how to get good returns from his labour, and at the same time build up and maintain the soil fertility for himself and his children. It must be remembered that land on native reserves is communal and it is limited. No individual can be permitted to go extensively into the production of money crops, wear out the land and crowd out other individuals who have an equal right to a share of the land.¹⁹⁸

As a result, Agricultural demonstrators, under the supervision of Alvord, moved into the reserves and prepared small demonstration plots, stressing the virtues of modern methods of agriculture, such as crop rotation, separation of grazing from arable land, prevention of soil erosion and contour ridging.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Rennie, 'Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism', 196.

¹⁹⁶ I.R. Phimister, 'Discourse and the discipline of historical context: conservationism and ideas about development in Southern Rhodesia 1930-1950', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 12, 2, 1986, 270.

¹⁹⁷ E.Punt, 'The development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with Particular Reference to the Interwar Years' (MA Thesis, University of Natal, 1979), 71.

¹⁹⁸ *Official Yearbook of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia*, 2 1930, 745.

¹⁹⁹ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, 201.

However, not all settlers were for this idea. Some white farmers and government officials were clearly unsettled, adamant that Africans should not be given this support. They feared that African products would ultimately enter the market and compete with theirs.²⁰⁰ As a result, Alvord faced criticisms from the white farming community and those NCs who also served as district magistrates for European communities.²⁰¹ One Government Official, E.G. Howman, plainly pointed out that Africans should only be taught to grow millet, rapoko and sorghum, which had a very limited market.

Official Perceptions and the Reality about Africans during the Great Depression

On 25 October 1930, the Melsetter Farmers Association with support of the Melsetter Village Management Board wrote to the Colonial Secretary complaining about the withdrawal of six civil servants from Melsetter District.²⁰² Among the civil servants transferred were an assistant magistrate and two police troopers.²⁰³ Settlers in the district were apprehensive about these withdrawals, pointing out that it endangered the settler community.²⁰⁴ In response, a British South Africa Police Official (BSAP) allayed these fears. Basing on crime records for the district, the official wrote: “The native population in the Melsetter area is among the most law-abiding in the colony. Serious crime is practically non-existent and indeed offences of any kind are most infrequent”.²⁰⁵ This BSAP response typified the general perception within government circles. A 1937 report revealed that there were 345 cases of Africans who were charged during that year and of that number, 328 were convicted.²⁰⁶ While the figure may seem high, the NC downplayed this on the basis of the ratio and nature of the crimes, saying, “Considering the large native population of this district and judging by the number of Natives who were charged for committing petty crimes, it would be seen that the Natives as a whole have been remarkably law abiding”.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁰ R. Dinnis, cited in Punt, ‘development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia’, 72

²⁰¹ Punt, ‘The development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia’, 76.

²⁰² NAZ, S246/796, Melsetter Farmers Association, Withdrawal of Certain Civil Servants from Melsetter, from E.H. Alliot, Melsetter Farmers Association to Colonial Secretary, 25 October 1930.

²⁰³ Ibid, from secretary Law Department to Secretary, Department of Colonial Secretary, 17 November 1930.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, from Melsetter Village Management Board to Melsetter Farmers Association, 10 October 1930.

²⁰⁵ NAZ, S246/796, Melsetter Farmers Association, Withdrawal of Certain Civil Servants from Melsetter, letter from Station Officer, BSAP to Secretary, Law Department, 12 November 1930.

²⁰⁶ NAZ, S1563, Annual Report, NC Chipinga & Melsetter, 31 December 1937.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

Alongside this perspective, a striking administrative innovation of the 1930s was the formation of Native Boards in the districts. Rennie traces these Boards to 1923, when government started keeping “a very close watch on African association in the towns”.²⁰⁸ Rennie notes further that Government got worried when, in 1930, three branches of the Southern Rhodesia Native Association were established in the Zvimba, Buhera and Fort Victoria Reserves.²⁰⁹ Consequently, during that year, the Native Department resolved to establish Native Boards, which consisted of all chiefs, headmen and certain elected members from each of the country’s administrative districts, whose task was to discuss African economic and social grievances at local levels. Meetings were chaired by the local NC, who thereafter forwarded minutes of proceedings and resolutions to the CNC. Government hoped that discussing grievances at district level would prevent them from spreading into national grievances, which would be more difficult to control.²¹⁰ For the Africans, particularly in Melsetter district, the Boards became significant sites of struggle through which issues pertinent to their livelihoods were raised, discussed and brought to the attention of the authorities.

This section uses the Melsetter Native Board as a platform to examine the nature of African struggles over unequal distribution of natural resources in the district. It further analyses African grievances as they were expressed in the Native Board Meetings. Government’s responses to these complaints are assessed as well as aspects of African agency and what informed them. This is done within the broader discourse of master-subordinate relations and “everyday forms of peasant resistance”.²¹¹

The Melsetter Native Board was established in 1931, and its first two day meeting was held on 26 and 27 January.²¹² The deliberations lay bare African hardships and struggles as presented by chiefs, headmen and other representatives. Undoubtedly, the Africans’ primary concerns were associated with colonialism and race-based allocation of land and other natural resources, which often led to food shortages, particularly for communities that were in drought prone reserves. They were also concerned with the unequal access to educational and health facilities. Other concerns were glaringly associated with the Great Depression and these included the deteriorating economic landscape and the associated greater challenges in raising incomes,

²⁰⁸ Rennie, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism’, 235.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 235-6.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 220.

²¹¹ The phrase “everyday forms of peasant resistance”, is taken from J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985).

²¹² NAZ, S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, from Native Commissioner to Chief Native Commissioner, 28 February 1931.

which led to poorer working conditions and widespread failure to raise and pay taxes. The debates also give a clear insight into the nature of government response and African coping mechanisms as they endeavoured to escape and repulse these challenges. Resolutions reached at one of its meetings are lucidly comprehensive about the Africans' hardships and expectations:

(1) That since we have come to a full realisation of the value of education, we humbly ask the Government to impress into the minds of the people the necessity of educating their children. (b) That schools be put up on European Farms. (c) That there should be night schools for all young men employed in towns. (2) That we humbly ask the Government to give pieces of land to the chiefs near their areas. (3) That we ask the Government to raise Native wages in the colony. (4) That all farms belonging to Europeans which are near the reserves or Crown Lands should be fenced. (5) That in consideration of the great work undertaken by Kraal Headmen, we humbly ask the government to pay them. (6) That in view of the fact that we get very little pay in this colony, we humbly ask the Government to allow us to proceed to Johannesburg for the purpose of seeking work. (7) That we ask the Government to put up hospitals in the Native Reserves. (8) That we humbly ask the Government to permit all those who have farms to hold guns.²¹³

These meeting were evidently also used for public relations purposes. This can be inferred from the fact that some matters were raised on several occasions but rarely got adequate attention or answers from the authorities. For instance, most of the resolutions cited above were again on the agenda of the May 1938 meeting, three years later:

(1) That this meeting humbly asks the Government to reconsider our wages which seem to be ridiculously low. (2) That we humbly request the Government to allow us to hold guns for reasons which may necessarily be explained. (3) That we ask government to provide facilities for going to Johannesburg to work. (4) That no money should be asked as school fees from pupils in Sub A, B and Standard 1. (5) That headmen should be paid for the responsible task which they perform. (6) In view of the shortage of food this year, we humbly request the Government to allow us to kill game. (7) That we ask the Government to prolong the time for the payment of tax (this year only). (8) That the responsibility for the payment of tax for our sons who are not at home should not be placed on us. (9) That the Government should grant reserves to those chiefs who are without them. (10) Markets to be established in this country. (11) We humbly ask the Government to reply to our requests.²¹⁴

²¹³ Ibid, Resolutions of the Native Board Meeting, of 26 July 1935.

²¹⁴ Ibid, Agenda for the Native Board Meeting, 25 May 1938.

That the resolutions and agenda for these meetings were comprehensive is indicative of the challenges which the Africans were facing. It is also a commentary on the calibre of the people who comprised this particular Board, where most of its elected members were notable men whom had received education from the local Mission schools. Foremost among these were the likes of Hohoza Dube, Nzula Mhlanga, and Jonas Hlatywayo. The traditional authorities also used the Native Board as a platform to enhance their influence and visibility, as noted in the way chiefs such as Musikavanha, Mutema and Garahwa, who came from the dry Sabi Reserves, were always very vocal in raising issues about the sustenance needs of their communities. The debates in the Native Board Meetings also put the charismatic members on the spotlight and they became easily identified by the colonial administrators. In a 1932 report to the CNC, the NC noted the following about one of the Native Board member:

Hohoza Dube is an ordained preacher under the ABM in this district, a level headed man with a good reputation, and I do not regard him as a potential agitator but, from enquiries I have been making, I think he has been reading some of the speeches of Native leaders, such as that of Solomon Plaatje which was published and commented on in the Union newspapers recently. I do not think that Hohoza was deputed by any section of the natives of this district to speak for them in this matter.²¹⁵

Thus, Africans looked up to the idea of the Native Boards, and were eager that this would be an effective administrative and lawful platform from which to campaign for transformations for their welfare. This is clearly noticeable from the issues raised on the agendas, and the resolutions they made, as shown above. However, as will be demonstrated shortly, the meetings had a second role. They were a façade, representing a public relations exercise to contain African anxieties by keeping them hopeful that something positive would arise out of the meetings.

A pertinent issue consistently raised in the Native Board meetings was the payment of headmen for their role as tax collectors. This issue was raised right from the first Native Board meeting of January 1931. Chief Musikavanhu, who first raised this matter, insisted that headmen devoted their time to collecting tax and as a result had no time to raise their own. Headman Jenya then added that:

²¹⁵ Ibid, from NC to CNC, 23 February 1932.

We, headmen, had to work very hard to get the money from the taxpayers to hand to the NC. We have to be continuously going amongst the people for this purpose, and that leave us with no time to work for ourselves or for European employers to get the money we need for the payment of our taxes. We ask for some rewards for the assistance we give to the government all the time. Some of us hand in to the office large sums of money.²¹⁶

In April 1931, the NC had to clarify to the CNC who these headmen were. “The men referred to in my report are also called vasaguta by the Natives”, as wrote the NC:

The Musaguta is the head of his own kraal, or unfenced collection of huts, and he is the head of several other more or less discrete kraals...In this district many of the vasaguta bring comparatively large sums of money for tax gathered by them from the members of the kraals placed under their names in the tax register. Zamuchiya, for instance, brings in £196 and thirteen others bring in over £100 apiece.²¹⁷

The Africans remained enthusiastic about the sincerity of government in setting up the Native Boards. They were definitely persistent, often raising similar issues repeatedly, in anticipation that government would understand their daily tribulations. Nevertheless, transformations rarely dawned on the Africans. Although the colonial administrators continued sanctioning the same deliberations, responses from the Salisbury authorities were not timeous, if they came at all. The issue about headmen pay was raised again in January 1933 by Headman Maronga in a query in which he likened the government to a father:

Every father would give something to his son who worked well and long for him; if the father had no money he would give his son an old jacket or a pair of trousers. The kraal heads are the sons of the government, and they had to run up and down the hills all the time in their areas to help the government’s messengers to find the laggards and to bring them to book which left them little time to find the money they had to pay for themselves.²¹⁸

In addition, in 1934, J. Hlachwayo regretted that government had not responded to the issue although it was raised in every meeting. He lamented that “in these difficult times”, many headmen, some overseeing up to 200 households, were rarely at their homes as they would be continually travelling in search of members of their “books” from which to collect tax. He

²¹⁶ Ibid, from NC to CNC, 28 February 1931.

²¹⁷ Ibid, from NC to CNC, 30 April 1931.

²¹⁸ Ibid, from NC to CNC, Melsetter Annual Native Board Meeting, 31 January 1933.

added further saying headmen also put up with many abuses, as they also settled quarrels amongst their people, which took so much of their time that they could neither help their wives in cultivating the fields, nor have the opportunity to raise their own tax.²¹⁹ When the response finally came, government expressed appreciation of the headmen's role, but was adamant that it would not pay them: "Regarding those headmen who have very large numbers of Natives on their 'books', it is suggested to the NC that there should be sub-division of 'books' when they reach the abnormal proportions instanced".²²⁰

The Native Board also campaigned for other concessions to be offered to the Africans. During its campaign for the payment of headmen, the Native Board also agitated for a reduction of hut tax, or suspension altogether of the dog tax.²²¹ This campaign for tax reductions or suspension thereof was evidently made in face of the hardships that were exacerbated by the Great Depression. Hohoza Dube's comments during one of the meetings show the extent of the Great Depression as he stated that: "the people have no money. They are not hiding or saving their money; they have no money left, and there is no money in the land". He concluded, "If the Government wants money from us, they must put us in the way of earning it". The NC wrote that this cry "evoked loud and general applause".²²²

Added to challenges resulting from the Great Depression were the consequences of a prevalent drought. It reduced communal households' income and food reserves to the extent that communities relied on scavenging for food to survive. The chiefs' comments prove this challenge. For instance, in 1932, Headman Dabula Mapanga lamented: "We are no longer living as people, we are like baboons, without lands of our own, and we have to look for food again in the hills. We have nothing of our own to put in our mouths".²²³ Chief Mutema also pointed out that people were not resisting the demands of the government but had genuine challenges in raising tax because while there were no jobs, people had nothing to sell because of the drought. He bemoaned that: "We shall have to leave our kraals in the valley and seek food from our friends and relatives in the hills, [the Melsetter Highlands] and we have no money for taxes". As a result of this outcry, chiefs and headmen from the drought areas "joined strongly in support of Mutema's words".²²⁴ Nevertheless, all their pleas were in vain as the

²¹⁹ Ibid, Minutes of a meeting of Chiefs and Headmen and Native board held at the Native Commissioner's Office on 12 June 1934.

²²⁰ Ibid, from Acting CNC to NC Chipinga, 29 June 1934.

²²¹ Ibid, from NC to CNC, 19 January, 1932.

²²² Ibid, from NC to CNC, 19 January, 1932.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

CNC's was resolute in the affirmation that: "Under no circumstances would I recommend the remission of taxation. If necessary it would be better to face the cost of famine relief measures".²²⁵

The drought and the Great Depression continued to haunt the Africans. This is visibly evident from the NC's description of the mood at one of the 1933 Native Board meetings:

Almost to the exclusion of everything else there was in the minds of the assembled Natives one thought, and that was about the question of how the money for the payment of the government's taxes was to be got this year. Again and again this question was brought forward in the discussion of other matters to which it did not appear to be particularly relevant, which shows that the natives of this district are beginning to realise the serious economic difficulties which they now have to face.²²⁶

At this meeting, Chief Musikavanhu once again regretted Government's lack of concern for African challenges. He stated that any headmen could not squeeze money out of people who no longer have any for the government: "...if the government will show us where the money can be earned we will send our sons to get it with all speed",²²⁷ he affirmed. The NC observed that Africans were clearly disturbed, as the message was "iterated with variations of illustrations and delivery by all the delegates [and] from the tone of the meeting, though commendably restrained, it was evident that the feeling expressed was deep and sincere in all these people".²²⁸ During the subsequent July meeting, Chief Mutema suggested a reduction of the *Lobola* charge from £25 to £10. The NC reported that: "After full discussion, Mutema's proposal was put to the vote and carried".²²⁹ However, the NC was deeply doubtful of the sincerity of this decision, though, feeling that it was orchestrated to gain government's sympathy:

As to the matter of lobola, I might say that I did not believe that the representations made at the meeting were the outcome of general agreement among natives of this district; I took them to be rather in the nature of a gesture intended to show how dire was their general need of money for the payment of tax that could drive them even to sacrifice half of the time honoured amount of lobola claimable according to their settled custom.

²²⁵ Ibid, from CNC to the Premier, 1 February 1932.

²²⁶ Ibid, from NC to CNC: Annual Native Board Meeting for Melssetter District at Chipinga, 31 January 1933.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid, Minutes of the Melssetter Native Board Meeting, 3 July 1933.

That the present want of money among the natives here is real and serious is, however, so obvious, that there was no need for the “stage effort” but Natives will be Natives.²³⁰

While Africans’ failure to raise taxes were genuine, authorities insisted that they should raise and pay these taxes. As shall be shown shortly, many were left with no option but to devise ways of evading paying the taxes.

As J.C. Scott has demonstrated, one of the common man’s frequent and effective responses to repression has been flight.²³¹ Scott considered how, in south east Asia in general and among the rural Malaya people in particular, peasants resorted to “avoidance protest”, often “voting with its feet”,²³² instead of engaging in open confrontation with the state. Duri’s study on informal livelihoods activities across the borders is a classic example of “fluid communities and a porous border”. This study is equally illuminating about resistance and desertion, as well as livelihood strategies of the subordinate.²³³ Correspondingly, with economic challenges staring them in their faces, yet deeply perturbed by state’s negative response, more than a thousand Africans from the Melsetter District deserted. It was reported in 1933 that “at least half the number of people who pay tax for the privilege of occupying intermittently the southern part of this district have been away from their homes in quest of food in adjoining areas chiefly Portuguese East Africa”.²³⁴ The following year, the Assistant NC for Melsetter recorded a decrease of 1 258 people, “chiefly due to natives migrating over the border into Portuguese Territory”.²³⁵ In June 1934, Chief Mupungu reported that without consulting him, large numbers of his people moved into Portuguese East Africa, adding that he “did not know how he was going to get their tax from them”. Chief Garahwa also revealed that many of his people “were doing likewise”.²³⁶

The above migrations show the nature and significance of colonial borders among the Africans. When the Rhodesia-Portuguese East Africa border was finally demarcated in 1897, it followed physical landscape; a watershed along the mountain ranges that include the Chimanimani, Himalaya, Vhumba right up to Nyanga mountains. It ignored African traditional chiefdoms

²³⁰ Ibid, from NC Chipinga to CNC, 29 August 1933.

²³¹ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 245.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ F.P.T. Duri, ‘Antecedents and Adaptation in the Borderlands, A Social History of informal Socio-Economic Activities Across the Rhodesia-Mozambique Border with Special Reference to the City of Umtali, 1900-1974’, (PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2012).

²³⁴ NAZ, S1563, NC Annual Report, Melsetter/Chipinga 1933.

²³⁵ Ibid, Assistant NC Report, Melsetter, 31 December 1934.

²³⁶ S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, Minutes of the Melsetter Native Board Meeting, 12 June 1934.

and cultural affinities. In fact, Duri alludes to the fact that this border constituting 1 200 kilometres was demarcated for the convenience of the colonial powers and “without considering African interests”.²³⁷ Thus, besides splitting African grazing areas and fields between the two countries, it further separated five Shona speaking groups: the Ndau, Manyika, Barwe, Teve and Zezuru.²³⁸ Along the Melsetter border, for instance, Chief Chikukwa remained in Rhodesia while his headmen: Gudza and Mahate, found themselves in Portuguese East Africa.²³⁹ In the Rusitu Valley of this same district, paramount chief Mafuse remained in Portuguese East Africa while his sub chief, Ndima, ended up in Rhodesia.²⁴⁰ The same happened in Chirinda area, where Chiefs Mapungwana and Garahwa had several of their subjects in Portuguese East Africa.

By splitting people with similar socio-economic cultures without considering their interests, the border interfered with African cultural practices. According to Duri, the border became “irrelevant to Africans whenever their survival was under threat.”²⁴¹ Thus, earlier in 1896, Chimbadzwa, one of Chief Mutasa’s sons, and 500 followers left the Rhodesian border district of Umtali and settled in the Barwe Chiefdom of Makombe in Portuguese East Africa escaping food scarcity.²⁴² Similarly, in 1904, headman Chikomba, 12 village heads and their followers crossed the Gairezi River and settled in Portuguese East Africa partly because they did not want to pay rent to the BSAC which had established farms in the area.²⁴³ Borders were therefore permeable in Melsetter, Rhodesia and throughout the region. The same prevailed in Zambia where much of African protest to colonisation centred on land, taxation and labour. “In the case of eastern Zambia”, writes Kanduza, “the Nyau people among the Chewa led protest by moving its camps and adherents to other chiefdoms in Malawi and Mozambique when tax collectors and labour recruiters toured Chewa chiefdoms in Chipata district”.²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, African struggles in Melsetter District were not totally in vain. Being “the man on the ground”, the NC Nielson, yielded to these pressures and joined in the campaign to have taxes reduced. In a 1935 report, he chronicled how the intermittent droughts between 1926 and 1935 impoverished Africans, specifically those from the Sabi Valley Reserves. These droughts

²³⁷Duri, ‘Antecedents and Adaptation in the Borderlands’, 89.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid, 90-91.

²⁴⁰ Mabulala, ‘The Native Affairs Department in Melsetter District’, 22.

²⁴¹ Duri, ‘Antecedents and Adaptation in the Borderlands’, 91.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Kanduza, ‘Land and Peasant Politics in Chipata District’, 56.

induced sufferings added onto the economic hardships resulting from the Great Depression. As a result, a number of Africans from these reserves resorted to barter trade with Africans from the Highlands: exchanging clay pots, baskets and mats for grain. By 1935, they were slaughtering their remaining animals, drying the meat and bartering the biltong for maize.²⁴⁵ In addition, the Melsetter District had by 1935 accumulated tax and rental arrears amounting to £5 101, and grain loan arrears of £840.²⁴⁶ While the CNC was resolute that this should not be scrapped, Nielson convinced him after pointing out that in spite of the continuous droughts, Africans who were “living on the borderline of starvation” had managed to pay seventy four per cent of their taxes and rentals, and that an attempt to collect these arrears “required the use of means which no civilised government would approve”.²⁴⁷ Eventually, the arrears were written off while the total tax amount for the year was halved.²⁴⁸

This reprieve was not unique to Melsetter. The contestation over the proposed 1928 raising of rentals for Africans on Crown Land is a good example of such reprieves. In 1928, Government raised rentals for Africans residing on Crown Land to £1 and the CNC, H. J. Taylor, protested against what he called “a blanket rate”. He argued that it was too high for the majority Africans in poorer districts, and was further critical of the fact that the NCs had not been consulted. Government accepted the criticism and as a result, Africans in Bikita, Lomagundi, Ndanga, Sebungwe, Wankie and many parts of Mount Darwin districts were exempted from this rental increase.²⁴⁹

Gun policy was another major source of contention that was constantly debated, for it categorically discriminated against the Africans. The Melsetter Native Board argued that, like the white farmers, Africans also needed fire arms to protect their livestock and crops against wild animals. That game caused severe damage to crops and livestock was common knowledge, just as it was well known that white farmers regularly killed destructive game. For instance, farms owned by the Odendaal families around Mt Silinda area were constantly under attack from baboons, leopards and wild pigs, such that the Odendaals kept a team of trained dogs to track these animals down and firearms to shoot them.²⁵⁰ Thus D.P.J. Odendaal killed over a hundred leopards in his lifetime, and on one occasion had his arm severely mauled, that

²⁴⁵ NAZ, S542/R4 letter from CNC to Office of the Treasury, 1 October 1935.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ NAZ, S15642/ letter from NC Melsetter to C.N.C., 20 November 1936.

²⁴⁸ Mabulala, ‘The Native Affairs Department in Melsetter’, 55-56.

²⁴⁹ Punt, ‘The Development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia’, 30.

²⁵⁰ NAZ, Oral/OD, 1, Interview with John Odendaal, 25 April 1973.

“it was through the skill of Dr Huggins that his arm was saved”.²⁵¹ Equally, one Fred, who managed Willow Groove and Fairview Farms during this time, killed 59 leopards in just seven years.²⁵² Accordingly, the regular game menace to livestock and crops in the district compelled the Melsetter Native Board to argue that it was clearly unfair to deny Africans licences to carry firearms.²⁵³

Unsurprisingly, the arms issue later degenerated into racial undertones. One Muchadeyi Ntuso said it was mind boggling that Africans were treated with mistrust and scorn, yet since the arrival of settlers during the 1890s, “no white man, woman or child had ever been harmed by Africans in the district...” He then asked:

Why then does the government refuse to its black children the privilege of carrying guns to protect their crops and stock against the vermin of all kinds that are the common enemy of all the government’s people, white and black alike?²⁵⁴

Chief Musikavanhu concurred, adding that Africans throughout the district welcomed settlers with friendliness, were peaceful and obedient and also asked “why then should they not be trusted?”²⁵⁵ Headmen Chikwanda also noted that Africans escorted white settlers into the country, worked for them as they proceeded to build their houses, villages, and had ever since lived in peace and security, indicating that Africans were “law abiding,... quiet fit to be trusted”.²⁵⁶ The indigenous community of Melsetter District’s activities during the different forms of resistance to colonial occupation over different periods is instructive. While most indigenous communities took part in the Shona Ndebele uprising of 1896-97, protesting against, among others, colonial occupation, loss of land, taxation and forced labour, the Ndau of Melsetter District did not participate.

Nevertheless, concerns about the gun issue persisted. It was raised in the first Native Board meeting of January 1931²⁵⁷ and since there was no response, was raised again the following April,²⁵⁸ and then in the July 1935 meeting.²⁵⁹ Of the 11 matters that were on the agenda for the May 1938 meeting, the gun issue was second,²⁶⁰ while the 11th item was “a humble request”,

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 93.

²⁵³ S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, from NC Chipinga to CNC, 28 February 1931.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, from NC Melsetter to CNC, 30 April 1931.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, Resolutions of the Native Board Meeting, 26 July 1935.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, Agenda for the Native Board Meeting, 25 May 1938.

for Government “to reply to our requests”.²⁶¹ It is interesting and probably due to public relations motives that NC rarely intervened during the gun issue debates, allowed it to be debated, captured it in the minutes but would write a separate confidential communiqué to the CNC recommending non issuance of guns to Africans. In April 1931, he wrote one such letter stating that he did not wish to raise the number of permits already granted, unless there were “good grounds” to extend “the privilege to carry guns among the Africans.”²⁶² After the gun issue had been debated again June in 1934,²⁶³ the NC wrote to the CNC pointing out that “in line with government policy not to increase African gun holders, I am not prepared to recommend the request”.²⁶⁴ In September 1935, the CNC responded: “Guns for native farmers: Your non-recommendation suffices. It is thought that Natives of your district are more exceptionally skilful in dealing with animal and bird pests without recourse to firearms”.²⁶⁵

When, in 1938, armed with bows and arrows, Africans destroyed five lions in the Sabi APA, the NC felt vindicated, and wrote “this means of defence would appear to be adequate”.²⁶⁶ African struggle for the ownership of guns through the Native Board Meetings thus clearly shows that the idea of the Native Board was an administrative ploy to contain the Africans. Africans raised and debated the same issues repeatedly in several meetings but rarely got positive outcomes from the authorities. The idea of the Native Board Meetings was indeed, as claimed earlier, a façade.

Hunting was equally a contentious issue. Traditionally, it was always significant for dietary supplements, and Africans increasingly resorted to this activity during times of food crises. However, colonial game laws allowed hunting by licenced persons and yet Africans were hardly granted the licences. It is not surprising therefore that, considering the significance of hunting to rural African economies; this issue was consistently raised during Native Board meetings. In 1934, Chief Musikavanhu requested that people in the famine ridden Sabi Valley be allowed to kill game.²⁶⁷ To curb unsustainable exploitation, he proposed that hunting be organised and controlled by chiefs and headmen who would coordinate hunting schedules and keep records of game killed. At the same time, he hinted that some people had already been

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid, from NC to CNC, 30 April 1931.

²⁶³ Ibid, Minutes of the Melssetter Native Board Meeting, 12 June 1934.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, from NC Chipinga to CNC, 16 August 1934.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, from Acting CNC to NC Chipinga, 19 September 1935.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, (Minutes of meeting of Melssetter Native Board, 25 May 1938.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, Minutes of a meeting of Chiefs and Headmen and Native board held at the Native Commissioner’s Office on 12 June 1934.

compelled to hunt in order to feed their families, adding that “They felt like thieves... They did not want to be thieves”.²⁶⁸ Though the NC promised to take up the issue with his superiors, it most probably fell on deaf ears because in May 1938, one Mwanema of Mutema Reserve made a similar request in view of another famine that year. This time, the NC was blatant, stating clearly that he was not prepared to recommend the request.²⁶⁹

Denied the permission to own guns and hunt, Africans devised and pursued clandestine survival manoeuvres. Though it is not clear where and how they got firearms, hundreds of Africans owned guns which they used to control game and for stealthy hunting excursions. In 1944 alone, more than 27 Africans were arrested by members of the BSAP in the Cashel area for the illegal possession of fire arms and hunting. The arrested were subsequently tried at the Cashel Periodical Court and fined or imprisoned. These include one Mwanyisa of Nyanyadzi in Muwusha Reserve who, on 13 July 1944, was handed six months imprisonment for unlawful possession of 2 muzzle loading flint rifles.²⁷⁰ Other notable arrests include that of 29 August 1944, in which Mutowo of the BSAP’s patrol in Mutambara Reserve resulted in the arrested of one Dzambo, for illegal possession a fully loaded muzzle loading rifle;²⁷¹ the September 1944 case in which a patrol officer named Timothy arrested one Mwateta near Shati Village for possessing a loaded muzzle rifle. Timothy’s description of the event immediately preceding Mwateta’s arrest is that when Mwateta saw Timothy, “he bolted... I chased him and eventually caught him, but I struggled to chain him”.²⁷² Another victim was Swipire, who after being found in possession a rifle, was handed with six weeks imprisonment. It should however be underscored that survival concerns spurred the Africans to possess guns and engage in hunting illegally. This is noted in the case of Swipire, who, during the trial, justified his ownership of the gun on the grounds that he used it to kill leopards, jackals and hyenas which attack livestock.²⁷³

Other Africans resorted to hunting without necessarily using firearms. In October 1943, one Taruma of Mukono village was arrested by the BSAP officer, Nyamayaro, while at his home in Mutambara Reserve.²⁷⁴ A whistle blower had tipped Nyamayaro regarding Taruma’s usual hunting excursions. Nevertheless, Taruma was very cooperative after the arrest, as he took

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, Minutes of meeting of Melssetter Native Board, 25 May 1938.

²⁷⁰ NAZ, S2171, Cashel Criminal cases, NC vs Mwanyisa, 13 July 1944.

²⁷¹ Ibid, NC vs Dzambo, 14 September 1944.

²⁷² Ibid, NC VS Mwateta, 7 October 1944.

²⁷³ Ibid, NC vs Swipire, 5 January 1945.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, NC vs Taruma, 11 November 1943.

Nyamayaro to a spot on a mountain, some distance from his home, where he showed Nyamayaro game meat hanging on trees to dry. Nyamayaro was further cautioned but however, described the incident of the hunt as follows:

I went in search of my cattle, my two dogs were with me, they saw a Kudu, they chased and caught it, I then killed it by stabbing it with my assegai, this was two and a half weeks ago.²⁷⁵

That Taruma was aware that the hunting was unlawful is unquestionable as testified by the fact that he dried the meat in the bush. Therefore, apart from being a crucial livelihood activity, hunting also denotes protest against colonial game policy.

In other cases, the colonially perceived criminality was clearly a result of clashes between Western and African cultures. Game and other natural resources such as honey, fruits and mushroom were perceived, in traditional Shona culture, as communal resources, available for any member of society's access. Unless circumstances forced a reassessment, Africans thus tended to assume that the world was working in ways that they had always understood. This clash of beliefs is evident in an incident when one Themba, with all innocence, gathered honey from Nyambewa Farm in Cashel, much to the displeasure of the irate farm owner, Johannes Steyn, who described the case in this way:

At about 6: 30 AM, that day I was milking cattle at my kraal. Accused passed me and went to a gully about 500 yards away. Then I saw smoke rising from the gully. I went there to investigate. I saw accused with a bucket. I asked him what he was doing. Accused said he was removing honey. I could see honey had been removed from a bee hive in a hole in trunk of a tree. Accused ran away with his bucket containing honey. Accused had no permission to come to my farm and remove honey. Accused does not work on my farm. When accused was employed by me, accused and I went to this same beehive and accused removed honey from it for me. This did not authorise accused to take away honey now.²⁷⁶

In defence, Themba pleaded innocent, stating: "I did not know that it was an offence to take the honey. I placed a stone against the trunk of the tree before the bees entered the hive".²⁷⁷ It was a clear clash of cultures when Africans were arrested for gathering these resources. By "placing a stone against the trunk", Themba made a customary claim to the beehive; hence he was surprised that he was charged with a criminal offence.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, NC vs Themba 3 January, 1945.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

The cases of these Africans who were arrested are certainly just a tip of the iceberg. It was clear from the oral narratives that many hunting excursions went undetected. A consideration of the size of the district and the number of its African inhabitants meant that no amount of police patrols would have thoroughly curbed this significant social and economic activity. In addition, the rugged terrain of what later became Chimanimani National Park was cumbersome to patrol and the Musikavanhu and Mutema Reserves were far away from the administrative centres of Melsetter and Chipinga for effective policing.²⁷⁸ Therefore, hunting remained a significant socio-economic activity and efforts to stop it remained unabated.

It should be underscored that Africans devised stealthy hunting manoeuvres, which were partly founded on knowledge about cultural practices and patterns of land ownership. Informants highlighted the significance of famous church services among settler farmers, where the long distances and poorer modes of transport during the 1930s meant that farmers from remote parts of the district could not attend church services regularly. These made it a point not to miss services like Easter, or 4 or 5 other services per year, when the Holy Communion was served. However, each wagon trip to and from church centres at Chipinga and Melsetter took between seven and ten days.²⁷⁹ As a result, Africans organised hunting excursions during such periods when the land owners were away.²⁸⁰ Dingane's Day was another well celebrated day on the Afrikaner calendar, whose commemoration dates back to 19th Century South Africa, when Piet Retief and more than a hundred Afrikaners seeking land in Zululand were duped and massacred under Dingane's orders in 1838. The Zulu army was subsequently massacred at the Battle of the Blood River in December 1838,²⁸¹ a victory which was thereafter celebrated by Afrikaner communities, including those in Melsetter. But some Africans used this day for hunting, as described below:

Dingane's day was a very popular Afrikaners event. On this day, 2 or 3 cattle were slaughtered at Clearwater farm, which was popularly known as Dingane's place. There was partying all day: eating, drinking and dancing... At the same time Africans used the opportunity for communal hunting. Of the participating communities, men set up hunting nets while women and youth drove game into the nets, where they were trapped and killed. Because game from communal hunting like this was always shared among

²⁷⁸ Interview, Chengetai, Mutidye, Chipinge, 26 December 2014.

²⁷⁹ NAZ, Oral/223, Interview with J.H.B. Serfontein, November 1977.

²⁸⁰ Interview, Joyce Tandire, Chipinge, 28 December 2014.

²⁸¹ <http://www.henrileriche.com/2013/12/16/the-battle-of-blood-river-16-december-1838/>, (accessed on 28 July 2015).

the participating households, it benefited the whole community hence rarely were these cases reported to the authorities.²⁸²

Africans also utilised other opportunities to engage in hunting. This include periods when landowners attended funerals, weddings and during farmers' meetings. In any case, the tenants' homesteads were not centralised but were scatted all over the farms, making it impossible for land owners to effectively monitor African livelihoods and other socio-economic activities.

This section has demonstrated that the Native Board meetings were platforms through which Africans raised matters pertinent for their survival. The meetings were also, undoubtedly, part of the administrative mechanisms for the state to remain privy of African opinion, thereby making it easier to monitor their activities and contain them during the turbulent Depression era. It has been demonstrated that because the administration was less proactive to Africans grievances, the latter challenged colonial policy in more complicated but subtle ways by resorting to "everyday forms of resistance" which "make no headlines",²⁸³ such as illegal hunting, petty theft and relocating to Portuguese East Africa. The fact that the Africans were virtually non-confrontational meant that the state apparatus could not adequately capture their subtle resistance and breaches of the law; hence Africans in this district appeared to be "among the most law abiding in the colony". The next section explores an equally subtle response by Africans; in the form of an increased clandestine migration to South Africa.

"Breaking the Law in order to observe the Law": the South African Alternative

South Africa had always been a large employer of migrant labour from the region since the beginning of the Minerals Revolution during the last quarter of the 19th Century. However, the rise of the Rhodesian state from 1890, and development of its own commercial enterprises led to a rise in demand for labour and competition for African labour between Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Southern Rhodesia, however, remained optimistic that a lasting solution to arrest labour migration to South Africa would one day be found. In the meantime, Rhodesia took a number of measures to curb this migration. In 1901, an agreement was reached with the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), forbidding the association from recruiting

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ E. Hobsbawn, quoted in J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Heaven and London, University of Yale Press, 1985), 36.

labour in Southern Rhodesia.²⁸⁴ This was reinforced by the Native Pass Ordinance of 1904 which forbade NCs from issuing passes to Africans intending to seek work outside their districts.²⁸⁵ Further to that in 1913, the South African Government prohibited the recruitment of labour from the area north of latitudes 22 degrees, which is the area North of Beit Bridge, for health reasons.²⁸⁶ This development was indeed welcomed by Southern Rhodesia, as the country believed that the health-related prohibition would arrest the labour haemorrhage to South Africa.

As Rennie notes, legislation that seems to perpetuate the interest of one group always attracts resistance from the others.²⁸⁷ Although this ban on labour migrants was based on health considerations, it still fell in conflict with the interest of capital. While South African employers could not strictly enforce it, the economically stressed Africans from Melsetter and beyond continued drifting to the South African mines. In 1925, E.T. Jollie, a representative of Melsetter in the Legislative Assembly, lamented that labour from her constituency “goes almost entirely to the Transvaal”, where the Ndau people, identified as Shangaans, were renowned miners and therefore “in high demand”.²⁸⁸ After a tour of the district in 1925, the Chief Land Inspector also noted that “an appreciable percentage of the natives find their way to Johannesburg, where a native can earn from £2.15.0 to £6 per month”.²⁸⁹ Measures to curb this migration were therefore highly unsuccessful. The subject of migrant labour to South Africa was also constantly raised during Native Board meetings, as evidenced by one of the 1935 resolutions that, “In consideration of the fact that we get very little pay in this colony, we humbly ask the Government to allow us to proceed to Johannesburg for the purposes of seeking work”.²⁹⁰ The issue was again on the agenda in May 1938, when one Taitas from Chief Ndima’s area requested that Africans be allowed to proceed to the Union, where wages were higher.²⁹¹ In response, the NC referred to the 1913 policy prohibiting Africans North of the Limpopo from migrating to South Africa for health reasons.²⁹² Incidentally, the CNC had made similar remark earlier in 1933 saying:

²⁸⁴ Van Onselen, *Chibaro, African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia*, 85.

²⁸⁵ Southern Rhodesia, Ordinance No. 10, June 1904.

²⁸⁶ F. Wilson, *Migrant Labour in South Africa* (Johannesburg, The South African Council of Churches, 1972), 113.

²⁸⁷ Rennie, ‘White farmers, black tenants and landlord legislation’: 91.

²⁸⁸ NAZ, Legislative Assembly Debates 3, 24, May 1925, cols. 973.

²⁸⁹ NAZ, S1193/L5/1, Agricultural Potential and Development of the Melsetter district: 1925 1926, 2 September 1925.

²⁹⁰ S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, Resolutions for the Native Board Meeting, 26 July 1935.

²⁹¹ Ibid, Minutes of meeting of Melsetter Native Board, 25 May 1938.

²⁹² Ibid, Minutes of Melsetter Native Board Meeting, 25 May 1938.

...natives being stopped from proceeding to the Union for work are interesting. I take it this will compel natives of this district to seek work in Southern Rhodesia, and with the improvement in the position which is taking place in this country it is possible that all available labour may be absorbed by our mines and farms, etc.²⁹³

A move to consolidate labour migrancy in the region was established in August 1936, through the signing of Tripartite Migrant Labour Agreement between Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. It came into effect in June 1937.²⁹⁴ As the major employer of migrant labour among the three signatories, Southern Rhodesia stood to gain most from the agreement, which hoped to put to an end the recruitment of African labour by WNLA from the three countries. However, as J.P. Mtisi argued, as long as the gap in wages between the Rand and these signatories continued to exist, then labour migration to South Africa was bound to continue. Mtisi further maintained that South Africa's own pressing labour demands compelled employers to continue employing labour that arrived voluntarily in the country.²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, in an effort to win South Africa's cooperation, Rhodesia successfully lobbied for the Johannesburg agreement of 1936,²⁹⁶ and at the Cape Town conference in September, 1938, where both aimed at obtaining South Africa's support not to engage clandestine labour.²⁹⁷

Meanwhile, Southern Rhodesia intensified police patrols along the border with South Africa. A bus service based in Gwanda District tasked with taking back clandestine migrants ferried back 5 461 migrants en-route to South Africa between 1941 and 1945.²⁹⁸ However, as maybe expected, many African migrants successfully evaded the patrol and repatriation system. Admitting later in 1945 that it was difficult to estimate Southern Rhodesian clandestine immigrants in South Africa, the supervisor for Native Labour reported that, 4 337 Africans from Southern Rhodesia were employed in the Johannesburg municipal area alone.²⁹⁹ There were certainly thousands more in the renowned mining industry, and other smaller sectors, thus attesting to the Southern Rhodesian Government's failure to stop the tide of African labour migrants to South Africa.

²⁹³ Ibid, from the Premier's Office to the Chief Native Commissioner, 13 February 1933.

²⁹⁴ J.P. Mtisi, 'Missing the point: Colonial State's Efforts to stop clandestine Labour Migration from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa, 1937-1942' (Paper presented to Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe, April 2004),

²⁹⁵ Mtisi, 'Missing the point', 4.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁹⁸ Annual report of the supervisor for native Labour, 1945.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

There were a number of labour migrants who came from the different parts of the Melsetter District. As has been pointed out earlier, Africans from the reserves were obviously pushed by its poor agrarian potential while tenants from the alienated farms responded to the poor living and working conditions there. A majority of the farmers in the district indeed depended on labour tenancy but as seen in the 1934 NC report, there was “an undercurrent of discontent by native tenants,” as it was observed that the tenants:

Seem reluctant to come forward to air their grievances. I am of the opinion that there is considerable exploitation of native tenants by farmers, whilst on the other hand, many natives fail to carry out their obligations as tenants. Many natives leave the district to seek work in towns and on mines. A large number proceed clandestinely through the Portuguese Territory to the Transvaal, where higher wages are the attraction.³⁰⁰

As has been noted above, the Rhodesia–Portuguese East Africa border was porous. Reflecting further on this border, D. M Hughes observes that guards staffed only seven checkpoints, where vehicles passed through, with the rest remaining unmanned, unfenced and unmarked. Therefore, to the pedestrian, the border was virtually non-existent and especially when considering that people from either side shared blood and marriage bonds.³⁰¹ Those denied travel documents from the colonial administrators on the Rhodesian side slipped into Portuguese East Africa and connived with traditional authorities who assisted them in obtaining local identity documents. Thereafter they proceeded to South Africa.³⁰² Others simply travelled without any Registration Certificates and just presented themselves as originating from Portuguese East Africa. Mtisi notes that Spraggon, a recognised recruiter and transporter for the Rand in Portuguese East Africa, played a huge part in this clandestine migration. If Southern Rhodesian authorities challenged Spraggon, the task was on the Rhodesian authorities to prove that among those in Spraggon’s lorries were Africans from Southern Rhodesia, which was difficult because they would not produce the evidence.³⁰³

According to Jeater, the mines greatly appealed to the young people. This was due to high pay rate and the endurance that enhanced the young workers’ masculinity.³⁰⁴ In 1931, the NC made a similar observation that “It has almost become a custom in this district that at a certain age

³⁰⁰ NAZ, S1563, Report, NC Melsetter, 31 December 1934.

³⁰¹ D.M. Hughes, ‘Refugees and squatters: Immigration and the Politics of Territory on the Zimbabwe-Mozambique Border’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 25, No. 4, (August 2010), 536.

³⁰² Mabulala, ‘Native Affairs Department in Melsetter’, 39.

³⁰³ Mtisi, ‘Missing the Point’, 24.

³⁰⁴ Jeater, *Law, Language and Science*, 43.

the young men must proceed to Johannesburg and remain away for at least twelve months, failing which he becomes a subject of scorn by others”.³⁰⁵ This was reiterated by another NC, Charles Thomas, who observed in 1946 that going to the South Africa was “more than a custom, but an institution”, and further confirmed that “a man who had never worked in South Africa was looked upon as soft and lazy”.³⁰⁶ Therefore, migration to South Africa remained increasingly difficult to curb as it became another symbol of manhood and success.

Nonetheless, the official attitude to this labour migration was two sided. It was both apprehensive and appreciative. Writing to the Premier’s office in February 1933, the CNC hinted that:

Regarding the discussion as to the payment of Native tax, I learnt at my recent visit to Melsetter that the Union restrictions against the immigration of natives from this territory were being more rigidly enforced, and that a result of this would be that less money would be brought into the District by clandestine labour migrants. There can be little doubt that many Melsetter Natives have relied on this source of income to meet their dues. They are, however, not more remote from labour centres in this colony.³⁰⁷

In 1936, the NC gave more illuminating evidence regarding the nature and implication of this migration. He noted that an absence of mines to employ local Africans and lack of markets to absorb their agricultural produce left Africans with very little sources of money to meet their financial obligations. He quantified the extent of the migration as follows: “...about 70 per cent of the taxable natives leave the district to seek employment on the mines, particularly on the Transvaal, where better wages are paid”.³⁰⁸ A further demonstration of the impact of this migration was revealed in the statistics that of the total £5, 716, 10, 0 tax that was collected from 1 July to 31 December, 1936, £3, 290- , representing 57 per cent, was paid in Union notes.³⁰⁹ The evidence from the local postmaster, a Mr King, also showed that approximately £600, 00 was paid annually to Africans from remittances through money and postal orders.³¹⁰ In 1938, Chief Chikukwa complained that fathers of tax defaulters should not be held responsible for the tax obligations of their children who were away from the district. The NC responded instantly, pointing out that it was “well known that money is sent home by natives who are

³⁰⁵ NAZ, S235/509, Annual Report, NC Melsetter, 1931.

³⁰⁶ S1562, Annual Report, NC Melsetter, 1946.

³⁰⁷ S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, From the Acting CNC to Secretary to the Premier, 8 February 1933.

³⁰⁸ S1563/2, Annual Report, NC Chipinga, 1936.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ NAZ, S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, from Acting NC to Native Commissioner, Chipinga, 12 July 1934.

away at work, parents are expected to see that their children had paid their tax before they disposed of the money received from them”.³¹¹

The above were consistent with established culture. In 1930, the NC lamented that farmers in Melsetter continued paying their workers lowly. While he was concerned that Africans were breaking the law by migrating to South Africa, he appreciated that because of the migration, they raised money to meet their legal obligations. He wrote:

Natives have broken the law in order to observe it. They have done so in order to earn money for the payment of tax which the good tax gatherer had taught them is the prerequisite of all law.³¹²

Clearly, while it was against policy to sanction labour migrations to South Africa, NCs, being the colonial authorities who were “on the ground”, came to appreciate and tolerate this practice. Their tolerance was based on an established fact that the Melsetter District was cut off from the major economic centres of the colony and hence Africans from this region could only raise incomes by migrating elsewhere.

While it alleviated the economic challenges of the migrants and their dependents, these out migrations had their own social costs. They strained relations with the landowners who were always inimical to the flow of labour from Melsetter to South Africa because it threatened local labour supplies. Furthermore, the behaviour of returning migrants worsened these relations:

Upon their return, Africans had ways of showing off their acquired wealth. They brought boxes of clothes: suits, jackets, coats, hats and shoes. Some also brought radios, cameras and bicycles. They organised parties called *Zviparasa*, where there was a lot of feasting and drinking by local community members. They also attended traditional *Muchongoyo* dances. As the migrants were the focus of attention, as a status symbol, it was not unusual at these occasions to alternate three different types of clothing, mostly suits: one in the morning, another in the afternoon and one later during the evening. It was a way of showing off the material wealth they acquired out of earnings made from working in the Johannesburg mines. More often than not, each return trip was subsequently followed by marriage of local young woman, explaining why most of these migrants were polygamous.³¹³

Farmers detested these celebrations for, among other reasons, they encouraged further out migrations. Therefore, there was recurrent animosity especially with returning migrants whose

³¹¹ Ibid, Minutes of meeting of Melsetter Native Board, 25 May 1938.

³¹² NAZ, S235/508, Annual Report, N.C. Melsetter, 1930.

³¹³ Interview, Johnson Sobona, Chirinda, 30 December 2014.

families stayed on the alienated farms. “In the majority of the cases,” reported the NC, “friction occurs...and this office spends quite a lot of time arbitrating in these matters...The usual trouble is that”, he says:

the husband goes off to Johannesburg, and consequently the farmer wishes the wives and children to be removed immediately from the farm. It requires a lot of tact on the part of the official to whom the complaint is made to settle these disputes between farmers and their tenants. In most cases, compromise is the only solution. The cases that do come to court are usually so involving that one is forced to give the native tenant the benefit of the doubt.³¹⁴

The reaction to this system of labour migration was not uniform; it differed from farmer to farmer as some landowners compromised. At Kenilworth farm, heads of household availed remaining family members such as sons or wives prior to migrating and made them take over the migrating householder’s obligations. Therefore, the landowner was assured of continuity in labour supply.³¹⁵

Migration, however also led to some major social changes. The structure of family life and gender roles were transformed as a result of male migration. As men were away, women who remained behind assumed greater responsibilities in managing the family institution. As quasi family heads, they cared for children, managed livestock and carried out land preparations, cultivation and harvesting. This led to fundamental social costs as not all marriage relationships withstood the strains of long separations. For instance, some women became promiscuous, leading to domestic fallouts and divorces. The fact that many divorces were handled as family matters makes it difficult to quantify these cases. Nevertheless, an analysis of those that went through the NC’s office shows that divorce cases were certainly widespread and covered practically all parts of the district. Some women actually initiated divorce procedures, on grounds such as long periods of separation with husbands and lack of support. The period 1934 to 1939 witnessed a number of cases that were tried by the NC, and many more during the 1940s. The Hezi and Chimene case and a few other examples will illustrate this point:

I have born him 2 children... The reason I claim a divorce is that my husband never stays with me. He has been away in Johannesburg many times, and never stays at home. Five years ago I left his kraal as I had no clothes of myself and children. I informed his father, but he gave me no help. I received no financial help from them. I then left his kraal. I did not report to my father. I went out to work in Chipinga at Rietvlei. I then

³¹⁴ S2163, Annual Report, NC Chipinga, 1936.

³¹⁵ Interview, Joyce Tandire, Chipinge, 28 December 2014.

went to work for Mr Miemie at Inyazura. I am prepared to return to my husband on condition we go out to work together. I will not return to his kraal because he will go off again. I agree that he take his children, but ask if I may keep them for 2 years until they are bigger. I have supported them since their birth.³¹⁶

The case exhibits a regional migrant labour system that reproduced local labour migration. While the wife left behind had to take increased responsibilities as head of family, she was undermined, lacking adequate support from the husband and as a result became an employee as well, working locally in Chipinga and later migrating for work in Inyazura. The Inyazura area, located along the railway line, was closely linked to the more lucrative local and international markets and thus was commercially more vibrant and had better paying employers, hence the migration from Chipinga.

There were several other cases involving accusations and counter accusations of infidelity. The graphic natures of these cases demonstrate how migrations complicated socio-cultural relations embroiling families and the larger communities. The case between Marijeni and Tendayi centred on allegations that while Marijeni was in South Africa, the wife committed adultery with Marijeni's brother, as narrated during a court hearing:

I fell in love with Tendayi in 1932... Tendayi and I came to be registered and stayed together in perfect harmony until 1934. In 1934, I went to Johannesburg. I sent £25 to my brother Wilson who took it to Munoremba to pay lobola. I returned home from Johannesburg and stayed with my wife. In 1941, I went to Johannesburg again, but this time when I came home, my wife Tendayi began telling me that while I was away, she committed adultery with my brother Bongani. When she saw that I was seriously investigating into the matter, she denied that she did not commit adultery with Bongani. According to our custom, it was not safe on my part to eat the food which Tendayi cooked before consulting the medicine man; otherwise I might contract a deadly disease. Tendayi became annoyed because I could not eat what she cooked. She went to report me to chief Ndima. Ndima advised us to go and settle the matter between us. We did according Ndima's advice. After some time Munoremba, my wife's father, intervened into the matter of adultery. He said that I was ill-treating his daughter. I then told Munoremba to take his daughter home.³¹⁷

However, that labour migration alleviated the plight of Africans from Melsetter is not in doubt. The migrants sent back remittances that alleviated the poverty induced by radicalised

³¹⁶ NAZ, S1058, Civil Cases, Chipinga, Hezi vs Chimene, 11 March 1943.

³¹⁷ Ibid, Tendayi vs Marijeni, 4 March 1943.

allocations of natural resources. However, this also came with social costs, especially as it destabilised the traditional marriage fabric.

This section has demonstrated that though labour migration from Masetter to South Africa was already in place when Mashonaland was occupied in 1890, it was sustained by the disproportionate ownership of natural resources following colonisation. Undoubtedly, it assumed greater significance during the Great Depression era, which clearly speaks of the challenges faced by the Africans. As noted, the Rhodesian authorities continued demanding tax at the peak of the Great Depression, and with limited options, the hard pressed Africans increasingly migrated particularly to the South Africa mines. While this migration was illegal, it proved to be beneficial in terms of tax revenue such that the local NC had no option but to tolerate it. Of course, the migration, just like any other adventure, had its own social cost, especially on the African family structure. Overall, this is, on the one hand, a commentary about the limits of the colonial system's enforcement of its policy on the subjects, and on the other hand, a case of socio-economic adaptation of the African during a crisis period. It is equally a historical narrative about agency, resilience and innovation among the Africans. Within this same context, the next section explores aspects of organised protest that developed in the district.

Facets of Organised Protest

The response to the Great Depression was also associated with some early form of organised protest. The protests were attributed to the activities of the local educated elites and migrants who were returning from the South African mines. The returning migrants were quite influential in the spread of African Independent Churches. If anything, their activities reflected what was also happening nationally, characterised by the spread of the Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association (RBVA), the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) and the Native Welfare Association.³¹⁸ These independent churches and African political and worker organisations all challenged the racial inequality in the division and allocation of land and other national resources.

Of the non-religious organisations, the Native Self Constructing Society (NSCS) was quite active among the Africans in the Masetter District. The NSCS's campaigned for improved

³¹⁸ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, 177.

educational opportunities which were one of its unique approaches in the fight for the betterment of African welfare. This should not be surprising considering that its structures were dominated by products of the local mission schools, including Kamba Simango, Phillip and Hohoza Dube. Incidentally, most these mission school graduates were also members of the Melsetter Native Board. As a result, the NSCS also fought its struggles through the Native Board Meetings. The NSCS campaigned for greater educational opportunities for Africans through availing more schools in reserves, farming areas and towns; reduction of school fees; and the provision of higher educational facilities for high school graduates. In 1931, Phillip Dube criticised government for prioritising European education, arguing that it was, “much more necessary for the blacks who had so little of it”.³¹⁹ Similarly, later in 1933, Chief Musikavanhu suggested that the law which compelled European children to attend school should be applied to Africans as well.³²⁰

Missing from the district was a higher training institution and calls for its establishment featured consistently in the debates. The NSCS agitated for a higher training institution, in anticipation that this would train, “agents for societal change”, or people, “who could approach the white men of responsibility in high places and speak with them as men to men about things affecting Africans”.³²¹ Meanwhile, Africans prematurely terminated their education or sought it out of the country, “a long way from their homes and at a cost which their parents could not possibly afford.”³²² A typical case was captured as follows:

A native named Pasimani spoke about his son who had gone to Lovedale to get the education which could not be had at Mt Silinda where he had passed the final standard. This youth, he said, had written asking for money to enable him to continue his studies but he, the father, had given all he had. If, he said, his son could have gone to a high school here he would have been saved the heavy expenses of travelling so far from home.³²³

Africans, thus, increasingly became conscious of prevalent inequalities in accessing education, which they challenged. While this consciousness was partly a result of missionaries’ educational activities in the region, it also resulted from migrations and interactions with the South African mines. The resultant exposure made Africans to regard education as a great necessity. “In speaking to the same effect,” wrote the NC:

³¹⁹ NAZ, S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, from NC Chipinga to CNC, 28 February 1931.

³²⁰ Ibid, from NC Chipinga to CNC, 31 January 1933.

³²¹ Ibid, from NC Chipinga to CNC, 19 January, 1932.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid, from NC Chipinga to CNC, Melsetter Annual Native Board Meeting, 31 January 1933.

several of the natives mentioned the fact that they, the Shangaans, as they have been called for generations, had ever since they had borne that name gone to work for the white people in the deep mines of Kimberley and Johannesburg. They had gone deeper, they say, than any of the other tribes; it was well known that they were the best hand drillers in South Africa, and that as such they had helped the white people for many years to get out the gold they loved from the deep places in the earth. For this reason they thought the government should not now refuse their unanimous request for a high school in their own area at which their sons could learn the things that were most important.³²⁴

Nevertheless, D.H. Coley, chairing the meeting, diffused this debate. He pointed out that the country had not yet advanced to a level that allowed it to meet the costs of building, equipping and maintaining the college, let alone absorb its products. The colonial authorities were also sensitive to the challenges of containing an African educated class as aptly noted by Coley in his statement that he was afraid “the devil may find work for idle minds”.³²⁵ Therefore, this was another struggle which did not have immediate results with regard to the Africans’ outcries.

Another facet of subtle but organised protest was that of Independent Church Movement, (ICM) which spread rapidly in Rhodesia during the Great Depression. Of these, Ranger has discussed the Watch Tower Movement in detail, which spread from Northern Rhodesia into Mashonaland from the late 1920s onwards.³²⁶ He notes that its prophecies were strikingly similar to that of the Mwari Priests who led the 1896-97 uprisings. It got many followers because of the prevalent economic and social strife, which it associated with colonial rule. The Watch Tower Movement also gave people hope, claiming that colonialism would come to an end, after which white people would become servants of the Africans in heaven.³²⁷

Unsurprisingly, the ICM spread rapidly in the Melsetter District. Such churches gained many followers in this region by promising to cure illness, bring fertility, rain and do exorcism, which the Christian Mission did not promise. Particularly conspicuous was the Zionist Movement, led by Samuel Mutendi, which Alexander has linked to the activities of migrant labourers returning from South Africa.³²⁸ However, by confining her study Africans reserves, Alexander does not capture the widespread nature of these movement. There were extensive contacts

³²⁴Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid, minutes of Melsetter Native Board Meeting, 12 June 1934.

³²⁶ T.O. Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898- 1930* (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1970).

³²⁷ Ibid, 200-215.

³²⁸ Alexander, *The Unsettled Land*, 30-31.

between the reserves and the white farming areas, where the church also spread broadly due to the economic and social hardships faced by both communities. These churches became widespread as they “swept across the district and spread into neighbouring Portuguese East Africa”.³²⁹ Similarly striking was Johanne Marange’s Apostolic Faith Church. After a long history of visions and prophetic dreams, Marange, who claimed to have received the Holy Spirit and given powers to drive away evil spirits, restore fertility, and “cure the sick by laying hands on them and by consecrating water for them to drink”, founded his church in 1932 in the Maranke Reserve in the nearby Umtali District. This church also secured a wide following in Mesletter.³³⁰ The promise of free healing by both independent churches, at a time when cost of healthcare services was high, undoubtedly attracted followers.

The independent churches criticised colonial rule. According to Ranger, the movement was also successful as, “obviously it contained an explicitly political and anti-European element”.³³¹ The fear of persecution, however, compelled these churches to avoid direct confrontation with government. They therefore criticised colonial rule through “hidden transcripts”:³³² metaphors, parables, song, prophecy and dreams. One of the Zionist leaders, Jeremiah Magodo from Mutema Reserve preached against working for the white men, insisting that Africans should establish their own income generating projects, such as gardening, craftwork and trading.³³³ This was directly the opposite of the needs of capital: labour for the farms and mines.

Marc Block remarked with regard to feudal France that the great millennial movements were “flashes in the pan” compared to the patient, silent struggles stubbornly carried on by rural communities”.³³⁴ The same is evident in the spread of these churches in the Southern Rhodesian at large. Undoubtedly, government was concerned. Mutendi soon fell in conflict with the administration which feared that the enthusiasm brought by his faith might undermine the authority of chiefs, thereby creating political disorder.³³⁵ In 1929, he was imprisoned on the pretext that he unlawfully opened a school.³³⁶ In Melsetter, Nielson was equally concerned about peasants’ resorting to prophetic religion. In 1932, he wrote that it was common practice

³²⁹ Rennie, ‘Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism’, 481.

³³⁰ Ranger, *African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*, 219.

³³¹ *Ibid*, 219-220.

³³² The term “hidden Transcript” is borrowed from J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcript* (New Heaven and London, Yale University Press, 1990).

³³³ Interview, Nisbert Masirande, Ndima area, 19 December 2014.

³³⁴ M. Block, cited in Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xv1.

³³⁵ Ranger, *African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*, 217.

³³⁶ T.O. Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*, 217.

for the oppressed to express themselves heavenwards.³³⁷ Though he dismissed these as the work of frustrated and disappointed individuals affected by years of economic difficulties, he warned that “these religious whispers and prayers would”, in future “develop into open defiance, and direct confrontations with authority”.³³⁸ The claim that Magodo was once arrested and beaten under Nielson’s instruction suggests a high degree of apprehension about these churches.³³⁹ That Nielson once confronted the church leadership is confirmed by this extract:

All chiefs, headmen and members of the Board were unanimous in their disapproval of the teachings and preaching’s of pseudo-religious sects and factions and approval of such teachings and preachings being stamped out by government. Four preachers of the Zionist sect, Jeremiah, Ben, Johann and his son, were then called in and in the presence of the gathering were ordered in terms of section 51 of the Native Affairs Act, to cease preaching and teaching in Zionist cause.³⁴⁰

However, these persecutions further popularised these churches as members simply likened them to the persecution of Christians in the biblical times. Hence, the more the church leaders were persecuted, the more the church followers became resolute about their faith.³⁴¹

From the above, one can assert that the NSCS and the ICM that appeared on the Melsetter landscape were precisely African-initiated-organisations with a specific agenda for the betterment of the welfare of the marginalised Africans. That they spread widely during the era of the Great Depression indicates that their message resonated with the optimism of the sidelined. In addition, the subtle nature of their protest suggests that they were not ready for a physical confrontation with the state. Therefore, these were early forms of organised resistance to economic marginalisation and colonial hegemony and, to borrow from C.L.R. James, this is a case when religion became “a weapon in the class struggle”.³⁴²

Conclusion

The Great Depression and Second World War eras left some indelible footprints on the Melsetter’s economic, social and political landscape, broadly characterised by a more

³³⁷ NAZ, S235/510, NC Melsetter, Annual Report, 1932.

³³⁸ NAZ, S235/510, NC Melsetter, Annual Report, 1932.

³³⁹ Interview, Nisbert Masirande, Ndima area, 19 December 2014.

³⁴⁰ NAZ, S1057/6, Native Board Meetings, 1931-1938, Minutes of Melsetter Native Board Meeting of 12 June 1934.

³⁴¹ See for example, M. Acquina, ‘The People of the Spirit: An Independent Church in Rhodesia’, *Journal of International Africa Institute*, Vol.37, No. 2, 1967.

³⁴² C.L.R. James, cited in Ranger, *African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*, 212.

diversified economy. Firstly, the viability of the beef sector became more pronounced from the late 1930s, a promising dairy sector emerged characterised by the Excelsior and Eastern Border Cheese factories and a more promising commercial oriented agriculture represented by the TTC's New Year's Gift and Ratelshoek Tea Estates. However, Africans came out of the Great Depression more marginalised as they were exposed more as victims of the extra legislative measures that were deliberately put in place to cushion the white farmers from the Great Depression. Nevertheless, Africans were not docile victims of colonial domination. They resorted to a series of protest activities; used Native Board meetings as a platform to challenge colonialism and racial inequality; resisted through breaking the law; defaulted on their tax obligations; migrating and settled in Portuguese East Africa; acquired and used guns for unlawful hunting excursions. They also clandestinely migrated to the South African mines where wages were better. While these activities clearly show agency and resilience of African societies, they, at the same time, demonstrate the limits of colonial control. At the same time it was this economic marginalisation that began to manifest itself through growing independent church movements, which, in search for an alternative explanation, began to appeal favourably to the Africans on both the reserves and the white farming areas.

Chapter Three

“It is obviously not in the national interest to devote a part of the country’s forest estate to permanent African occupation”: Of Plantations, Evictions and African Livelihoods; 1945- 1959

Introduction

This chapter examines the post-Second World War land use transformation that occurred in Chipinga and Melsetter Districts from 1945 to 1959. It explores the land use changes in the context of a post-war national and international economic and political landscape. The period from the establishment of colonial settlement to the end of the war had been marked by a situation in which the ownership of commercial land in the Melsetter and Chipinga Highlands was dominated by the pioneer settler families, mostly Afrikaners. Largely isolated from major markets, these settlers were predominantly into tenant farming and, as a result, land in these highlands remained largely underutilised. While changing post-war global trade relations impacted on land use practice throughout Rhodesia, this chapter examines how shifting trade systems after the Second World War impacted on Chipinga and Melsetter Districts.

Rhodesians increasingly turned to tobacco production in the aftermath of the war, producing Virginia tobacco for the British market. The tobacco boom witnessed dozens of Chipinga and Melsetter farmers selling their land and migrating to the tobacco producing regions of Mashonaland. This white farmer exodus was also met by the entrance of five timber concerns onto this landscape. These timber concerns acquired several farms and amalgamated them to form large forestry estates and in the process transformed the physical, social and economic landscape of the Melsetter-Chipinga Highlands. This chapter, therefore, traces the process and history associated with the establishment of timber estates and how this impact on the Africans in this South Eastern region of Rhodesia. The two main options available for the region’s Africans, which were either to become full time labourers on the emerging plantation economies or to migrate into the dry reserves and struggled to eke out a living, are explored, together with the resilient nature of their economies and the strategies they developed to deal with the uneven political and economic landscape.

The Second World War as catalyst for change

A striking feature of the pre-Second World War Rhodesian economy was the underutilisation of white-owned land. As D.A. Berle has pointed out, there were “millions of acres of totally unused land in a country where the greater part of the population lived in overcrowded conditions”.³⁴³ Berle notes three categories of underutilised European Land between 1945 and 1955. These were un-alienated farm land in Crown Land areas, unutilised land on alienated farms and land which was utilised below its full agricultural potential.³⁴⁴ The Rhodesian government began questioning this trend and sought to address this after the Second World War.

Though more effective use of land in Southern Rhodesia took place after the Second World War, a sharp increase in demand for this land can be traced to the war time period. Two government objectives during this War had a direct impact on the post War land transformation in Southern Rhodesia. Firstly, as part of Rhodesian war effort, government had to produce food for both the Rhodesian nationals and empire forces that were stationed in the colony. In pursuance of this, it formed Central Agricultural Committees which coordinated the country’s food production plans. These Central Agricultural Committees worked closely with Food Production Committees that were involved in food production planning at district levels. It was in the process of planning for food sustenance that concerns about land underutilisation was raised.

Secondly, when the war ended, the Rhodesian government was obliged to reintegrate thousands of ex-soldiers into the civilian community; a process that also entailed land resettlement schemes. Palmer argues that even though there was no legal requirement for ex-servicemen to be rewarded with land, it became a tradition in Southern Africa to avail land to military veterans after a successful military operation. Therefore, expectations for resettlement schemes in Rhodesia after the Second World War were already high, as confirmed by the 1943 report of the National Rehabilitation Board which noted that land settlement “is the usual reaction to long periods of strenuous active service accompanied by subjection to discipline, constant strain, and a life which affords little privacy or quietude”.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ D.A. Berle, ‘European Underutilisation of Land: The Failure of Europeans to fully utilise their land resources in Southern Rhodesia, 1945-1955’, (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1986), 1.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 5.

³⁴⁵ D.A. Berle, ‘European Underutilisation of Land,’27.

Government's obligation to acquire land for the ex-servicemen's settlement became more urgent towards the end of the war. As the year 1944 drew to a close and news of impending Allied Victory started filtering through, the home front felt the urgent need to provide employment, homes, farms, and, "...the best possible conditions and opportunities for our men and women who are fighting our battles on the active war front..."³⁴⁶ One army officer named Colonel Addison estimated that of the 7000 men that had to be rehabilitated, 2000 needed vocational training.³⁴⁷ Considering the remaining time, J.E. Stone of the IDAC was not amused:

...it is no use promising returned soldiers a new and prosperous Rhodesia if there is no sufficient work for them on their return. I have no hesitation in saying that if the war ends in a month or two there would be absolute chaos, because the country's plans are not sufficiently advanced.³⁴⁸

Resettlement of the ex-servicemen was another way of avoiding post war political instability. The resettlement also fit into what A.S. Mlambo described as "the long cherished dream of making Rhodesia a whiteman's country".³⁴⁹ As a result, there was notable increase in the white population with the first five years between 1946 and 1951 witnessing a 5.1 per cent increase from 82 000 to 135 000, and the figure rose to 219 000 by 1960.³⁵⁰ A striking feature of this period was a boom in the agriculture sector that was dominated by Virginia Tobacco production. Blair Rutherford's study of the Hurungwe and Karoi District in north western Zimbabwe confirms this. Rutherford points out that during the late 1940s, the Lomagundi District was demarcated, bringing, *inter-alia*, Karoi and Urungwe Districts, with the former being set aside specifically for the resettlement of white ex-servicemen. Consequently Karoi, which in 1944 had only about ten white farmers, witnessed the population rising to sixty five by 1947.³⁵¹ Rhodesia as a whole had more than 300 settlers established under this scheme, with most of them occupying the high rainfall parts of the country. Rutherford thus concludes that

³⁴⁶ NAZ, F341/59/7/69, Eastern Districts Development, Minutes, 1 September 1944.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to Federation* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2002), 7.

³⁵⁰ P.S. Nyambara, "'That place was Wonderful' African Tenants on Rhodesdale Estate, Colonial Zimbabwe, c 1900-1952", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 38, 2, 2005, 281.

³⁵¹ B. Rutherford, *Working on the Margins, Black Workers, White Farmers in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe* (Harare, Weaver Press), 31.

European Agriculture reached “take off” in the 1950s, making it one of the most productive sectors of the economy.³⁵²

These post-war developments also had an effect on the land and agrarian landscape of the Eastern Districts. Although the region had a great economic potential, it had remained underdeveloped.³⁵³ As a result, A.C. Soffe, Chairman of the Eastern District Development Corporation (EDDC), who was apprehensive about the lack of investment and development in this region, lamented that:

Notwithstanding the years of effort put into publicising the Eastern Districts by enthusiastic residents and by the Umtali and Eastern Districts Publicity Association, most people of the colony, and more particularly, members of Government, have not yet discovered and realised the vast untapped assets and resources in this part of the country. The most well catered part of the colony, having the highest rainfall, and with enormous irrigation possibilities over fertile soils, this part of Rhodesia has been overlooked by all Governments.³⁵⁴

Included in the list of neglected districts were Melsetter and Chipinga, which, despite their suitability for settlement “...have been lying dormant for over fifty years...the climate would encourage the growth of sturdy young Rhodesians, free from Bilharzia, Malaria and other diseases which are common to most parts of the colony”.³⁵⁵ The fact that most landowners were ready to offer their land for government resettlement and forestry schemes indeed confirms the presence of land underutilisation in the Chipinga-Melsetter Highlands. The Melsetter Central Planning Committee confirmed this some two decades later:

The small measure of success achieved by farmers was demonstrated by their willingness to sell when the opportunity presented itself, mainly to large organisations wishing to plant timber. Five large companies now control 60 per cent of the ICA, 184, 000 acres approximately.³⁵⁶

These forestry concerns bought land on a willing buyer-willing seller basis. As early as November 1943, farms Glencoe, Welgelegen, Tarka, Rumble Rills and Hayford A, had already

³⁵²*Ibid.*

³⁵³ NAZ, F341/59/7/69, Eastern Districts Development, Memorandum, May 1943.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ NAZ, F341/59/7/69, Eastern Districts Development, Plan for the Development of Melsetter and Chipinga, (undated).

³⁵⁶ NAZ, Location: (hereafter L): C 32.15. 9R, Box: (hereafter B), 126947, Lands, Melsetter Area Regional Plan. Melsetter Regional Plan, March 1968.

been offered for the advertised government post-war settlement scheme.³⁵⁷ A government inspector who subsequently evaluated the farms highlighted that though the area “is extremely well watered with streams of various sizes,” it had one major challenge:

The area is generally hilly with little flat land. I estimate that of each 1000 acres, about 40 acres, after the necessary soil protection works have been undertaken, are suitable for cultivation. In view of the impossibility of large scale agriculture at this distance from the railway, the small arable extent is of little account.³⁵⁸

He, however, recommended that these farms could be sub-divided for post war settlement scheme. Despite the underutilisation, the purchase process had its own hitches. There were challenges related to negotiating with absentee and speculative land owners. P. Pinde of the Lands Department cautioned about this in 1943:

But government needs to make a clear decision before acquiring these farms because for years, there has been a tendency among owners to place fictitious prices against land in the Melsetter area, and by reason of its peculiar appeal and the undoubted quality of much of the land, prices have remained high despite the economic disadvantage of the district, situated, as it is, so far from rail communication and markets.³⁵⁹

Another challenge resulted from settlers’ broader motive for acquiring farms. Land was acquired not only to meet contemporary livelihood needs, but for their progenies. Moyana traces this culture to pioneer settlers of the Melsetter Highlands and shows how, during the 1890s, the Moodie family acquired large tracts of land for the kith and kin that were still in the Free State.³⁶⁰ This became a sticking point during negotiations for the purchase of Glencoe farm:

Your letter of 21 May 1944, at hand, now sir, it is a very difficult question you ask me to do, to give an option of purchase on the farm Glencoe during the period of the war and for six months thereafter. For that sir, I cannot do anything on the farm for a certain time. I have five children of my own and one step child and I have to give them all a piece of farm to live on. Now if you are willing to allow me to buy another farm close

³⁵⁷ NAZ. L:13.9.4R, B:58845, Purchase of Land for Government Purposes; Glencoe, Melsetter, from C.F. Jameson, acting Chief Clerk, to Under Secretary, 23 November, 1943.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, from J.W.S. Cobban, Land Inspector, to Undersecretary, 5 November 1943.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, From P. Hinde, Undersecretary, Department of Lands, to Secretary, Director of Lands, 27 November 1943.

³⁶⁰ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 111.

here in Inyazura or Rusapi, I am willing to grant the government an option of purchase on the farm Glencoe. My price would be three thousand pound for Glencoe...³⁶¹

The matter reached a stalemate. Government was also adamant that as the land inspector had put the value of the farm at 1.705.0.0, the £3 000 prices asking was too exorbitant, more so when considering that the government's objective was to resettle ex-servicemen.³⁶² There was yet another challenge:

I would also like to emphasise the fact that the Native Land Board has advised me that the Southern Portion of the original farm of Glencoe, which is in the Native Purchase Area, is infested with the tsetse fly and there is a possible danger that the fly may approach on the Northern portion of original farm, i.e., that portion which apparently, it has been suggested should be purchased for settlement.³⁶³

Meanwhile, the ex-servicemen resettlement plan gave in to afforestation schemes. While the Land Department expressed these reservations, the Forestry Department developed interest on this farm, which it needed as a possible addition to the Tarka and Rumble Rills farms that had just been acquired for forestry purposes".³⁶⁴ When the Forestry Department inspected the farm, it estimated that 75 % of the total acreage was suitable for afforestation.³⁶⁵ With government having set aside £82, 865 for acquiring land for afforestation purposes³⁶⁶ the farm was purchased for 8, 345, 16, 69, in October 1950, 6 years after the initial purchase negotiations.³⁶⁷ In the meantime, evidence for underutilisation was glaring as noted in the description: "There is a house on the farm, but the roof, doors, windows, etc. have been removed and it has no present value. There are no other known improvements of the farm".³⁶⁸ This is indicative of the general underutilisation of land in the Melsetter Highlands and it explains further why Africans had continued to occupy such land mainly as tenant farmers.

The suitability of the Melsetter highlands for exotic timber production was not in doubt. This was supported by abundant evidence of the existing luxuriant indigenous trees species and the

³⁶¹ NAZ, L: 13.9.4R, B: 58845, Purchase of Land for Government Purposes; Glencoe, Melsetter, from P.B. Muller to Undersecretary, Department of Lands, 6 May 1944.

³⁶² Ibid, from C.F. Jameson, Undersecretary, Department of Lands, to Secretary Agriculture and Lands, 11 May 1944.

³⁶³ Ibid, from Undersecretary, Department of Lands, to Secretary, Department of Lands and agriculture, 22 July 1946.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, from Acting Chief Conservator of Forests, to Undersecretary, Department of Lands, 21 October 1949.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, from Acting Chief Conservator of Forestry to Undersecretary Department of lands, 29 October 1949.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, from C. Findlay, for Undersecretary, Department of Lands, to Ternouth and Dendy Lawton, 17 October 1950.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, from Acting Chief Conservator of Forests, to Undersecretary, Department of Lands, 21 October 1949.

existence of indigenous closed evergreen forests, called *Gwasha*, such as the Nyakwaa, Haroni, Chirinda and several other forests that were scattered throughout this region.³⁶⁹ There were also a number of small private plantations, like on Vermont Farm, owned by one Mrs Scott, where there was “an impressive belt of *Saligna* trees” which went a long way in convincing the Conservator of Forests, J.S Henkel, that Melsetter was ideally suitable for pines, eucalyptus, cypresses and poplars.³⁷⁰

The need for large scale timber production had been mooted well before the 1950s. This was discussed for a number of years at Farmers Associations and Development Committee meetings. Discussions centred on the persistent outbreaks of the ACF disease, which had been a menace since settler occupation of the highlands. The advice of the veterinary department, in the face of the ACF threats, convinced farmers of the need to set aside cattle free zones: land that was to be utilised for non-pastoral uses, so as to curtail the spread of ACF and other cattle disease.³⁷¹ Hence, the need for forestry plantations in the region was considered long overdue.

Nevertheless, one has to locate the trigger for transformation in land use practice in the region within the conditions necessitated by the post-war British economy. The Second World War curtailed British trade with the United States of America, and later on the post-war period also witnessed a devaluation of the British Sterling, which resulted in Britain encountering severe challenges in procuring USA commodities. Britain was forced to increasingly turn to her colonies for substitutes. As John Darwin has shown, while trade with the colonies culminated in the ill-fated ground nut project in East Africa, it heralded the beginning of a real fortune for Rhodesian tobacco growers.³⁷² This growth in Rhodesian tobacco production was facilitated by the London agreement between Britain and Rhodesia, whereby the former undertook to purchase two thirds of the annual flue cured tobacco grown in Rhodesia, subject to the availability of suitable qualities.³⁷³ The subsequent agricultural boom had a huge effect on land use practices in Rhodesia. As Ranger has noted, the prosperity led to estates being broken up into workable farms and sold or leased to whites.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ NAZ. L: C 32.15. 9R, B. 126947, Lands, Melsetter Area Regional Plan, March 1968.

³⁷⁰ J.S. Henkel, Pamphlet ‘Forestry in the Melsetter District-Experiments with Exotic Trees’, 1925.

³⁷¹ Sinclair, *Story of Melsetter*, 138-140.

³⁷² J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation, the Retreat from Empire in the Post War World* (Hampshire, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), 138.

³⁷³ Hodder-Williams, *White farmers in Rhodesia*, 190.

³⁷⁴ Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War*, 103.

While, elsewhere, large farms were being subdivided to accommodate more settlers, the opposite happened in Chipinga-Melsetter Highlands. In response to the tobacco boom, dozens of farmers sold their land to timber concerns and relocated to tobacco producing districts like Rusapi, Macheke and Marandellas. The timber concerns, on the other hand, amalgamated these farms to form extensive timber estates. In Chipinga, the entry of the timber sector began with the Forestry Department's purchase of Gungunyana Farm, on which a large portion of the farm was designated as a forest reserve.³⁷⁵ In Melsetter, it began with the Forestry Department's purchase of the Rocklands Farm in 1945, where so many outbreaks of the ACF disease had occurred. After this purchase, the former owner of this land; the Martin family, relocated to the tobacco growing district of Inyazura.³⁷⁶ Thereafter, the Forestry Department bought five more farms, namely the Corner, Dunblane, Westfield, Clifton, and Riven Hills. These were amalgamated with Rocklands Farm to form the Martin Forest Reserve, where planting of pine trees began in 1946. The Forestry Department acquired four more properties during the 1950s, namely Lionhills, Chisengu, Tarka and Glencoe, thus setting the platform for the development of one of the biggest forestry estates in Rhodesia.³⁷⁷ In 1954, the Forestry Department became a parastatal, thereafter changing its name to Rhodesia Forestry Commission (RFC).

The second large scale investor after the RFC was the Forrestal Lands and Railway Company of London. It sent representatives, through its subsidiary, the Natal Tanning and Extract Company, to inspect the Melsetter District in 1944. Subsequent to the inspections, the Rhodesia Wattle Company (RWC) was formed in 1944 and it went onto purchase several properties between 1945 and 1951, as summarised in Table 2 below.

³⁷⁵ NAZ, L.25.12.6F, B. 92151, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, Provisional Report on Ngungunyana, 2 May 1939.

³⁷⁶ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 137-140.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 159.

Table 2: Land Purchase RWC: 1945-1957

Year	Property acquired	Acreage	Value (£)
1945	Cecilton	11 257	13 296. 13.4.
	Erasmus	3 323	4 000.
	Jopa	2 958	2 795.
1947-1951	Highlands	7 072	11 916.
	Onrust	2 116	2 500.
	Nyabamba	6 865	45 000.
1957	Vooruitzicht	6 880	32 500.
Totals	7	41 371	112 107.13.4

Source: Compiled by the author from Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 140.

The RWC planted wattle trees on a large scale. It also promoted an aggressive timber out grower scheme, where it offered private growers a 15 year agreement and guaranteed a minimum buying price.³⁷⁸

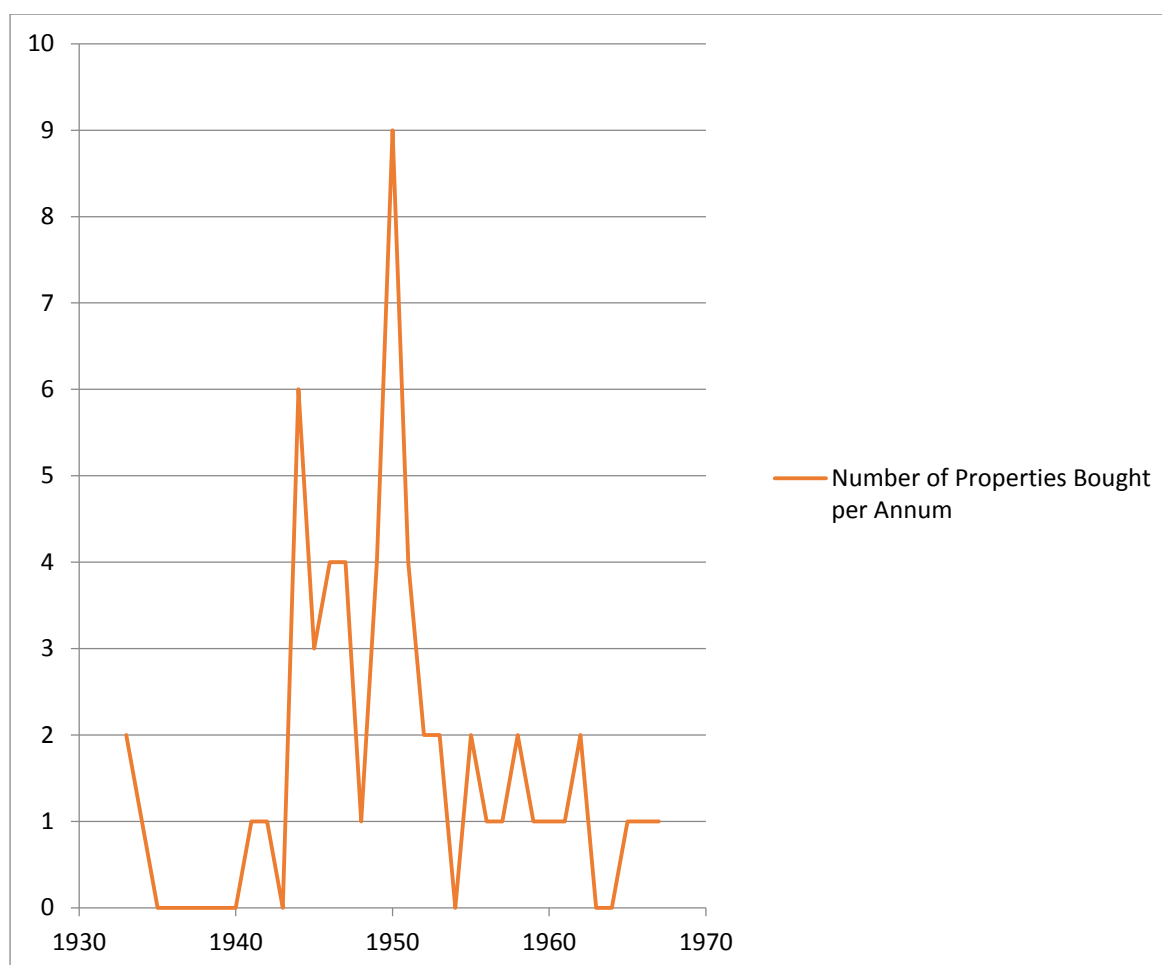
There were other companies that were equally significant in the district's forestry industry. These included the BSAC whose forestry officers visited Melsetter in 1952 and started off by purchasing Welgelegen Farm. By the end of that year, it had already acquired 17 000 acres. The Fairfield Estate, which was closest to the new highway and served by abundant water, became the factory site and headquarters of the company's forestry branch.³⁷⁹ Gwendingwe Estate also began planting operations in 1950. In addition, the Border Forests Rhodesia, which later changed its name to Border Timbers in 1957, came onto this landscape and planted trees in an area covering 21 000 acres at its Tilbury estate in 1957.³⁸⁰ The trajectories of these acquisitions are summarised in Graph 1 below:

³⁷⁸ NAZ, S 2827/2/2/2/5, Report of the NC for Chipinga, 1952.

³⁷⁹ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 158.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 159.

Graph 1: Number of Properties Purchased by Timber Companies



Source: Modified from NAZ, L: C 32.15. 9R, B: 126947, Melsetter Area Regional plan, 1967.

Thus, some 12 years after the Second World War had ended; land ownership patterns on the Melsetter highlands had been significantly transformed. Five large forestry companies had acquired 162 526 acres, representing 49 per cent of the total acreage on these highlands. At the same time, 77 remaining private owners, the Chimanimani National Park and the Melsetter town owned 51 per cent of the land, which translated into 168 986 acres.³⁸¹ This is summarised Table 3 below.

³⁸¹ NAZ, F151/ICA/Mel, Melsetter ICA File 2, from Conservation and Extension Officer to Director of Conservation and Extension, 27 April 1957.

Table 3: Land Ownership in Melsetter ICA, 1957.

Owner	Acreage	Percentage of ICA Land
Rhodesia Forestry Commission	53 500	16. 138
Rhodesia Wattle Company	43 011	12. 974
Charter Forests Estates	29 555	8. 915
Tilbury Estate	21 181	6. 389
Gwendingwe Estates	15 279	4. 608
77 Private Owners	135 986	41. 019
Chimanimani National Park	26 000	7. 842
Melsetter Town Lands	7 000	2. 111
Total	331 512	100

Source: NAZ F151/ICA/MEL, Melsetter ICA file 2, From Group Extension Officer (Eastern), to Assistant Director of Conservation and Extension, 27 April 1957

This entry of the forestry companies was accompanied by significant investment in road construction. Government constructed the main national roads, which were tarred in preparation for the heavy transportation of timber and timber products from the district to markets.³⁸² These national roads linked Umtali with Melsetter, and then Chipinga. In addition, the timber concerns also constructed several feeder roads linking the main roads with their estates, saw mills and residential areas.³⁸³ Thus, for the first time, this region, which was cut off from the country's main urban centres, was connected by a national all weather road from Umtali to Melsetter and ultimately Chipinga. Reflecting on how the forestry enterprises transformed the infrastructure of this landscape, P.A. Cremer, resident, teacher and a farmer from Melsetter, observed: "The Forestry Commission had led to great improvement in the roads and now the districts could really go ahead".³⁸⁴

Thus, the issues of underutilisation of land and the isolation of the region, owing to a lack of transport networks linking the region and the rest of the country and its markets, were beginning to get settled. Elsewhere in the colony, some regions had, by the 1950s, become relatively specialised agrarian areas. For instance, Mashonaland had become a relatively distinct tobacco and citrus region, while Matebeleland was increasingly becoming identified

³⁸² Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter* 140.

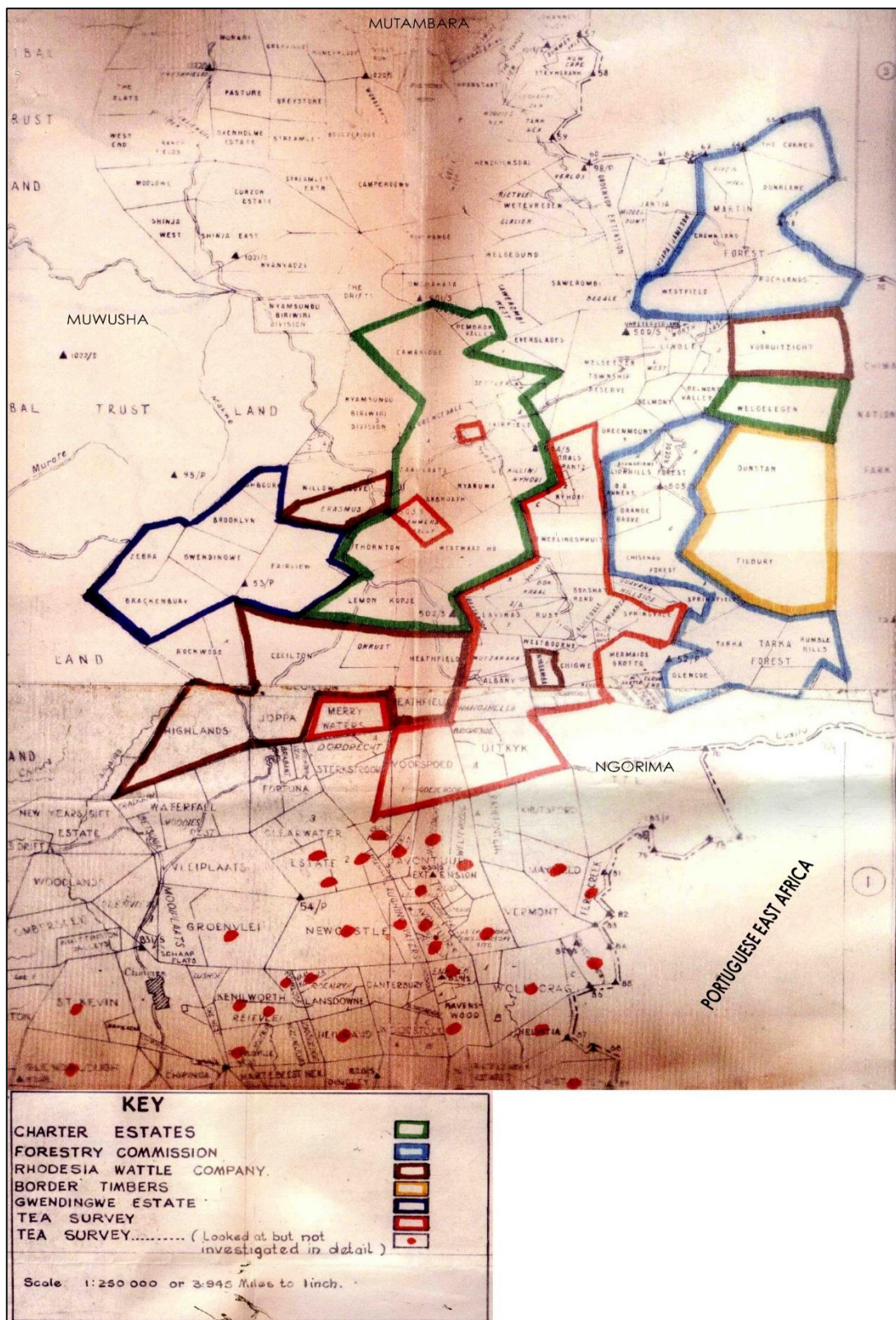
³⁸³ *Ibid*, 159.

³⁸⁴ NAZ, Oral/CR 1, Interview with P.A. Cremer, 28 April 1971.

with ranching. The Eastern districts had had no single agricultural enterprise emerging as a foundation on which the farm business could be based. While this challenge affected the Eastern Districts generally, because of its wide topographical changes and comparative remoteness from markets, the Melssetter District was perhaps the extreme example of this situation. The paradox though, was that it had high and reliable rainfall and a great cropping potential.³⁸⁵ Hence, the entry of large timber concerns introduced new land use practices and Melssetter was transformed into a timber growing region. Map 3 shows patterns of land acquisition by Forestry Concerns in Melssetter by the end of the 1950s.

³⁸⁵ NAZ, L: C 32.15. 9R, B.126947, Lands, Melssetter Area Regional Plan, March 1968.

Map 3: Timber Plantations: Patterns of Land Acquisition in Melsetter District



Source: NAZ, L: C32.15.11F, B: 126961, Tea Planting in Southern Rhodesia

Not all white settlers were impressed by this transformation. Although some farmers accepted that the district's potential as a food producing district was undermined by its location, which was far from big markets, they still felt that mixed farming, as opposed to large scale timber plantations, was the best developmental approach. These pro-mixed farming farmers also argued that government had not done enough to promote this line of development. "We are concerned," reported Chairman of the Melsetter ICA,

by the fact that a tremendous amount of land in Melsetter has been taken up for tree planting exclusively. Economic prices are stronger than our wishes. Due mostly to our distance from the market, food production gives hardly - if at all - a decent monetary return to the farmer. But Natal gives us a good demonstration of what can be done. There we have farms covered in the hills with wattle, gums and pines, and to the flatter portions splendid intensive farming and pedigree dairy herds. We, the farmers, could do the same here. We could afford to finance mixed farming, orchards and irrigation schemes out of profits from trees. We have a community of prosperous, taxpaying, individual farmers, instead of huge government undertaking. Unfortunately money is short now. But I put it to you that the future of our district, what is left of it, as a farming district by individual farmers and food producing farmers is rather in jeopardy just now.³⁸⁶

This comment underscores the fact that the white society was also heterogeneous, and had conflicting views about the best line of investment. In this case, acknowledging challenges associated with the isolation of the district from markets, the chairman of the Melsetter ICA felt government has not done enough to assist individual farmers. This also speaks of the fears that individual farmers had in face of large scale plantation enterprises. As will be shown in the next section, this plantations economy transformed labour practice within Melsetter and Chipinga Districts.

The Timber Industry and the Labour Question

Compared to other non-timber plantations enterprises, such as tea and coffee, timber production is less labour intensive. Nevertheless, it requires heavy manual labour during establishment and harvest stages. Starting a timber plantation involves labour for clearing

³⁸⁶ NAZ, F151/ICA/Mel, Melsetter ICA File 2, Chairman's Report, Melsetter ICA, 11 October 1952.

virgin land, a laborious tasks involving the use of machetes and axes. Burning the cleared debris is followed by pegging, pitting, and then planting. The latter task was a huge challenge as it was done during the rainy season, when Africans in these districts were attending to their own fields as well. This early stage also involves the setting up of compounds and construction of senior staff houses, roads and saw-mills. Thereafter is the maintenance stage, which involves guarding the plantations, pruning, constructing and refurbishing fireguards as well as firefighting activities. Harvesting is equally laborious, as the mature trees are felled, stripped of the bark, loaded into lorries and transported for processing at sawmills. The various work processes done at sawmills depend on the intended industrial product, such as planks, roofing material or poles.³⁸⁷

While individual commercial farmers continued to form a significant population of the Melsetter landscape, by 1957, BSAC, RWC, RFC and Border Timbers, had emerged as large employers of paid labour. Also significant on this landscape was Liebig's, which ran a fruit and vegetable processing factory at Cashel. Despite the fact that it was still in infancy, it employed 90 Africans in 1957. Another private sawmill, established in 1957, paid its senior African employees up to £15 per month, which was reasonable by prevailing standards.³⁸⁸ Such investments meant that there arose stiff competition for African labour. Yet, as local labour continued shunning these employers, 75 per cent of the labourers crossed the border from neighbouring Portuguese East Africa for work on the Southern Rhodesian timber plantations.³⁸⁹ Actually, it was the bad treatment of labour in that colony that worked to Rhodesia's advantage. Africans from Portuguese East Africa migrated to Rhodesia fleeing from a wide range of forms of exploitation, including subjection to forced labour. Duri argues that:

Without crediting the British administration in Rhodesia in any way, the heinous nature of the Portuguese forced labour regime partly explains why the traffic of Mozambican Africans across the Rhodesia Mozambique border was far more predominant than that of their Rhodesian counterparts.³⁹⁰

Duri further claims that it was due to Portugal's relatively poor position, when compared to other European powers that she pursued a more extractionist colonial economic policy, the

³⁸⁷ P. Godwin, *Mukiwa, the Story of a White Boy in Africa* (London, Macmillan, 1996). Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 159.

³⁸⁸ NAZ, S2827/2/2/5/2, NC Report, Melsetter, 1957.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Duri, 'Antecedents and Adaptations in the Borderlands', 114.

result of which was “notorious system of forced labour.” In fact, the NC for Melsetter made exactly the same observation:

A visit was recently paid to the Portuguese Chefe de Posto at Mavita, where enormous gangs are ‘Shanghai-ed’ for work on roads without pay. Such a system has much to commend, although it appears to cause widespread dissatisfaction, it sends labour flocking over the border to this happy sanctuary.³⁹¹

In fact, labour migration from Portuguese East Africa was not unique to this part of eastern border. Joel Mauricio das Nerves confirms that poor working conditions were widespread in Portuguese East Africa. This comes out lucidly in his study of the Portuguese Resettlement Scheme of the 1940s and 1950s, under which poor, unskilled and undercapitalised whites were resettled in the Manica Province of Central Mozambique and encouraged to embark primarily on commercial maize production. In face of poor working conditions and forced cotton production, Africans deserted to neighbouring Rhodesia, where they were better remunerated, could choose employers they liked and returned home at will.³⁹² To tap this human resource, Rhodesian employers along the eastern border established a lorry transport service³⁹³ and, on their return to Portuguese East Africa, these migrants purchased among others, agricultural implements like ploughs, ox wagons, carts and axes; carpentry instruments; bicycles, knives, clothes, blankets and radios.³⁹⁴ Therefore, apart from boosting the local retail sector, more importantly this stimulated further migrations into Rhodesia.

The influx of labour from Portuguese East Africa occurred within a situation of limited availability of African labour in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. The fact that most reserves in both districts were located in regions of poor agricultural potential created an assumption among white employers that these reserves could be a source of cheap labour. This belief was quite prevalent with employers from outside the districts of Melsetter and Chipinga. For instance, during the 1951 season, labour recruiters, mostly tobacco farmers from Rusapi and Inyazura, visited Chipinga, optimistic that they would find abundant cheap labour. Contrary to their expectations, labour was not plentiful. “Many, on calling at this office to have their licences endorsed,” reported the NC,

³⁹¹ NAZ, S2827/2/2/5/2, NC Report, Melsetter, 1957.

³⁹² J.M. Nerves, ‘Economy, Society and Labour Migration in Central Mozambique, 1930-1965: A case Study of Manica Province’, (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1998), 37.

³⁹³ Ibid, 39.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, 40.

said that they had heard that on account of the famine conditions prevailing in the Sabi Valley that there was no lack of natives just waiting to be recruited. With one notable exception, they were wasting their time and petrol. The Chipinga native looks at all recruiters with suspicion. The exception was the recruiter working for the Burkdale Chrome Mines. He was offering a minimum of £3, plus bonus. He recruited sixty natives.³⁹⁵

The above-noted lack of interest in joining farm labour is indicative of the innovation of the Africans in the reserves. It equally speaks to the resilience of their economies where they devised livelihood strategies that cushioned them from the worst economic challenges, even though they inhabited the poor reserves.

That demand for labour in the colony was high is also seen by the activities of large labour recruiting concerns. Although WNLA closed its labour recruitment operations in the lower Sabi Valley in 1951, the Southern Rhodesia Native Labour Supply Commission (SRNLSC) opened operations in the area in October the same year. The objective of SRNLSC was to tap into the old WNLA supplies and to intercept and divert alien Africans passing through this area to South Africa and channel them to Southern Rhodesian employers. Predictably, Chipinga farmers resented both the Commission's operations and the effort of employers who came from other parts of the country, fearing that their activities would interfere with their own labour needs.³⁹⁶ This is because, although more Africans migrated from the Sabi Valley to seek employment on the farms during drought periods, employers in the region continued to experience labour shortages, hence the tea and timber sectors, which underwent expansion during the 1950s were always in need of labour.

Nevertheless, other attempts were still made to recruit African labour. A striking innovation introduced in the tea plantations was the use of schooling as bait for labour. The concept of establishing schools was introduced during the late 1930s by the TTC and the Sabi-Tanganda Estates to attract and retain labour under what became known as *earn and learn* system. Here, children lived in boarding schools and provided labour to the estates. Scholars, such as B. Grier³⁹⁷ perceived this as part of the agricultural system that exploited child labour. The concept was partly motivated by the fact that the young labour was cheaper and easier to control. Charles van Onselen made the same observation with regard to the Rhodesian mines, noting that the lower profit margins of the mica and asbestos mines made it “impossible for the base

³⁹⁵ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1951.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ B. Grier, 'Child Labour and Africanist Scholarship: A Critical Overview', *African Studies Review*, 47, 2, 2004.

mineral mines to compete even with meagre wages that were paid to adult black workers in the voracious gold mining industry, so they turned to the even cheaper labour of children”.³⁹⁸ Thus, by the mid-1950s, the TTC had had more than 1 500 children and adolescents under this scheme, a population that constituted about three quarters of the tea pluckers.³⁹⁹

The criticism of this plantation school system is however questioned by other scholars. Bourdillon questions Grier’s criticism, arguing that it does not adequately consider that children, in return, accessed education.⁴⁰⁰ He admits that while in an ideal world, there would be no need for such schools; their existence provided an alternative for a community where parents could not cater for their children’s educational needs. Bourdillon further argue that government was not prepared to provide educational facilities on private farms insisting that it was the prerogative of the farm owners to provide these facilities. The Director of Lands, J.L. Reid, made this clear later in 1966:

As farm labourers have no security of tenure on European farms, and may only remain there at the landowners’ discretion, the provision of amenities, such as schools for those children should be the responsibility of the landowners, either individually or collectively. If amenities are not provided, then the employers’ prospects of recruiting labour will be reduced.⁴⁰¹

Plantation authorities, however, emphasised humanitarian motives for engaging these children. They also argued that this labour was not cheap. However, when compared to adult labour, the *earn and learn* system had unquestionable advantages, for it provided regular labour during the critical plucking season, which usually coincided with communal cultivations and thus risked labour shortages on the tea estates at critical time. In any case, the work routine of children under the *earn and learn* system provided a clear picture of the significance of this labour to capital:

The hours are long. In the cold season children go to school in the mornings and work in the fields for up to 4½ hours a day on weekdays and they work on Saturday mornings. Then they have a study period in the evenings. In the other two terms they work in the fields from dawn to midday and then have a school and study periods in the afternoon

³⁹⁸ Van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe*, 125.

³⁹⁹ Grier, ‘Child Labour and Africanist Scholarship,’ 18.

⁴⁰⁰ Bourdillon, ‘Child Labour and Education’, 27.

⁴⁰¹ NAZ, S2929/1/7, Delineation Officers Suggestions regarding the squatter problem, from J.L. Reid to Secretary for Internal Affairs, 25 June 1966.

and evenings. The first term of the year was particularly heavy, when pupils worked for eight hours a day six days a week, besides all their school work.⁴⁰²

There is also an interesting relationship about church and capital as these schools were under the superintendence of the ABM. It is not surprisingly that, when a long serving ABM Missionary, J. Orner, retired from Chikore Mission in 1952, he became a full time African Welfare Officer of the TTC, working primarily as the schools administrator of the of these tea estates.⁴⁰³

Parallels can be made with the way the agricultural sector dealt with the labour question in early colonial Malawi. Local farmers, who were facing regional competition for Malawian labour suffered critical labour shortages. Later on, the Nyasaland Planters and Missionaries protested in 1904, without any success though, against the Nyasaland Foreign Office's signing of an agreement with WNLA over the recruitment of Africans to the South African Gold Mines. In addition, hundreds of Malawians migrated each month to the Rhodesian farms and mines while others migrated to the Tete and Sena sugar plantations in Portuguese East Africa. This left Nyasaland employers with access to casual labour from tenants and surrounding reserves. The major challenge with this labour was that it was erratic: plentiful during the dry season, but almost unprocurable during the planting season when they had to attend to their own fields as well.

In face of the challenges, Missionaries resorted to employing children. Inducement laid "in the schools which their workers attended freely out of working hours".⁴⁰⁴ Some planters emulated this strategy with much success, as the colonial Official, Alfred Sharpe, explained:

...about 15 miles from Blantyre is a station for one of the missions, and 2 or 3 miles from it, a plantation whose owners has been planting up a large piece of land in cotton this year; the missionary is also doing work which requires a good deal of labour and the competition between the two Europeans for the local supply is keen. Nearly a year ago the planter came to this conclusion that his rival's superior inducement lay in his school which the labourers could attend freely out of working hours; he straightaway built a school and hired an educated native to teach reading, writing, and English to all comers. He assured me that the result has well paid him.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Bourdillon, 'Child Labour and Education', 15.

⁴⁰³ NAZ, S 2827/2/2/2/5, Report of the NC for Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁰⁴ R. Chirwa, 'Child and youth labour on the Nyasaland Plantations, 1890-1953,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4, 1993, 669.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

This section has shown some of the labour dynamics associated with timber and tea plantations economies. While the tea estates came to rely heavily on child labour under *earn and learn* scheme, the emerging timber plantation relied greatly on labour from Portuguese East Africa. The fact that Melsetter and Chipinga Districts share a border with Portuguese East Africa facilitated easier migration of afrivcans across the border. It has also been demonstrated that land in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts changed hands after the Second World War, in the process fundamentally altering African access to fertile lands. It is the fate of these Africans, their innovation and resilience in non European areas that the next section turns to.

Evictions, Livelihoods and Accumulation in non-European Areas

The entry of large scale plantation capital on the Chipinga and Melsetter highlands had fundamental repercussions on the socio-economic history of this geographical region. This represented a second wave of land acquisition, the first occurring during the 1890s which ushered in labour tenancy which enabled Africans to continue using the acquired land.⁴⁰⁶ The “second occupation”, transformed land use practice, settlement patterns and further contributed to the demise of labour tenancy. Africans, who since colonial occupation had stayed on the farms as tenants had to make way for plantation economies or become full time plantation labourers.

However, not all former tenants were accommodated as labourers just as not all were willing to take up wage employment. From this time onwards, the status of those who did not take up but continued staying on this land changed to that of “squatters”, who had to be evicted. The subsequent evictions were devastating. Palmer states that during the 1945 to 1955 decade, at least 100 000 African “squatters” were forcibly moved into the overcrowded reserves, the inhospitable and tsetse fly ridden unassigned areas.⁴⁰⁷ A 1956 report confirms that the post-Second World War period fundamentally affected Africans’ access to productive land:

The past seven years represented the period during which the administration of the L.A.A. has been carried out, and during this time, 80 000 Africans have been moved from Crown Lands in the European areas to other areas set aside and specially prepared for their reception. There remain only 30 000 in this category.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ Hughes, *From Enslavement to Environmentalism*, 45.

⁴⁰⁷ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, 243.

⁴⁰⁸ NAZ, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1956.

Africans from the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts highlands were among the worst affected considering that since colonial occupation; they had been cushioned from the worst effects of land expropriation as tenants. A series of evictions from the Chipinga-Melsetter highlands began with relocations from Crown Lands. During the course of 1952, some 346 Africans were moved off the Melsetter Crown Lands and resettled into the Muwusha and Ngorima reserves,⁴⁰⁹ followed by Africans residing in the Sabi Valley Crown Lands. A typical state executed expulsion was reported as follows:

During 1952, an estimated 190 families involving a population of 1 324 people were moved from European Crown Land in Chipinga to Matsai Reserve in Bikita. The natives, their grain, and personal effects were transported by eight CMED three ton trucks. Stock was moved on the hooves across the Sabi and through the ranches direct to Matsai. Difficulty was experienced in crossing the small stock over the Sabi, as, owing to late rains, the main flow of the river was strong. Most small stock had to be man handled across. However, the stock arrived safely with little loss.⁴¹⁰

A series of evictions followed thereafter. In 1955, 250 families were moved from the Chipinga-Melsetter areas: 162 were resettled in Mutema Reserve, 30 in Musikavanhu Reserve, and 52 in Muwusha Reserve.⁴¹¹ It is worth noting, however that, the great demand for labour meant the eviction of younger men was not a priority. The plantations' labour requirements defined older people as prime targets for eviction, with younger men getting evicted only if they were unwilling to become labourers.⁴¹² On rare occasions, evictions also involved relocations from more crowded to less crowd reserves, as was the case in 1958, when 82 families were moved from the slopes of Biriwiri Valley of Muwusha Reserve, and resettled on the Chikwakwa plateau.⁴¹³

These evictions destabilised traditional political and social systems, thereby arousing tensions between these communities and the state. Most of those evicted were sceptical about the possibility of ever reconstructing their lives far away from their previously-known physical environment. These evictees had been farming on the same fields as their parents before them. They knew the lay of the land, the contours of the hills, the location of streams, and their

⁴⁰⁹ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1952.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, Report of NC Chipinga, 1952.

⁴¹¹ Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1955.

⁴¹² Interview, Ottas Tsamwani, Rusitu Valley, 16 December 2014.

⁴¹³ Annual report of the Director of Native Agriculture, 1958.

seasonal patterns. It was thus difficult for them to imagine acquiring such rich local knowledge in a new place. Therefore, with such nostalgic attachment to the productive lands, shrine centres, burial grounds of chiefs and family graves, communities were resentful of moving out of their ancestral lands. Some Chiefs were also indignant as migrations meant total loss of authority and control over their subjects, some of whom remained on the plantations as labourers, while others were displaced to other reserves, where they became subjects of the hosting traditional authorities.

Chiefs were also directly affected. This includes those who totally lost their authority because upon settling in other areas, they became subjects to the new authorities. An example is that of Headman Kutsenza who migrated from Martin forest reserve to Rusitu Valley, where he became a subject of the Ngorima chiefdom.⁴¹⁴ At the same time, some of Kutsenza's subordinates went to Mhakwe and Chikwakwa areas thereby becoming subjects of the Muusha and Chikwakwa chiefdoms, while many other families migrated to the neighbouring Portuguese East Africa.⁴¹⁵ It is not surprising, therefore that, Chief Chikukwa protested against eviction and wrote several protest letters enough to arouse debate among colonial officials:

As for chief Chikukwa and his people on Martin Forest, this is obviously a case which requires special consideration. Generally speaking, this Ministry is opposed to any large scale African occupation on national land. However, it is recognised that there is no easy way of removing people who have lived there for generations. At the same time, it is obviously not in the national interest to devote a part of the country's forest estate to permanent African occupation.⁴¹⁶

The case of Chief Chikukwa falls in the same category as that of Chief Mapungwana. Because their territories were confined to the Melsetter and Chipinga Highlands respectively, they completely lost out as this land, designated as European land, was expropriated for intensive utilisation after the Second World War.

Some Africans, as was the case throughout the colony, accessed land in the APAs, which were created as result of the 1930 LAA. The APAs were freehold areas meant to compensate Africans for loss of rights to purchase land elsewhere in the country. There were two categories of APAs in the Chipinga-Mesetter Districts namely; state administered and church-run purchase areas. Writing on the Marirangwe APA whose conditions are representative of most

⁴¹⁴ Interview, Tsamwani.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ NAZ, S2929/1/7, Melsetter Delineation report, 1966.

Southern Rhodesian APAs, Allison Shutt notes that much of the land was of poor quality, often in isolated areas and far removed from transportation lines and markets.⁴¹⁷ Scholars have debated widely around the significance of these APAs. Cheater argues that, for the settler society, APAs had greater political than economic significance. She argues that the political bias was evident in the conscious fashioning of these areas in marginal areas and in the lack of government support for individual farm development.⁴¹⁸ Shutt further argues that APAs served a political rather than an economic role, saying they were meant “to curb a growing disturbing trend” where, some poor whites landowners in Southern Rhodesia were selling land to some enterprising Africans, despite the well-known racial sanctions of the Southern Rhodesian society.⁴¹⁹

APAs were also meant to maintain stability in the reserves. According to Shutt, there was a growing number of “reserve entrepreneurs”: Africans who increased their yields by tilling more land, thereby crowding out other cultivators and creating land shortages in the reserves. Some type of accommodation was therefore needed for this “potentially destabilising class”.⁴²⁰ While their right to land could not be swept away, it was felt that they should not be allowed to purchase land indiscriminately or use land in the reserves to the exclusion of other peasants, as “either course spells political turmoil for the settler government”.⁴²¹ Reflecting on the land question as the government viewed it on the eve of the 1930 LAA, A.C. Jennings, the assistant director of the National Land Board stated that:

Had the LAA not been brought in when it was, I think without doubt you would have a very considerable number of natives purchasing land fairly extensively throughout the colony. It was happening in 1925 even when the Morris Carter Commission sat... The effect of the LAA was to try to stabilise the position in some way.⁴²²

The political aspect of the state-instituted APAs is evidenced by the nature of land reserved for such use in Chipinga and Melsetter Districts. Most of this land did not have worthy agrarian significance. For instance, the Honde APA bordering Portuguese East Africa and the Ngorima APA bordering Ngorima reserve were Tsetse fly ridden. The Biriwiri-Nyamusundu APA in

⁴¹⁷ A.K. Shutt, ‘Purchase Area Farmers and the Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia, c 1931-1952,’ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 30, 3, 1997, 555.

⁴¹⁸ A. Cheater, “*Idioms of accumulation*,” *Rural Development and Class Formation among Freeholders in Zimbabwe*, (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984), 6-7.

⁴¹⁹ Shutt, ‘Purchase area Farmers,’ 558.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² Shutt ‘Purchase Area Farmers’, 558.

the Melsetter District may equally be described as a mere geographical expression. More than a decade after its establishment, a land planning committee described it as follows:

It lies in the Western escarpment of Melsetter ICA and partially in the Biriwiri Valley. It is on the lee side of Melsetter highlands and a drastic change of climate takes place as one drops from skyline into Biriwiri Valley, majority is in Region 3. Only 5 Africans have been settled here, all of whom in the Southern portion and three of these have farms along Biriwiri River in the flat South Western corner. One man adjoins them on steeper ground across the river. The fifth farmer has a farm in the escarpment country which incorporates a certain amount of flat ground. His farm can be considered as being within Natural Region 11 D. The four in the valley experience a lower rainfall but each has water rights from the Biriwiri River...Despite the fact that (settlement in the Northern Section) this part is less rugged; no settlement has taken place apart from a business centre and clinic, reportedly due to lack of water.⁴²³

However, as Oliver Pollack has shown, APAs offered the African middle class privacy, a measure of respect from the colonial government, the symbolic and concrete separateness from low paid workers and African cultivators in the reserves.⁴²⁴ Therefore, a strong case can be made that some farms and the purchase area communities became important symbols of African middle class life.

Arguably, state administered APAs also constituted strong elements of divide and rule. Shutt has demonstrated the persistent conflict between APAs of Marirangwe and the peasant farmers from the adjacent Mhondoro reserve. The animosity manifested in many ways. These included the fact that peasants were not represented in the Marirangwe Farmers Association, cattle from the reserves were confiscated when they strayed into Marirangwe APA and the Marirangwe Farmers often complained of the peasants' encroachment and illegal cutting of wood, "often urging government to prosecute offenders".⁴²⁵ Shutt elaborates:

Although the elite cast their settling of purchase areas within an ideological conception of 'racial uplift,' these middle class pioneer farmers clashed, often spectacularly, with chiefs and peasant farmers whose lands were designated as purchase areas. Peasant cultivators resident on designated purchase area farms stole survey pegs, drove their cattle into the private farms, and cultivated within the boundaries of pegged farms and at their most dramatic, attacked applicants and killed or maimed animals.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ NAZ, RC, L: C 32.15. 9R, B: 126947, Lands, Melsetter Area Regional Plan, March 1968.

⁴²⁴ O. Pollack, 'Black Farmers and White Politics in Rhodesia,' *African Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 296. 265-268.

⁴²⁵ Shutt, 'Purchase area Farmers', 567.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*, 569.

It can therefore be argued that state administered APA schemes served a political purpose. By creating animosity among Africans, this fostered disunity among them. The APA farmers acted as a buffer zone between the African peasantry and the white farming communities, which helped to sustain land and racial domination of the white over black communities.

There was a second category of APAs in the Chipinga District, which were administered by the ABM. During its establishment, the ABM received large tracts of land from Rhodes, which stretched from Chirinda to Portuguese East Africa. In 1895, the ABM founded another mission at Chikore, about 30 kilometres west of Mt Silinda after it was given some 18 000 acres as compensation for land lost by Mt Selinda Mission when the Southern Rhodesia-Portuguese East Africa border was finally defined.⁴²⁷ Compared to land that government set aside for African purchases, the ABM land was productive as it was located in Natural Farming Region One. It was during 1952 that the ABM subdivided some of its farms into plots averaging 100 acres, and sold them to its African converts.⁴²⁸

The ABM's APA schemes had a different objective with that of the state. While for the state, the motive was political expediency, for the ABM, it was part of civilising the African convert through the gospel of the plough. The ABM considered African land ownership to be an essential factor in its civilisation mission, arguing that,

...the power of the chief would be lessened; individual responsibility encouraged; belief in spirits of a particular locality dispelled; polygamy dispelled (because wealth would be in land, not wives)...permanent houses would be erected as development of property; sustained effort in looking after individual plots would diminish sexual appetite.⁴²⁹

For this reason, the ABM was greatly concerned during the late 1890s as settlers' wantonly confiscated land, targeting that which was densely populated by Africans. Eager to acquire land for its converts, the Church requested, unsuccessfully though, an extra 100 square miles from Rhodes.⁴³⁰

What the ABM did was common with other Missionary bodies that operated in Southern Rhodesia. T.A. Leedy argues with regard to the American Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) that missionary intervention in African agriculture was significant in creating "self-

⁴²⁷ R. Matikiti, 'The Role of the United Church of Christ During the Liberation War in South Eastern Zimbabwe: Gazaland,' (MA Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1992), 8.

⁴²⁸ NAZ, NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC for Chipinga, 1952.

⁴²⁹ Rennie, 'Settlers and Missionaries in Southern Melssetter', 9.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

supporting Christian communities”.⁴³¹ The ABM, like AMEC, believed that a thriving peasantry would constitute a more receptive and permanent audience for their evangelical efforts, and that those thriving for livelihoods could not be strong Christians. The other objective was to create a stable rural population that could resist “the lure of the bright lights”.⁴³² Creating and maintaining a strong rural Christian base became an issue with the rise of urbanisation. Leedy gives an example of the AMEC’s concerns in Mrewa District. Being less than 80 kilometres from Salisbury, the district experienced labour migration to Salisbury, sufficient to warrant the posting of an African preacher in Salisbury in 1930, who was charged with following up on “Methodist workers who might otherwise drift away from the church while in the city”.⁴³³

The ABM took advantage of the great demand for land in this fertile Mt Silinda area and used it to reward converts as well as to lure others. Most of the African converts managed to secure better farming land on the ABM’s Gwenzi, Beacon Hill, Emerald and Tamandai, farming areas. It is not surprising that loyalty to the church was a crucial factor for one to access this land, as one informant explained:

...Not every African could buy land from the ABM African Purchase Area scheme. I remember that Mrs Craig, the church secretary, kept a register of church activities. It had details of Church attendances and pledges made by members. It was this register that was used for selecting people who could buy farms on Mission land. Priority was given to more visible, active or devoted converts: like those who attended church service more regularly and made bigger financial or material pledges to the church.⁴³⁴

Among these African recipients were converts such as Hlanti, Nzula, Njapa and Mbesa, all of Zulu origin, who had accompanied ABM missionaries from Natal to Mt Silinda during the 1890s. Therefore, by the 1950s, these had become an elite class among the African converts. They had the privilege of taking part in the demarcation process, choose for themselves the biggest and most fertile farms and also became landlords as they also accommodated African tenants on their land.⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ T.H. Leedy, “‘A starving Belly Doesn’t Listen to Explanations’: Agricultural Evangelism in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900 to 1962,” *Agricultural History*, 84, 4, 2010, 489.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 490.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁴ Interview, K. Sukuta, Mt Silinda Mission, 30 December 2014.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

The fact that the Mt Silinda area falls into Natural Farming Region One, meant that those who got land under this scheme had great prospects for a lucrative farming enterprises. Most of these went into out grower tea production, selling raw tea to the nearby Zona Tea Estate owned by the TTC. In the nearby Gwenzi Section, a number of these farmers set up wattle plots, interest of which was aroused when one APA farmer cut and stripped an old wattle plantation that had been grown before the area was assigned as an APA. Following the disposal of the wattle bark, the farmer “received an excellent price for his buck.” The RWC, thereafter, began encouraging these Africans to establish wattle plots.⁴³⁶

The gospel of the plough was also meant to foster the spiritual conversion of the Africans from African Traditional Religion to Christianity. In agricultural matters, the Ndau people, just like the rest of the Shona communities, believed that ancestral worship was significant for agricultural productivity. They also believed that *Mhondoros* (territorial spirits), which they thought inhabited certain sacred forests, determined annual rainfall and soil fertility. Any annoyance of the *mhondoros* could result in community wide punishments such as drought, livestock diseases and crop pests. Therefore, religion was linked with agriculture and the Shonas performed ancestral worship ceremonies to keep the spirits happy. The missionaries, who believed that a fully converted Christian had to undergo a change in the mind-set, taught the Africans modern agricultural practices such as crop rotation, use of compost manure and soil conservation, so as to prove that agricultural productivity was not linked to ancestral worship but to scientific agricultural practices. Missionary intervention in African agriculture was therefore a strategy seeking to transform African religious mind set about land and spirits.

This resonated well with the activities of the ABM in the Chipinga and Chikore Mission areas. The ABM intervention in agriculture can be traced back to 1919, when an American trained agricultural scientist, E.D. Alvord, was appointed in the area.⁴³⁷ From 1920, demonstration plots were set up at Mt Silinda and in communities within the ABM’s spheres of influence. Africans were taught modern agricultural methods, environmental conservation and management. The demonstrators also continuously emphasised that the African farmers should cultivate on flat lands as opposed to steep slopes. Extension services programmes included campaigns that encouraged proper and consistent use of manure. In addition, there was a

⁴³⁶ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁴³⁷ NAZ/S/840/2/23, American Board Mission, Mt Silinda, Department of Agriculture.

“school on the move” programme, in which Agricultural Demonstrators visited the communities regularly, offering extension services and teaching cattle owners how best to use manure from their livestock, while those without livestock were taught to make and use compost.⁴³⁸ As Leedy argues, the proper use of manure and fertiliser was also meant at undermining the traditional belief in *divisi*: an herb which was secretly put in field with the belief that this would increase yields.⁴³⁹ Therefore, the missionaries’ intervention in African agricultural activities sought to further the religious objective of transforming the traditional religious ideologies about ancestral spirits through the discourses linking higher agricultural productivity with hard work and scientific methods: an element that was part of the bigger scheme to transform the African religious mind set.

When Alvord was appointed Government’s Director of Native Agriculture in 1926, he nevertheless continued working with peasant farmers in the Chipinga and Melsester Reserves. For instance, he was influential in the development of irrigation schemes in Nyanyadzi, Mutema and Mutambara areas.⁴⁴⁰ Upon leaving government in 1949, he returned to the ABM, and was instrumental in opening the Alvord School of Agriculture at Chikore in 1951, whose first graduates were released in 1954. Alvord’s initiatives with the ABM also resulted in construction of roads, centralisation of villages and division of arable plots and residential areas as recommended under the 1951 NLHA.⁴⁴¹ Finally, the mission secured veterinary medicines and tended animals on the mission farm and some Africans reserves as part of the campaign to teach Africans about animal health from 1959-1966.⁴⁴²

It should be underscored, however that, differential access to church land created social stratification among the Ndaus of the Chirinda areas. On one hand, those who accessed this land developed into a new class of the privileged black bourgeoisie class, as they acquired a more distinct western lifestyle, owing to better incomes realised from their agrarian activities. Some members with better farming equipment managed to build modern houses, buy cars and invest income from agriculture in other businesses as well. This marked social and economic transformation is aptly captured in the following comments by one missionary:

⁴³⁸ Interview, K. Sukuta.

⁴³⁹ Leedy, “A starving Belly Doesn’t Listen to Explanations”, 496.

⁴⁴⁰ Punt, ‘The Development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia’.

⁴⁴¹ NAZ/S 5135, Selinda Special News Echo, 1954.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

This last decade has shown marked advancement in all lines among the vaNdau. Many have purchased their own farms and are developing them beautifully. Brick homes are becoming more plentiful. Others are operating bus lines, grain transport, general stores, butcheries and bakeries...it is encouraging to realise that all these businessmen are church members and therefore the result of mission work.⁴⁴³

On another hand, those without access to ABM land felt alienated, in the process fostering hostilities and disunity within the African communities. Those who accessed church land owed this their Christian faith, and in the process criticised those who believed in African Traditional Religion. These landed Africans also became heavily indebted to the ABM and criticised both traditional authorities and government. Furthermore, the less privileged Africans, such the landless and farm employees, developed love-hate feelings towards the converts who admired and adopted western values. The workers, for instance, detested the fact that they were paid less than those employed on white-owned farms and plantations. They were further infuriated by some of the discriminatory social lifestyles practised by their employers, such as drinking white tea, while their domestic servants were given black tea; eating peeled sweet potatoes, while servants were asked to partake unpeeled ones; eating the staple *sadza* prepared of *mutserwa*, ‘refined mealie meal’, while servants’ was prepared from *mugaiwa*, ‘unrefined mealie meal’.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, the racial differential that was created by colonial rule reproduced itself among the Africans.

Game Slaughter Campaign and Rural Infrastructure

The resettlement of Africans from European land to reserves was hampered by environmental challenges. Apart from constant droughts, the Melsetter and Chipinga reserves faced a huge challenge of game and pests that caused severe depredations to livestock and crops. The worst affected were the Musikavanhu and Mutema reserves, which, during the 1940s and 1950s, had to accommodate hundreds of families that were evicted from the white farming areas.

There we also numerous environmental challenges. For instance, in 1952, the NC for Chipinga reported that while the 1952 season initially had a promising yield, large swarms of grasshoppers suddenly attacked corn, the main crop in Sabi Valley, which resulted in the yields

⁴⁴³ NAZ/S, 2014, American Board Mission, Mt Selinda.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview, M. Chamboko, Gaza Township, Chipinge, 31 December 2014.

dropping by 25 per cent. A further crop reduction resulted from a three week winter rains spell, which caused ripe grain to sprout. “However,” wrote the NC, “the sprouted grain was hastily put into the beer pots and slacked many thirsty throats after nearly two years of famine”.⁴⁴⁵ In 1953, the CNC reiterated the gravity of this problem:

In my 1951 report, I mentioned the irrigation experimental station being developed on the black basalt soil of the Sabi Valley. How easily unforeseeable factors can upset the most careful plans is shown by the NC Chipinga’s observation that, “during the winter, being the only patch of green for miles around, crops were attacked by crickets and then by thousands of field mice. All crops were destroyed and no data could be obtained except on methods of watering.”⁴⁴⁶

There were also consistent outbreaks of quela birds, which damaged small grains like sorghum and *rapoko*, as well as wheat that was grown as winter crop in the irrigation schemes. The NC seems to have been in a state of despair, especially with regard to the quela birds, as he suggested in 1951 that the only solution to the small birds was “only to plant crops which they are not able to swallow.”⁴⁴⁷

Big game was equally devastating. Critical among these were elephants, baboons and wild pigs which destroyed crops while predators like lions, leopards, jackals and hyenas also attacked livestock. Thus, while in 1952, African peasant farmers in the Chipinga District disposed 3 243 herd of cattle and up to 29 per cent of these died from attacks by carnivores.⁴⁴⁸ Similarly, of the 436 cattle deaths reported in the Melssetter District, more than 31 per cent were due to carnivorous attacks.⁴⁴⁹ Hence from 1941, government resorted to game slaughtering, the objective being to make reserves more habitable. From 1941 to 1944 104 African hunters used nearly 10 000 rounds of ammunition to kill 4 700 game.⁴⁵⁰ This war picked momentum during the 1950s highlighted in the 1951 report:

Hunting campaign in the open area still goes on. I am unable to get exact figures but I am informed by the Ranger in charge that 74 native hunters used 8 200 rounds and destroyed 4 000 head of game during the year.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁵ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC for Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁴⁶ Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1953.

⁴⁴⁷ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, Report of NC for Chipinga, 1951.

⁴⁴⁸ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC for Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ NAZ, S1563, NC Annual Reports, Chipinga 1941, 1942 and 1944.

⁴⁵¹ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, Report of NC for Chipinga, 1951.

It is evident that the interests of the settler society, as opposed to that of Africans, always came first when it came to determining game policy in Southern Rhodesia. One is inclined to consider the massive game extermination process carried in the Chipinga and Melsetter reserves during the 1940s and 1950s within the broader historical perspective. As noted in Chapter Two, Africans in the lower Sabi reserves fought relentlessly during the 1930s in order for them to be allowed to own guns for the protection of crops and livestock from wild game. Their fight was in vain. Ironically, from the 1940s onwards, government embarked on a massive game slaughter scheme not in response to African calls, but for the needs of the white settler society. The land on which game was exterminated was meant to accommodate hundreds of African families who were being evicted from the Chipinga-Melsetter Highlands so as to create more space for the white capitalist agrarian economy. In fact, African interests were always peripheral as hundreds were arrested, fined or imprisoned each year for the illegal hunting of game, which the colonial state exterminated.⁴⁵² Therefore, the game slaughters of the 1940s and 1950s are a window from which we can always view wild life policy and race relations in Southern Rhodesia.

The development of capitalist enterprises on the Chipinga-Melsetter Highlands was also aided by the expansion of irrigation schemes in the African reserves. These schemes were critical in two ways. Firstly, by accommodating hundreds of Africans who were displaced from the highlands, irrigation schemes created space for the timber plantations on the highlands. Secondly, they mitigated the effect of drought-induced famine. As a result, the government was able to save money as it had to budget less for drought relief, unlike during earlier drought periods where famine relief measures used to cost the government thousands of pounds.⁴⁵³

The irrigations, which underwent expansions during the 1950s, had their origins in the late 1920s, and were the brainchild of Alvord. While proceeding from Mt Silinda to Salisbury to assume duty as Government Agriculturist for 'natives', Alvord passed through the Mutema reserve, where he noted "belts of level alluvium soils and perennial streams coming down from the Melsetter Highveld". Enthused by the irrigation potential of this area, in 1928, he surveyed the Mutema irrigation furrow and construction of the irrigation system, which started in 1930, was complete in 1932 and irrigation started in September of that year.⁴⁵⁴ Between 1933 and 1940, 9 more irrigation projects were set up, including the Mabuyaye Plot at Mutema Reserve,

⁴⁵² A detailed examination of these dynamics is done in Chapter Two.

⁴⁵³ Annual Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1947.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Annual Report of the Director of Native Agriculture ending', 1946.

Nyanyadzi Plot in 1934, Umvumvumvu Plot in 1936 and Chibuwe Plot in 1940.⁴⁵⁵ These irrigation schemes transformed arid landscapes into islands of agricultural production. To this day, Alvord left permanent footprints on the agricultural landscape of the dry Melsetter reserves.

These schemes turned very arid areas, otherwise condemned as useless and unproductive, into green belts of high agricultural productivity. Indeed, during this latter period, considerations for developing more irrigation plots were also based on the need to accommodate Africans who were being evicted from the Crown Lands. For instance, in 1952, the NC for Chipinga requested for more funds to develop 1 500 acres at Tawona and Maronga in Mutema and Musikavanhu reserves respectively, meant to accommodate 120 families scheduled for eviction from the Crown Lands in 1953.⁴⁵⁶ The significance of Irrigation scheme is captured in Table 4 below, which shows production statistics of 3 of the oldest irrigation projects in the Melsetter District:

Table 4: Melsetter Irrigation Schemes

	Acres	Plot holders	Maize (tons)	Wheat (tons)	Sunnhemp (tons)
Nyanyadzi	745	309	13 858	2 715	533
Umvumvumvu	206	89	2 265	619	151
Mutambara	302	120	3 532	428	57
Totals	1 253	518	19 655	3 762	741

Source: NC Report, Melsetter; 1952

The harnessing of irrigation water, however, brought its own health problems. Irrigation furrows became sites of diseases. One official reported how, by 1952, both the Sabi and Tanganda rivers and canals had become “badly infested with bilharzia snails”.⁴⁵⁷ The irrigation schemes in Melsetter were also affected by the outbreak of bilharzia snails and disease. Later on, when canals for the Nyanyadzi Irrigation Scheme were tested for bilharzia “a high state of infection was found” and efforts to keep the snails to a minimum were constrained by inadequate funding.⁴⁵⁸ NCs were actually dissatisfied of this poor funding, with one of them

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Annual Report, NC Melsetter, 1952.

arguing “any government funds spent on treatment would be well spent, as it is no use teaching natives to grow food to fill sick bodies”.⁴⁵⁹

Because irrigation schemes largely catered for the subsistence needs of plot holders, maize, the staple food crop, was always the main summer crop. When there was surplus maize in the colony during the 1950s, it became necessary to introduce new and more lucrative cash crops into the rotations. However, it remained a challenge to persuade plot holders to restrict maize production in favour of cash crops.⁴⁶⁰ This was obviously a commentary on the plot holders’ priority of food crops which was a for food security measure. In times of drought and other natural disasters, plot holders always traded grain with communities outside the irrigation schemes. According to the NC:

Food crops were given a priority and I feel sure that the fact that natives in the Mutema Reserve were able to purchase grain from this project is one of the reasons that despite the failure of dry land crops that application for famine relief maize from this area is few.⁴⁶¹

However, for communities further away from the scheme, the burden often became the government’s concern:

In the Musikavanhu Reserve and Sabi Native Purchase area, famine conditions became apparent early and famine relief was started in March. Sixteen hundred bags of yellow mealies were distributed for 2.5.0 a bag. ... In addition, native storekeepers must have supplied a further 1 500 bags through the normal trade channels.⁴⁶²

Therefore, the development of irrigation schemes helped to contain African population.

However, the sizes of the irrigation plots were so negligible that there was a limit to which enterprising plot holder could produce and accumulate wealth. As demonstrated in Table Four, three of the oldest plots in the Melsetter District: Nyanyadzi, Umvumvumvu and Mutambara, accommodated 518 plot holders who shared 1 253 acres. This implied that each of them owned an average of 2.4 acres.⁴⁶³ A 1959 government report revealed that the 71 acre plots developed at Nyanyadzi, Devuli, Mutema and Chibuwe, were shared among 72 beneficiaries, implying that each peasant used an average of one acre.⁴⁶⁴ Reporting about African irrigation plots in Southern Rhodesia, the Secretary for Internal Affairs said that: “As a general rule, each

⁴⁵⁹ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁶⁰ Annual Report, Director of Native Agriculture, 1958.

⁴⁶¹ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, Annual Report, NC Chipinga, 1951.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Annual Report, NC Melsetter, 1952.

⁴⁶⁴ Annual Report, Department of Native Agriculture and Lands, 1959.

potholder has been allocated an irrigation plot of 2 acres, although there are some who cultivate as much as four acres, whilst others in Midlands merely cultivate ¼ acre plots".⁴⁶⁵

Related to this, P.S. Nyambara has shown that the eviction of Africans from the Rhodesdale estate to Gokwe and Sanyati Reserves during the early 1950s did not in any way consider the carrying capacities of the reserves. He explains:

Among those evicted from Rhodesdale were 1, 000 families under Headmen Myambi and Chirima, who were dumped in Gokwe Special Native Area. Another group consisting of 470 families under Chief Whozele and his headman Mudzingwa, were dumped in Sanyati Reserve. While expert research demonstrated that people could only survive in Gokwe on the basis of 300 acres per family; being 30 acres per ten beasts per family, the Native Department refused to go along with this opinion because it wanted to squeeze in as many people as possible. Instead, the department argued that it would allow 1, 530 families to be squeezed into Gokwe.⁴⁶⁶

Therefore, the expansion of irrigation plots in the Chipinga and Melsetter reserves has to be contextualised within the political economy of land in the post Second World War era. The broader aim for expanding the irrigation schemes was not to create an entrepreneurial African agricultural class. Instead, the schemes, just as the reserves in general, were meant to accommodate as many Africans as possible, thereby creating more room for white enterprises on the Chipinga-Melsetter highlands.

Predictably, fertile land remained a closely guarded resource in the reserves. In 1952, for instance, the RWC planted 15 acres of wattle in the Mutema Highlands. Though this area was not really suitable for food crops, its suitability for wattle was in no doubt, as evidenced by 100 per cent seed germination. The economic significance of the scheme was also not in doubt, with the RWC estimating that upon maturity, the buck from this plantation would be worth at least £500, while the timber would be useful for roofing, fuel wood, poles and other uses. While it made economic sense to establish small timber plantations, Africans were very sceptical and this did not escape the attention of the NC, who reported that:

Efforts to increase the interest of natives in this area in planting of wattle in small lots have failed, one reason being the long lapse of time between the planting and the payment; the other stated reason is that, should wattle prove to be a success in this area,

⁴⁶⁵ Report of the Secretary for Internal Affairs, 1968.

⁴⁶⁶ Nyambara, 'That place was wonderful', 296.

“the Europeans would take their land”. I explained the fallacy of this belief, but still no request for seed has been made.⁴⁶⁷

Irrigation plot holders resorted to cultivating the land all year round. In the process, wheat became a significant food crop, second to maize. This must be seen in the context of its compatibility with the agricultural cycle. While maize was grown during summer, it was followed by wheat in winter. Its growing importance as a food crop is indicated by the fact that as more wheat was produced during the 1950s, less of it was disposed. For instance, out of 1 815 bags produced on the Chipinga Melsetter irrigation schemes in 1949, only 98 were sold, with the rest being retained for family consumption.⁴⁶⁸ Wheat production rose rapidly, as noted in the fact that by 1953, irrigation schemes in Melsetter produced 3 802 bags. Remarkably, “none of this is sold”, reported the NC, “as it is all consumed by the native himself”.⁴⁶⁹ This is clearly indicative of the fact that, in the face of the colonial domination and economic marginalisation, Africans in the Chipinga and Melsetter reserves were adaptive and innovative as they earned livelihoods switching to new crops that were better cultivated on the irrigation plots.

The development of irrigation schemes went hand in hand with the construction of boreholes. The pattern of human settlement and livestock distribution in the Musikavanhu reserve had for a long period been concentrated either along the Sabi River or the Sabi Valley escarpment.⁴⁷⁰ Thus in 1951, the Musikavanhu Reserve was, despite the existence of vast stretches of unoccupied dry land, already considered overstocked. However, the option to destock was not viable as the government actually needed more space to resettle a growing number of Africans being evicted from the Crown Lands. The state, therefore, resorted to the construction of boreholes.⁴⁷¹ Thus, in 1951, “a line of boreholes” were sunk in this Reserve and the adjacent Sabi NPA. It was envisaged: “by properly equipping them with drilling troughs and efficient pumps, it should make all the difference with the stock density in this particular area of the Sabi Valley”.⁴⁷² These boreholes were therefore of great significance to the inhabitants of the Sabi valley. By 1952 14 boreholes that were sunk in 1950 had transformed the land use systems of the reserve. As the NC reported, “during the dry winter months, instead of cattle grazing

⁴⁶⁷ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁶⁸ Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1949.

⁴⁶⁹ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Annual Report, NC Melsetter, 1952.

⁴⁷⁰ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1951.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1951.

and watering only on the plateau, or on the banks of the Sabi River, cattle owners also took advantage of water and good grazing around the boreholes”.⁴⁷³

In the Melsetter reserves, boreholes were also constructed in Charamba and Chayamiti areas of Muwusha and Mutambara reserves in 1952. In addition, a two and a half million gallon capacity dam, which cost the state £450, was constructed on the “notoriously dry” Chikukwa plateau. Similarly, wells were also constructed and the government contracted a Salisbury firm “to construct a number of T dams on the plateau,” thereby further enhancing the carrying capacity of the reserve.⁴⁷⁴

Rural Livelihood Strategies

The heterogeneity that developed among Africans inhabiting the APAs also developed among those who stayed in the reserves. Economic differentiation in the reserves was partly a result of differential access to climatic and soil potentials as well as that of access to markets. Related to this, Phimister lucidly demonstrated that economic development in reserves was uneven and that there were pockets of African prosperity regardless of settler political control.⁴⁷⁵ He outlines further how geography fostered rural stratification as rural development was partly influenced by the manner in which reserves were incorporated into the wider economy. For instance, communities which were closer to big towns, lines of communication or well served by traders, flourished through the sale of cattle, beer, grain and other food stuffs.⁴⁷⁶ Phimister also shows the experiences African communities that thrived on labour migrations, especially those from Belingwe, Chivi and many of the Shangaan people, who were mostly resident in the south eastern Zimbabwe. They regularly migrated to the Johannesburg Mines, where they monopolised the best paying jobs, since they were valued as semi-skilled workers. On their return, they reinvested their earnings by purchasing implements such as ploughs, sleighs and scotch carts for future agricultural activities. This made them richer than the rest of community members.⁴⁷⁷

Economic differentiation was also a visible feature of the Chipinga and Melsetter reserves. Africans, depending on the areas they occupied, established socioeconomic systems that were

⁴⁷³ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁷⁴ NAZ, Report of NC Melsetter, 1952, p.24.

⁴⁷⁵ Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, 71-77.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 71.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

shaped by their particular environments. Sinclair's description of one of the Melsetter Reserves clearly outlines this environmental variability;

Ngorima, including Ndimba, is probably one of the most potentially wealthy T.T.Ls. in Rhodesia from the point of view of natural resources: climate, good rainfall averaging over 60 inches, little or no frost, regular breezes, and very little evidence of disease. There has been great deal of agricultural development. Nearly all tropical and many sub-tropical crops can be grown and over 30 % of the total area is under cultivation.⁴⁷⁸

The secretary for Native Affairs made a similar observation about this reserve in 1955:

...in a normal season, Ngorima is the most fertile area in the district, in addition to the usual grain crops, there is an abundance of bananas, guavas, mangoes, yams and cassava. Coffee and rice is also grown. Even when the season is too wet, there is no likelihood of famine owing to the variety of food produced.⁴⁷⁹

What is noteworthy is the fact that Africans, in their response to state machinations, became adaptive to their physical and economic landscape and developed livelihood systems based on the available natural resources and market opportunities. This innovation is manifest in a report that stated that: "A growing trend to diversification is noticeable in vegetable production in those areas able to exploit the proximity of a ready market in the towns, in the tropical fruits, especially pineapples, starting to find favour in Melsetter district".⁴⁸⁰ Some four years later, the NC for Melsetter similarly observed:

...the selling of fruit, vegetables and eggs by women and children is a common feature on the main roads while the more enterprising lorry owner carries his produce to Umtali for sale. The grinding of mealie meal by hand is becoming an obsolete chore and several new mills have been opened.⁴⁸¹

Furthermore, economic accumulation and social stratification in the reserves was also a result of differential accesses to Christian Mission education. Mission education contributed to the rise rural entrepreneurs who fared relatively well despite the racially uneven political and economic landscape. By 1938, African tradesmen in the district were as shown in Table 5 below:

⁴⁷⁸ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 177-178.

⁴⁷⁹ Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1955.

⁴⁸⁰ Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1953.

⁴⁸¹ NAZ, S2827/2/2/5/2, Report of NC Melsetter 1957.

Table 5: Professionals by Trade

Trade	Total Number	Trade	Total Number
Builders	19	Store keepers	14
Carpenters	26	District Hawkers	6
Shoe makers	10	Masons and Plasters	9

Source: Report of NC Chipinga; 1938

The majority of these tradesmen were trained at the four Missionary schools in the two districts, namely Chikore, Mt Silinda, Mutambara and Rusitu Mission stations. In a study of the impact of ABM's activities, T. Taringana⁴⁸² notes that as early as 1909, the ABM's Industrial Department had developed a Saw Mill that processed timber not only for the school's woodwork and building studies but also for sale. It introduced a carpentry specialist course in 1939 and a 3-year joinery course in 1949. It opened of a Secondary School at Chikore in 1955, and a Higher Teacher Training course at Mt Silinda Mission in 1959. It is remarkable that by 1957, the high reputation of Mount Selinda carpentry products had spread around the colony and Southern Rhodesians acknowledged furniture made from "the unique brown Mahogany from Chirinda forest which found its way into many homes, winning high praises for its beauty".⁴⁸³ Therefore, several Africans acquired invaluable practical and academic education which contributed the growing stratification of the communities in the Melsetter-Chipinga region.

In addition to carpentry, the four schools also offered other practical subjects that contributed to development of skilled rural entrepreneurs. The four schools employed African agricultural demonstrators, who offered agricultural extension services to Africans within their sphere of influence. For instance, the Mutambara Mission Farm was described as "a model of instruction on good agricultural methods and organisation".⁴⁸⁴ Other practical subjects offered at the schools included industrial craft, hygiene, mother craft and medical nursing.⁴⁸⁵ The significance of Missionary education in imparting skills among the rural communities was therefore quite visible throughout the 1950s.

⁴⁸² T. Taringana, 'The Socio-Economic impact of the American Board Mission activities in Chipinga 1893- c. 1965' (BA Honours dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 2008).

⁴⁸³ *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, 7 September 1957.

⁴⁸⁴ NAZ, S1563, NC Report, Chipinga, 1940.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Missionary education indeed had a visible impact on African livelihoods in Chipinga and Melsetter Districts. Instead of being labourers on the surrounding farms, many Mission school graduates accessed better paying jobs in construction companies, while others became substantive instructors in woodwork institutions around the country. The regular comments from colonial officials of this district always points to the abilities and achievements of these graduates. This include references to Mt Silinda trained carpenters “excellent tradesmen...they obtain good prices for their work”⁴⁸⁶; “...the builders trained at the mission, readily find employment at wages from 10/- upwards”⁴⁸⁷; “...more and more educated natives feel the urge to set up some sort of business as it appears to give then a social standing among natives”.⁴⁸⁸ Similarly, the NC described storekeeping as “the main trade” in Chipinga District and, among the notable shop owners were two “well-educated Joel Hlahla and Stephen Mereka,” who had “excellent stores in the Sabi APA” and operated a lorry services as well. Further commenting about Hlahla, the NC said he “has been of great assistance to this office in the present famine. I have seen cheques from him for as much as £600 going to Hodgson and Myburgh for the purchase of maize”.⁴⁸⁹ Further to these were reports of “the usual boot makers, basket makers and other tradesmen who were found throughout the district”.⁴⁹⁰ This is clear evidence for the positive social and economic impact of missionary education in Chipinga and Melsetter Districts.

The ABM also promoted the academic and professional training of Africans. In 1949, it founded a scholarship fund that sponsored African teachers and church ministers. This opened the door to higher educational and professional mobility to individuals like Ndabaningi Sithole, Gideon Mhlanga and one B.E. Mlambo, who were sponsored for degrees outside the colony. They, particularly Ndabaningi Sithole, became active members of the African Teachers Association in the 1950s and later championed Zimbabwean nationalism.⁴⁹¹ Predictably, colonial officials who were sceptical of the mission educated Africans developed love-hate relations with these missions’ graduates. The educated Africans’ threat mounted with the eviction of Africans from the highlands during the 1950s as this class played a significant role the growing African dissentions. Predictably, as apprehension about them mounted, these

⁴⁸⁶ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, Report of NC Chipinga, 1951.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁸⁹ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1951.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Taringana, ‘The Socio-Economic impact of the American Board Mission activities’, 27.

graduates increasingly came under the spotlight. “The only Missions [in Chipinga],” reported the NC,

Silinda and Chikore turn out a good type of native and those who choose to remain in Chipinga District after passing out at Silinda are, for the most part, a definite asset. It is only when they leave Chipinga to urban areas that a certain of them are inclined to “get difficult”. ...A Mt Silinda educated native, Kenneth Dube, is in England studying medicine and has been there for at least 3 years...but I should think that if and when he returns to Southern Rhodesia, whether in possession of a medical degree or not, he will require watching.⁴⁹²

It is also interesting to note that the NC took active interest in school mission schedules. As a result attending some of schools’ public debates sessions, as noted in the report that:

A debate on federation at Mt Silinda Mission was well attended. Three natives spoke for the federation and three spoke against it. I am surprised at the eloquence and the divergence of the views expressed. They have evidently made a close study of the subject. There is no doubt that a few can influence the mass of native opinion in this country.⁴⁹³

On the spotlight also was one, Dzawanda Dzingire, an ex-demonstrator of the Native Affairs Department. He came on the limelight upon retirement, and after returning to Ngorima Reserve, his home area. The NC was cynical he “may give trouble in the future”, noting “he has already had a friction with the demonstrator there.... I do not think he is associated in any political organisation but he seems to have some form of complex and at the moment is merely a voluble nuisance”.⁴⁹⁴ Therefore, with more land alienations during the 1950s, the educated Africans came under increasing scrutiny as colonial authorities feared that that they had potential to instigate dissensions.

Other Reserve entrepreneurs arose as indirect products of Missionary work. These include people who pursued non-technical businesses that did not require specialised manual skills but basic knowledge of reading, writing and calculation. Among these were butchery operators. The Melsetter District had five licenced butcher owners by 1951. Although these had a total quota of 45 herds per month,⁴⁹⁵ they often slaughtered way above this quota whenever the

⁴⁹² NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1951.

⁴⁹³ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁹⁴ NAZ, S2827/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1951.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

demand was high.⁴⁹⁶ The NC often paid a blind eye on this, because such cattle slaughtering was also “a most useful means of getting rid of excess cattle in their areas”.⁴⁹⁷ When supplies from African cattle owners were inadequate, they (operators) acquired cattle from nearby European farmers.⁴⁹⁸ This shows both resilience and agency on part of Africans, particularly evident in the way cattle owners maximised by selling when the prices were high and how butchery operators breached terms set out in their licences when it enhanced their businesses.

Communication was another area of African investment. In 1951, the Melsetter District had two African-owned passenger buses, one of which plighted the Umtali-Rusitu Mission route. Further to this were three goods vehicles, which were doing “a roaring job” to the community. It is interesting to note further how white settlers “used these to a very great extent, more than do the natives themselves”.⁴⁹⁹ It is remarkable that African transport business thrived despite the existence of state owned RMS, which served the district since the late 1920s.⁵⁰⁰ This shows the resilience of the Africans in the face of an uneven economic landscape which gave favourable economic opportunities to the settler society. This gives us another perspective that Zimbabwean historiography has not often emphasised on, for while it has been the norm to write about colonial experiences using black-white stereotypes, it is clear as noted above that relations between whites and blacks in Melsetter allowed degree of mutuality, though limited. Labour tenancy in Melsetter was mutually beneficial just as African butchery operators traded with white farmers, and African transport operators also catered for the needs of white farmers, although this was, nevertheless, more of the exception than the norm. Meanwhile, the post Second World War period was characterised by both subtle and early forms of active protest, which is the thrust of the next section.

Of Subtle and Active Protest

⁴⁹⁶ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁴⁹⁷ NAZ, S2827/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1951.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1952.

⁵⁰⁰ NAZ, NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1952. Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 106.

The massive evictions of Africans from European Lands coincided with growing popularity of ICM. This church movement literally spread across the two districts, covering the reserves, farms and townlands. While it became more widespread during the 1950s, it had been noted in Chapter Two that the ICM had its roots in the Great Depression. By the outbreak of Second World War, three ICMs in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts; the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church, the Cornerstone Bethlehem Church and the African Congregational Church, had emerged.⁵⁰¹ While acknowledging in 1942 that the ICM was on the increase in Chipinga, the NC then believed there was no need to worry:

That the separatist movement usually known as ‘Zionism’ is on the increase, I think there can be no doubt but I do not think that this is due to any widespread feeling of unrest. It seems to me that the leaders of these sects might be likened to the native craftsman who, having learnt a trade, sets up business on his own account.⁵⁰²

This position had changed by the 1950s as the activities of these churches came under increased limelight. Officials began to pay meticulous attention to the activities of these churches:

This church, the ‘African Independent Church,’ with HQ in Salisbury, has a big following in Mutambara Reserve... The church body went ahead with its church building which is nearly complete. It is a large building, well designed and has been built entirely by the Africans themselves. During the year, the women section of this church organised a gathering of its members. I went to the opening of the meeting to observe. The meeting was very well conducted. Speeches were of high standard and non – political. Members came from all over Rhodesia and the Union.⁵⁰³

This growth of ICM in Rhodesia and colonial Africa has been examined by a number of scholars. Timothy Scarnecchia contends that this occurred “as responses to the stresses arising from “modernism” which, in turn, created religious institutions that mixed ‘modern’ (Western) and ‘traditional’ (African) elements”.⁵⁰⁴ He cites the case of Mai Chaza’s, *Guta RaJehova* Church (City of God), which rose to prominence in the 1950s. Mai Chaza, having been a Ruwadzana stalwart of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Salisbury then, broke away in protest of the restrictive hierarchy of the church, which did not adequately open avenues for black women to rise within the church structures. After breaking away, “her fame as a faith healer

⁵⁰¹ NAZ, S1563, NC Report, Chipinga, 1942.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ NAZ, S2827/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1951.

⁵⁰⁴ T. Scarnecchia, Mai Chaza’s *Guta re Jehova* (city of God): gender, healing and urban identity in an African independent church,’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23, 1, 1997, 88.

really took off”.⁵⁰⁵ Mary Aquina’s study, showing the church as a subtle reaction to colonial domination, observed how, “The characteristic dress of the Apostles is a white tunic and the absence of shoes and trousers; because trousers are regarded typically European dress and as clothes of Satan”.⁵⁰⁶ Therefore, the state’s close monitoring of these churches resulted from a realisation that they were part of a broader African agency exhibiting the Africans’ covert reaction to an oppressive system.

The ICM’s significance is shown in the rapid growth of its membership. The movement recruited the marginalised: peasants, the urban poor and farm workers. Commenting on the growth of these churches among the commercial plantations workers, the NC said: “they turn out to work when required and there were always bearded faces in every gang”.⁵⁰⁷ Nevertheless, employers were aware that they carried a protest voice. This explains why farmers were sceptical of these churches, as the NC reported:

Apostolic Faith Sect has a large number of adherents in the district. They are disliked by European farmers who consider their teachings are inimical to the smooth running of labour. I have, in fact, this impression but can produce no concrete proof of my belief.⁵⁰⁸

Therefore, these churches recruited mainly from the less privileged who always hoped for an alternative and more equitable society. This explains the fear within the white settlers in the Melsetter-Chipinga District.

But the protests were not just confined to the workplace. It also signified protest of the marginalised from within the Christian Missionary church institutions. The NC hinted on this:

So far as I can gather, the leading men of each of the three churches represented in the district were at one time members of a recognised Mission body at whose hands they gained whatever knowledge of theology they possess.⁵⁰⁹

The African Congregational Church in Chipinga was founded by a former Pastor of the ABM, who left the Board rather than to present himself before what he considered “a partial ecclesiastical court of this body”.⁵¹⁰ Similarly, the chief district representative of this Church was formerly employed by the ABM as its evangelist. Likewise, he broke away from the ABM

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 89.

⁵⁰⁶ Aquina, ‘The People of the Spirit’, 206.

⁵⁰⁷ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁵⁰⁸ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1952.

⁵⁰⁹ NAZ, S1563, NC Report, Chipinga, 1942.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

“on being refused ordination because of his low standard of education and lack of character”.⁵¹¹ In the Ngorima Reserve, a local chief supported a local Independent Church, with the result that: “the cult of Apostola sect increased”, with members holding their Saturday prayer sessions “almost on Rusitu Mission doorstep”.⁵¹²

Though this church movement did not take the form of violent political protest, it remained an anti-colonial protest movement. This can be inferred from the nature of the churches’ teachings, symbols, songs and practices. Their teachings, for instance, refer to biblical stories of oppression and salvation, such as the Israelites’ life of bondage in Egypt and how they were finally rescued when God sent in Moses. Prophecy and dreams which foretold of the end of repression and oppression were highly regarded. In some of these churches, the songs that were composed by some prophets’ consistently brought out the theme of the end of oppression. Even though most songs appear subtle, some had clear protest message against both Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa, as the membership in highlands covered both colonies. One such song had the following highlights:

Muputukezi woye

Chingwa chawakadya

Chingwaaa cheewaakadyaaa icho

Uchachirutsa

You the Portuguese

The bread that you ate

That bread which you ate

*You will vomit it*⁵¹³

Inevitably, these churches were also critical of the Orthodox western churches. As a result, the more conservative of these discouraged their children from attending mission schools.⁵¹⁴ Other converts “refused to be vaccinated against smallpox on the grounds that it was against their religion”.⁵¹⁵ These churches also prohibited their followers from using western medicine

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁵¹³ Interview, Lazarus Musaengana, 20 December 2014.

⁵¹⁴ NAZ, 1563, NC Melsetter, 1944.

⁵¹⁵ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

on grounds that this was unholy. Instead, they resorted to holy waters provided by church healers and prophets. Therefore, the growth of these churches not only became a matter of concern to colonial officials, but it also created instability within the orthodox Christian churches.

Not all Africans, however, were behind these churches. Some chiefs, particularly Musikavanhu, some headmen and other traditional believers urged the government to put a stop to the Independent Church activities. They argued that Zionist teachings undermined traditional values and the authority of parents.⁵¹⁶ However, even if colonial authorities might have wanted to intervene, it was difficult because this church movement remained subtle in its condemnation of the colonial system, for as one of the NCs reported, "...so far their conduct has not been such as to call for any corrective action being taken".⁵¹⁷

Further feelings of marginalisation through land dispossession and inequitable access to social services like education compelled the Africans to get more organised against both capital and state. One of the most conspicuous African organisations was the Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association (RBVA), led by Benjamin Burombo. Burombo travelled extensively during the 1950s, fighting against the eviction of Africans from Crown Land which was impelled by post Second World War land alienations.⁵¹⁸ He also fought against the destocking and soil conservation measures implemented under the NLHA Act of 1951. Ngwabi Bhebhe outlines some of the methods used by Burombo in his battles against forced destocking and evictions in courts here: "He would find serious cases where the NCs had overstepped their bounds, like burning people's homes... to force them to move, and would take these cases to court, and usually win". Burombo also spoke directly to the officials. Bhebhe notes how, because of his struggles, Burombo became "the biggest thorn" in the side of colonial officials.⁵¹⁹ Hence, state officials closely monitored the activities of African organisations such as Burombo's RBVA.

Burombo's activism in Melssetter District is instructive. He held two meetings during the 1951 visit, both of which were attended by the NC. Prior to Burombo's visit, Africans in the Mutambara Reserve had been forced to embark on pasture improvement schemes, in which

⁵¹⁶ NAZ, S1563, NC Report, Melssetter, 1944.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ N. Bhebhe, *Benjamin Burombo: African Politics in Zimbabwe: 1947-1958* (Harare, College Press, 1989), 76-79.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

they were ordered to reserve grazing and some arable lands to allow grass re-growth. “The move was not popular with the natives,” observes the NC, “and when Burombo visited the district, comment was made about it”.⁵²⁰ The NC further noted “the usual matter of Headman pay cropped up at a meeting Burombo had in the district”,⁵²¹ This visit clearly unsettled colonial officials in the district as noted in the NC’s pertinent concern that: “The tenor of his remarks at the meetings was mild but exactly what was discussed in privacy between him and others after the meeting is not known”.⁵²²

According to Bolding, Burombo visited Melsetter again in 1957. This time it was part of a countrywide tour to encourage Africans opposition under the banner of the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress.⁵²³ Subsequently, during a well-attended rally at Nyanyadzi in 1958, leaders condemned destocking, low wages, high bus fares and lack of higher educational opportunities in the district. After the meeting, “members bought party membership cards and the Nyanyadzi Committee was subsequently formed”. The educational background of the committee is worth noting:

...consisting of (former) teachers and local businessmen. All committee members had enjoyed Methodist education at Mount Silinda, Chikore and Mutambara Missions. Soon they opened another branch at Mutambara. Gwinya estimated that their following at Nyanyadzi comprised three quarters of all plot holders.⁵²⁴

This trend conforms to Rennie’s earlier observation that Christian Mission played a role in the development of nationalism among the Africans. While Rennie’s study focus on an earlier period, this trend continues up to the era of what became modern African nationalism.

Another element of the historical events associated with the growth of African protest is reflected in the development survivalist strategies during this period. An increasing exposure to the effects of the disproportionate allocation of resources on the highlands forced Africans to devise clandestine livelihood strategies to minimise the impact of colonial exploitation. A series of illegal activities, including theft of livestock and other valuables, took place as documented in 1951, when “15 cases of stock theft were dealt with”.⁵²⁵ There were also consistent complaints about farmers residing along the Eastern Border losing cattle to Africans

⁵²⁰ NAZ, NAZ, S2827/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Melsetter, 1951.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Bolding, ‘In Hot Water’, 168, Bhebhe, *Benjamin Burombo*, 116.

⁵²⁴ Bolding, ‘In Hot Water’, 168.

⁵²⁵ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1951.

in Portuguese East Africa. The nature of the stock thefts and associated events are outlined below:

Complaints of stock theft by farmers in the Eastern Border over a period of years have led to a European Police Sergeant and a stock theft section visiting the district. Their investigation led to the discovery of 31 stolen cattle in Portuguese territory and the conviction of 3 natives on five counts of stock theft. One native was not convicted. All these were either employed by the complainants or on neighbouring land. They drove the cattle over the border and sold them to Portuguese natives. The Commandant at Espungabeira assisted the police as much as possible in the investigations.⁵²⁶

One reason why most Africans got away with the thefts was the general high level of trust which the colonial officials gave the Ndau people. Hence, colonial officials continued to downplay the severity of these activities, although these cases were on the increase. By 1951, the NC further noted a rise in crime rate, reporting that, "...mealie theft increased slightly...the accused all pleaded hunger, but were, nevertheless, firmly dealt with".⁵²⁷ However, the general belief was that the situation was under control, with the 1957 report stating that, "On the whole Chipinga natives are abiding".⁵²⁸

Clearly, farmers control over the farm and the farm property was never absolute. There were numerous examples of covert and overt responses to settler power, with the 'everyday forms of resistance' being articulated in oral testimonies. The clandestine manoeuvres of one Reuben Sigauke are illustrative of this. For him, migration into the reserves was not an overnight, haphazard event, but a move that he planned for in advance. He foresaw that his ultimate home was the reserve and thus, clandestinely pilfered his landlord's calves and drove them to a relative in the Musikavanhu Reserve over a number of years. On the rare occasions that the landowner inquired, Sigauke would always provide rational responses, which convinced the landowner that calves were always vulnerable to attack by leopards or jackals. When he finally left labour tenancy for a new life in the reserve, he already had a sizeable herd of cattle, built from pilfered livestock.⁵²⁹ Africans rarely resorted to survival strategies that "made the headlines", preferring, instead, subtle ways, most of which went on undetected.

⁵²⁶ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

⁵²⁷ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1951.

⁵²⁸ NAZ, S2827/2/2/5/2, NC Report, Melssetter 1957.

⁵²⁹ Interview, Jameson Sobona, Chirinda, 30 December 2014.

There was also a marked increase of crime among the youth. Of the 31 juveniles that were charged in Chipinga District during 1951, 21 were convicted for theft. The NC reported about small gangs of juveniles who went in for store breaking, adding that the ringleaders were teenagers, “who had very little parental control and had previous convictions in the towns”. He further lamented that it was very difficult “to know how to deal with these youngsters”.⁵³⁰ Meanwhile, Europeans were also embroiled in these crimes as evidenced by two white who were charged for selling arms to Africans, and one of them was convicted.⁵³¹

The colonial state struggled to deal with rising crime. Colonial officials mostly resorted to the use of repressive apparatus: police, courts and prisons. However, these measures had their own limits. One of the major reasons was, as already discussed, the porosity of the border.⁵³² Therefore, when people committed crimes; theft, murder, or failed to pay tax, some escaped by settling across the border where ‘they were not really strangers because of family and cultural links’.⁵³³ A 1957, report is lucidly illuminating:

The messengers of this station have worked very well and are of better mantel than most in other districts. I especially wish to commend Remayi, a messenger of the ‘old school’, unable to speak or understand English, he came to me to make enquiries about an escaped prisoner and take a letter to the commandant at Mabvita, [in Portuguese East Africa], went to Mabvita and not content with that, and with the approval of Portuguese authorities, walked for two weeks in the lowveld making enquiries. He came back exhausted but with a detailed account of his efforts and his visit to the escaped prisoner’s kraal far in Portuguese territory. Unfortunately, the prisoners had not gone back to his home. This might not be strictly according to international rules but does show the cooperation between the Portuguese authorities over the Chimani-mani Mountains and authorities here.⁵³⁴

Finally, Africans also resisted through confrontation. Most of this open resistance was witnessed at Mission centres and on areas of employment, where people got organised. The ABM, which remained the most vibrant Mission school in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts, made plans for the establishment of a technical college in 1945. While Africans were looking forward for the opening of this college, the state disapproved the plan, maintaining that the

⁵³⁰ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga 1951.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² See Chapter Two.

⁵³³ Duri, ‘Antecedents and Adaptations in the Borderlands:’ Ibid, 93.

⁵³⁴ NAZ, S2827/2/2/5/2, NC Report, Melsetter 1957.

school should continue with the usual academic curriculum. This contributed to the Mt Silinda students' strike of 1947,⁵³⁵ an event indicative of some of the open confrontations against the state. There were also two consecutive strikes, in 1951 and 1952, at the Hippo Tungsten Mine, the only mine in the lower Chipinga District. Some 150 Africans embarked on a one day strike in 1951, only to return to work after the matter was settled by both the NC and the Native Labour Office.⁵³⁶ In the second strike of 1952, the mine sent a plane to fetch the Assistant Native Commissioner to settle matters.⁵³⁷ At the centre of the tensions were poor remunerations and administration of rations. It has been shown that Africans were not passive victims of colonial domination as they adopted both subtle and active protest thereby carving a niche within the repressive state system.

Conclusion

Up to the end of the Second World War, Rhodesia's Melsetter and Chipinga Districts had remained largely isolated from the rest of the country. The region's inaccessibility from major towns and markets meant that its vast agricultural potential remained untapped, with pastoralism and labour tenancy remaining the predominant modes of production. However, as Britain shifted her trading partners to her colonies, Rhodesia's closer ties with Britain, which facilitated a favourable trading preference for the production of tobacco and other raw materials. This resulted in large scale investments in the tobacco producing regions of Mashonaland. The Melsetter and Chipinga Highlands were also affected indirectly. Situated more than 300 kilometres from Mashonaland, farmers migrated to tobacco production zones, in the process disposing land to what became large timber concerns. It was the activities of these timber concerns that led to improved road networks, brought in plantation economies and led to the construction of processing factories which transformed this landscape.

At the same time, these land use transformations rendered labour tenancy unprofitable. The tenants' loss of cultivation land to the timber plantations left them with no option but to become full time labourers or to relocate to the reserves. Livelihood systems in the non-European areas, namely reserves and APAs provide a window from which we can view rural struggles,

⁵³⁵ J. Abbott, J. Low and A. Mundeta, *God at Work in Gazaland, 1893-1993, A History of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe* (Harare, UCCZ, 1993), 53.

⁵³⁶ NAZ, S2817/2/2/1/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1951.

⁵³⁷ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, NC Report, Chipinga, 1952.

accumulation and class formation. Of significance here is the way in which the reserves and APA's economies demonstrate how differential access to natural resources, such as water and fertile soils, as well as to markets or educational opportunities were critical in determining wealth accumulation and defining rural stratification. Therefore, the post-Second World War investment flows into the Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands, and the subsequent land use transformation can best be explained in the context of the global impacting on the local.

Chapter Four

‘The Soil, Our Greatest Resource’:⁵³⁸ Natural Resources Conservation and Conflict in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts, 1948-1959

Introduction

Studies on colonial conservation and resistance are not new to Southern Africa historiography. Citing examples from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho, W. Beinart⁵³⁹ argued that, by the first half of the 19th Century, ideas about soil erosion, conservationism and development were already deeply rooted in official thinking. Here, colonial officials believed Africans were generally destructive and non-conformative to colonial conservation policy than settler farmers, hence conservation in African areas were characterised by coercion. Citing the case of Herschel District in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, Beinart shows that the pursuit for conservation caused a huge conflict between the state and African communities. Furthermore, soil conservation activities in the 1930s, involving damming of large dongas and gullies went on smoothly in this district. However, conflict arose during the 1940s when the local magistrate began convicting and fining African plot holders who opposed the conservation projects on grounds that conservation works were done with little regard to boundaries of existing agricultural plots.

Though Phimister acknowledged state centred-conservation interventions in Rhodesia, he disagrees with Beinart on the degree and motive.⁵⁴⁰ Phimister argues that, for colonial Zimbabwe, the roots of state conservation were shallow and the environmental legislation promulgated during the 1920s and 1930s were not seriously implemented.⁵⁴¹ Instead, state targeted peasants in the reserves, while ignoring white settler farmers. However, what comes out clear from Beinart and Phimister works are the authoritarian approaches used by the

⁵³⁸ This was the motto for the Cashel ICA, which was always cited on the ICA Newsletters. However, though I captured this on this title, the chapter does not focus on soil conservation alone but it also examines conservation and contestation over other natural resources such as game, indigenous forests and water.

⁵³⁹ W. Beinart, ‘Introduction: the Politics of colonial conservation,’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15: 2, 2007, 143-146.

⁵⁴⁰ I.R. Phimister, ‘Discourse and the discipline of historical context: conservationism and the ideas about development in Southern Rhodesia 1930- 1950,’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 12:2, 1986, 263-275.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid*, 265.

colonial governments on the African peasant farmers. Hence, conservation efforts in colonial Zimbabwe resulted in ruthless destocking activities and the promulgation of the 1951 NLHA which further arrested African peasant production.

Most studies on conservation in colonial Zimbabwe have been largely centred on key tobacco and maize farming areas of the Mashonaland Districts. Other studies focused on farming communities around big towns, where commercial agriculture was driven by the proximity to urban markets. In areas where coercive conservation approaches were adopted, especially with regards to African communities, discussions have often been linked to the development of anti-colonial nationalist politics. The NLHA of 1951 and the subsequent rise of modern nationalist politics and parties such as the African National Congress and National Democratic Party are classic examples.⁵⁴² While this chapter considers the history of the conservation of natural resources, it attempts to add on to existing knowledge by extending focus from the well discussed case studies to a relatively under-researched region of the then Chipinga and Melsetter Districts. It was because of this delay that it sustained labour tenancy for a long duration and witnessed state-farmer conservation conflicts that were closely intertwined with the system of labour tenancy.

What follows is an examination of natural resources conservation and conflict in Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands, focusing on the period from the end of the Second World War to 1959. As background, the chapter discusses the national and regional conservation discourse on the eve of the Second World War followed by an overview of environmental challenges in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts. The chapter identifies Government, through the NRB, as the main player in the conservation drive in the Chipinga and Melsetter highlands. The NRB worked closely with the Department of Agriculture and Lands, mostly through its specialist arms, CONEX, the Research and Specialist Services (RSS) and the RFC.⁵⁴³ Also discussed are six main sites of struggle over conservation and conservation policy. Firstly, Conservation Officers were at loggerheads with commercial farmers over labour tenancy, overstocking, grass management practice, deforestation, contour ridging and irrigation policy and practice. The second encounter centred on the activities of the Africans who lived relatively free either as

⁵⁴² I.R. Phimister, 'Rethinking the Reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act Reviewed', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.19, No. 2, June 1993; V.E.M. Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 24, No. 3, 1991, 564.

⁵⁴³ G. Phiri, 'Forestry Commission: Origins and Development up to 1980', (Honours Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1985).

government tenants on the Crown Lands or simply as “squatters”. A third site of struggle involved the NRB and the ABM on whose farms resided hundreds of tenants, most of whom were church converts. Fourthly, the Tanganda River Valley was an interesting site of conflict, bringing together the conflicting interests of the TTC, Africans in the Mutema Irrigation Scheme and the Vanderbergh Estates on the Sabi Valley, which all looked up to the Tanganda River for Irrigation water. The final section discusses the Forestry Commission’s control over the Chirinda Forest and conflict with the local African communities who contested the RFC’s rights over the forest treasure.

Towards Conservation Policy and Practice

The period following the end of the Second World War is remarkable in the history of conservation in Zimbabwe. ICA schemes, first introduced in the Nyazura District, were declared throughout most of white farming districts in eastern Zimbabwe in an attempt to arrest the environmental degradations of natural resources. Although the implementation of this programme began after the Second World War, concerns over environmental degradation had been raised well before that. S. Maravanyika⁵⁴⁴ traced this environmental movement to 1908 and identifies C. Jennings, an Irrigation Engineer responsible for soil conservation, as one of the key personalities who raised awareness about the parlous nature of the colony’s agricultural lands from the 1920s. Jennings’ voice became more audible during the 1930s, when he became the Assistant Director for Native Lands. The significance of environmental concerns in Rhodesia, a process dating back to the period prior to the Second World War, are indeed reflected in Jennings’ 1937 raising of alarm over the deterioration occurring “from one end of the country to the other, consisting of the destruction of timber, the misuse of natural *vleis* or sponges, overstocking and general denudation of pasturage”.⁵⁴⁵

During the same period, colonial officials from within the central and southern African region became increasingly aware of the need for intervention in an effort to conserve the environment. John McCracken has shown how Malawi’s officials were alarmed from the mid-1930s, of the ‘dust bowl’ disaster of the American plains, which was caused by a combination

⁵⁴⁴ S. Maravanyika, ‘Soil Conservation and the White Agrarian Environment in Colonial Zimbabwe, c. 1908-1979’, (PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, March 2013), 139.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

of drought and a ruthless application of capital intensive farming methods.⁵⁴⁶ Thus, in January 1937, Malawi appointed the first Soil Conservation Officer, who carried out a coercive soil conservation campaign in Ncheu, Zomba, Cholo and the lower Shire Valley. In October 1935, prior to the Malawian case, the Colonial Advisory Council on Agriculture and Animal Health had held a meeting in London seeking to appoint conservation officers in the East African colonies and these were mandated to take preventive measures against soil erosion “with the minimum of delay.”⁵⁴⁷

In Colonial Zimbabwe, similar fears were raised by Robert Mcllwaine, the first Chairman of the Natural Resources Commission. Mcllwaine, then a colonial settler for almost forty years, wrote in August 1937 that:

...one of the most painful experiences has been to witness the wicked waste of natural wealth of the country. This wealth must, in my view, be regarded as a trust belonging to the country as a whole and should not be destroyed or impaired by those into whose temporary charge it comes.⁵⁴⁸

It is less wonder that the Natural Resources Act was passed and the NRB created after the Natural Commission’s report in 1939 which was described as “A momentous step in history”.⁵⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the Huggins government had begun enacting a number of legislations that were essential for the conservation and preservation of the country’s natural resources. In 1936, the Native Trust Act, which sought to combat overstocking in rural areas, was promulgated. It empowered the Department of Native Affairs to assess the number of livestock that each African area could carry and to cull excess stock.⁵⁵⁰ The Forest and Herbage Act was enacted in 1936 to ensure the conservation of indigenous timber and it was an extension of the Natives Reserves Forestry Produce Act of 1929 which was promulgated to control the exploitation of forestry products by Africans. The 1936 Act permitted Africans to exploit forest products such as honey, brooms, wild fruits and thatch for personal use and not for commercial purposes.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁶ J. McCracken, ‘Conservation and Resistance in Colonial Malawi, The ‘Dead North’ Revisited’, in W. Beinart and J. McGregor, (eds.), *Social History and African Environments* (Oxford, James Currey, 2003), 164.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ NAZ, 1/2/1, Natural Resources Commission, General Correspondence, letter from R. Mcllwaine to Minister of Justice, 24 August 1937.

⁵⁴⁹ P.B. Kennan, ‘The development of extension service among European farmers in Rhodesia’, *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, No. 6, November-December, 1971, 118.

⁵⁵⁰ Maravanyika, ‘Soil Conservation and the White Agrarian Environment’, 136.

⁵⁵¹ E. Mapedza, ‘Forestry Policy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Zimbabwe: Continuity and Change’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33, 833-852.

The Water Act was amended in 1938 to safeguard the colony's water and ensure that individuals with water rights did not use water in an unfriendly manner.⁵⁵² Clearly therefore, up to the beginning of the Second World War, government had laid the legal basis for environmental conservation practice. What remained, however, was implementation.

The ICAs were linked with the Natural Resources Act of 1941, just as NRB, which supervised natural resources conservation throughout the white farming areas of the colony. At cluster level, conservation work was administered by the ICA Committees. An ICA, consisting of 80 to 90 farmers, was declared after at least two thirds of farmers' agreed in writing that their farms needed rehabilitation works. Farmers who joined ICAs were eligible for state subsidies, loans, grants in aid and other forms of government support. Each ICA was also allocated a Conservation Officer by CONEX, which was formed in 1948 under the Directorship of Charles Murray. Hence, with time farmers became eligible for an enhanced state subsidy and the ICA system soon covered most of the white agricultural areas.⁵⁵³

In October 1949, W.C Lester-Smith was appointed as the Senior Extension Officer for the Eastern Districts. He subsequently made a tour of the 7 ICAs in these districts and was able to visit at least 15 farms in each ICA. He studied their farming systems, after which he produced a report for each ICA that became the basis upon which each ICA's conservation objectives were formulated.⁵⁵⁴ This chapter, therefore, focuses on three of the seven ICAs of the Eastern Districts, which are Cashel, Chipinga and Melsetter, located in south eastern Zimbabwe.

Environmental issues in the Chipinga and Melsetter Farming Districts

The key conservation concerns for the Chipinga-Melsetter Districts rested on the use of four natural resources: soil, water, vegetation and wildlife. Lester-Smith's reports indicated that there was need for proper land-use planning to enable all sections of the farms to produce optimally. All the seven ICAs of the Eastern Districts were reported to be agriculturally underutilised. Although they comprised two and a half million acres owned by approximately

⁵⁵² NAZ, S989, The Natural Resources Act, 1941.

⁵⁵³ Phimister, 'Discourse and the discipline of historical context,' 267.

⁵⁵⁴ NAZ, F 151/ICA/ EA-G, see Eastern Districts Group ICA File, 1, 1948-1960, Letter from W.C. Lester-Smith to Assistant Director of Research and Specialist Services, 28 February 1950.

800 farmers, excluding land which was under livestock, it was reported that approximately only two per cent of the land was under cultivation in 1950.⁵⁵⁵

The high rainfall received in the districts was indeed a unique fortune of the Eastern Districts. Nevertheless, the broken nature of this region and the intensity of the rainfall caused considerable conservation challenges. Most of the rainfall was wasted as a negligible proportion of land was under cultivation. Also, while rain intensity was highest in the higher altitude areas, the lower parts got less rainfall. As a result, it was the characteristic intensity of the rainfall and its uneven distribution which made its control and conservation of prime concern. Dam construction was recommended in an effort to store water for irrigation while, at the same time, minimise run-off and erosion. Considering that “natural vegetation had a conservation of its own value”, Smith recommended minimum human interventions to natural processes further observing that “more often than not, humans have intervened in these natural processes by cutting trees, overstocking, or by making frequent burning of land, without making artificial conservation measures. This has rendered the land increasingly prone to erosion”.⁵⁵⁶

The peculiarity of the Cashel ICA was that it had a dual landscape: a more elevated eastern region and a lower altitude western part. The higher region received a higher rainfall of about 50 inches and also had several springs, streams and rivers, which formed the headwaters of the Nyanyadzi, Umvumvumu and Murari Rivers that flowed westwards into the Odzi River, and subsequently Sabi River. A noticeable challenge was that these farmers were becoming increasingly lax in the protection and preservation of springs, streams and rivers that, during low rainfall years, river flow became increasingly ephemeral to the extent that rapid and damaging run off was experienced when rain fell. Apart from this, the upper Cashel area also had very fertile soils, to which the Senior Conservation Officer testified, “I saw some of the best soils I have yet seen; dark loamy topsoil with a deep red soil beneath, and the area appeared very fertile”.⁵⁵⁷

The western part of this ICA had a different environmental set up. It was on the leeward side and thus received 15-20 inches of rainfall. Coincidentally, it had sandy soils that are also prone to erosion. Farmers here resorted more to livestock than crop farming, which was also

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, W.C. Lester-Smith, Final Report, Eastern Group ICA's, 16 April 1950.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid, Lester-Smith, Report on Cashel ICA, 28 March 1950.

consistent with, “overstocking and overgrazing”.⁵⁵⁸ The area also had inadequate livestock watering facilities, which led to further soil erosion and formation of gullies. Therefore, Lister-Smith recommended the construction of dams, so that water from the higher altitude areas of the Cashel could be stored and used to irrigate the lower drier parts, provide water for cattle while minimising run off and erosion.

The second area was Chipinga ICA. When it was declared in February 1948, it had 455 898 acres, 142 farms, 94 farm owners and 16 unalienated farms.⁵⁵⁹ While a few farms were situated along the Sabi Valley, most were located in the Chipinga Highlands, which also formed the headwaters of the Tanganda, Chipangayi and Nyautsa Rivers that flowed westerly into the Sabi River. The Budzi and Rusitu Rivers flowed easterly into Portuguese East Africa. Lister-Smith recommended that, as a conservation measure, the numerous sponges, springs and streams from the Chipinga Highlands that fed these rivers be fenced. Furthermore, Chipinga, just like Cashel, had a dual rainfall pattern in which the drier westerly part got 15-20 inches, while higher eastern region received between 40 to 50 inches of summer rains. The region’s main line of development was livestock farming, involving both beef and milk production. In fact, by the 1950s, dairy farming, which was stimulated by the establishment of two local Cheese factories during the 1930s, had become a striking economic activity on the Chipinga agrarian landscape. Furthermore, small livestock, including sheep, goats and pigs, were also reared. One of the major concerns though was that farming was largely on a ranching basis with inadequate paddocks which resulted in overstocking and overgrazing.⁵⁶⁰ Lister-Smith further noted that high cost of fencing material were a deterrent factor towards these endeavours. As a result, he encouraged the development of live fencing as a stopgap measure. He further expressed the wish that the newly established Government Demonstration Farm in Chipinga could play a pivotal role in demonstrating the applicability of this strategy to the farmers.⁵⁶¹

In line with the diverse agricultural potential of the area; Lester-Smith noted “a definite lack of any comprehensive farmland utilisation planning.” To minimise erosion on the tracks and roads, he suggested the need for improved siting of farm roads and cattle tracks, and control over the dispersal of rainstorms. He also noted the presence of a considerable amount of

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ NAZ, F450/10 Chipinga ICA, File 1, March 1946-March 1952, Summary of Questionnaire, Chipinga ICA, February 1948.

⁵⁶⁰ NAZ, F 151/ICA/ EA-G, Eastern Districts Group ICA File, 1, 1948-1960, W.C. Lister-Smith, Report on Chipinga ICA, 23 February 1950.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

hardwood timber which was continuously being cut by farmers. The concern here was that, while the natural growth of such types of indigenous timber was slow, there was, in the meantime, no compensatory planting of suitable hardwoods, “as there should be ... on even small farm basis”.⁵⁶² These trees, he noted, could also arrest veld fires. Although he bemoaned a lack of indigenous tree planting culture, he recognised a new trend towards softwood planting in this area. Nevertheless, he still felt that this was not adequate because underlying this was a commercial as opposed to a conservation motive. Thus he said with regards to tree planting;

This work requires proper farm planning coordinated to programme of conservation which embrace the establishment of windbreaks, livestock shelter belts, river stream and spring reservations, reclamation of gullies, badly scarred cattle tracks or dip surround areas, and other land which is too steep or otherwise unusable.⁵⁶³

Thirdly was the Melsetter ICA, which acted as a catchment area for the Nyahode and Haroni Rivers that flowed easterly into the Portuguese East Africa. It is also the headwaters of Biriwiri River and source for numerous streams that feed into the Nyanyadzi River. It is also worth noting that, of the three ICAs, Melsetter had the most broken topography, which was characterised by extreme steep slopes, and received excessive precipitation, most of which was lost as surface run off. This explains the high trends of sheet erosion and the presence of “erosion pavements,” in this area.⁵⁶⁴ As a result, there were recommendations for suitable afforestation, fencing, contour ridges and pasture development. Farms also needed to be subdivided for intensive mixed farming, inter cropping and crop rotation. The senior extension officer also suggested “suitable afforestation, fencing and pasturage development, water supply and development of practically all lines of communication and transport”.⁵⁶⁵

Relations between the NRB and Commercial Farmers

The NRB, through its Conservation Officers, was always at loggerheads with the white commercial farmers in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts primarily over the activities of African tenants. Conservation Officers consistently blamed the African tenants for anti-conservation practices such as cultivating steep slopes, along stream banks, around river

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, Report on Melsetter ICA, 29 March 1950.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

sources and *vleis*. The farmers who accommodated the tenants were blamed for tolerating the Africans. They were often warned during ICA meetings and through circulars that they were, overall, responsible for the activities of their tenants. These white farmers were urged to take measures such as restraining the Africans from anti-conservation practices, assisting them in the construction of contour ridges and relocating the excess African population from the farms. Some of the district's areas also faced environmental degradation arising from different factors. For instance areas which had roads and railways had easier access to markets and experienced soil and environmental degradation owing to the settlers' practising of mono culture and over cropping. A district such as then Marandellas, peopled by a relatively large Afrikaner population within ten years of colonial occupation and situated along a railway line as well as at the junction of roads leading to Umtali to the east, Ankledoorn to the south, and the capital, Salisbury, bears a striking difference with the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts.⁵⁶⁶ Therefore Marondera farmers had easier access to markets and were more prosperous. In contrast, farming remained much less lucrative for the Melsetter farmers; hence labour tenancy remained an alternative land use practice.

Phimister clearly showed how, by the 1940s, over-cultivation and monoculture had become the main causes of environmental degradation in some Mashonaland farming areas. Soils in the main maize and tobacco regions were "either exhausted from continuous cropping or scarred by erosion".⁵⁶⁷ Phimister cited the example of Sunnyside farm in the Mazoe Valley, where, quoting J.S. Brown, Manager of the Farmers' Cooperative noted that when Sunnyside farm was at the zenith of production, it produced "a crop of 15,000 bags of maize", such that its owner, Charles Southey, thought that the high production trend would continue, and hence "had not practised any form of rotation farming," and "had got into this groove of planting maize year after year".⁵⁶⁸ The necessity of crop rotation and green manuring became evident as crops started falling, debt mounted and soil degradation became worse with each season and its declining productivity. Phimister noted further that "Hundreds of tobacco plantations were in even worse condition",⁵⁶⁹ despite the lucrative nature of tobacco farming in the post 1945 period. This underscores the way in which poor farming practices impacted negatively on the Mashonaland environment and agricultural sector.

⁵⁶⁶ Hodder-Williams, *White farmers in Rhodesia*, 62.

⁵⁶⁷ Phimister, 'Discourse and the discipline of historical context', 264.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

The environmental degradation cases in the Cashel ICA were related to the damage to rivers and water sources. The Conservation Officer for Cashel, P.A.H. Rogers, noted that while streams rising on Diepfontein Farm were protected by bush and ravines, those rising from Lusthof Farm, were not. The latter, which was occupied by 32 tenant families, was also severely over-stocked.⁵⁷⁰ An April/May 1948 circular to farmers prohibited Africans from cultivating certain places in the Tandaai and Nyambewa River Valleys. The circular emphasised that the ploughing of vleis, sponges and streambeds should “stop forthwith.” However, during the following January, Rogers noted that most farmers were not willing to enforce strict measures against their tenants and Africans continued “ploughing many unsuitable places”, elaborating further that:

Whilst some farmers are co-operating in this matter, either by giving their boys new lands, or, where feasible, having the old lands protected, many farmers have ignored this request. There does not appear to be any marked opposition to this, but merely a lack of interest and cooperation. Some farmers are, however, afraid of interfering with their labour owing to the acute shortage of labour in the area.⁵⁷¹

As a result, in February 1950, the RSS concluded that this problem could not be effectively dealt with as long as the farmers remained heterogeneous. The approach needed a common front, as he explained; “it must be applicable to all farms and farmers so as to avoid the danger of the willing owner losing his labour to his unconcerned neighbour”.⁵⁷² Labour tenancy challenges were prevalent in all these three ICAs. In February 1949, the Conservation Officer for Chipinga ICA, A.R. Boucher, expressed similar worries about tenant farmers;

I have been against the squatter system existing in this area ever since I have been down in Chipinga, as the damage done by them is irreparable, and the farmers have not awakened to the fact. I have already written to Mr Murray about this matter... but the farmers, although I have been hammering at them, and pointed out what the natives were doing, were absolutely non-cooperative, and the matter was left at that. I have made several interviews with the Native Commissioner about the damage that these squatters are doing, both on European and Crown land.⁵⁷³

Furthermore, Boucher strongly argued that every farmer in Chipinga was “an offender by allowing the natives the free run on their farms”. He was resolute that he would not hesitate to adopt “drastic measures to bring these farmers out of the lethargy into which they have been

⁵⁷⁰ NAZ, F 151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA file 2, Rogers’ Report on Conservation, Cashel ICA, (undated).

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, letter from P.A.H. Rogers to Chief Conservation and Extension Officer, 20 January 1949.

⁵⁷² Ibid, letter from Director Research and Specialist Services, to the Natural Resources Board, 1 February 1950.

⁵⁷³ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA file 2, letter from Boucher to Chief Conservation Officer, 18 February 1949.

for the past half a century”.⁵⁷⁴ This was indeed a consistent stereotyping of the farmers who settled in the Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands.

In one of his meetings of February 1949, Boucher brought in the local NC, Baybrook, to address farmers from the Chipinga ICA. Baybrook’s opening remarks: “For Heaven’s sake, don’t let any farmer get the idea that he is doing anyone a favour except himself in applying conservation methods to his land”⁵⁷⁵ were consistent with the official view that the region’s farmers were slow at adopting conservation methods. In that address, Baybrook bewailed the problems “caused by squatters on many of your farms”, further pointing out that “squattening” lead to labour shortages and environmental degradation.⁵⁷⁶ He castigated the labour practice where, “tenants worked one week in every month at a wage usually of 10/- per 30 day ticket,” which he said was “a very bad practice”.⁵⁷⁷ His reason was that labour tenancy restricted the earnings of the tenant to 30/- per annum, an amount barely adequate to meet the tenants’ financial obligations and thus “a definite incentive” for the Africans to look for money elsewhere, “in the Union or on tobacco farms”. He advised the farmers, instead, to employ permanent labour further clarifying:

Thus, if a native is to complete a ticket in a year, and is paid 20/- a ticket, his annual earning rises from 30/- under the old method to £9 under the suggested scheme. This tends to keep him at home instead of going out to look for money in Johannesburg or Inyazura.⁵⁷⁸

Having discussed the inefficiency and wasteful nature of tenancy and the “squatter” systems, Baybrook discussed their environmental impact. He was of the opinion that:

...if a farmer relies on this sort of labour entirely and obtains all his requirements from it, it is obvious that he is tying down four times as many labourers as he would if they were employed on a full time basis. And the important part is that these men are occupying his farm, and, by their methods of agriculture, are steadily ruining it.⁵⁷⁹

Thus, keeping “large numbers of squatters” on farms strained the land, especially when the people, in need of more land to cultivate, were compelled to encroach on land which was

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, Address to the Chipinga Farmers’ Association, 1949.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

supposed to be left under grass and tree such as steep hillsides, vleis, and the sides of streams. He remarked further that "...it is obvious to anyone going round this district that the most shocking erosion and drying up of streams is taking place on European farms, all caused by squatters ploughing where they should never be allowed to plough".⁵⁸⁰ Worth noting is the consistent blame for the Africans which disregarded the discriminatory land ownership pattern that was in place.

However, the campaign for environmentally friendly agricultural practices slowly gained support in the Melsetter and Chipinga region. The first farmers to conform to NRB and ICA Conservation initiatives were the ICA Committee members who included J.A.C. Kruger, the first Chairman for Chipinga ICA. In April 1951, Kruger expressed concerns about overgrazing and the fact that there were many farms which were overstocked with donkeys that belonged to African tenants. His concerns are noted here:

I have checked up and found that on some farms as many as 150 donkeys are owned by the natives. I wish to point out to the farmers that the same number of cattle could be run. Why not insist on your natives disposing of their donkeys. This will mean that you can graze 100 or more cattle, and thus increase our beef production.⁵⁸¹

This resonates well with the overall government perspective of low value livestock following the promulgation of the NLHA of 1951. Indeed, while the donkey was an asset for African cultivator, it was, in terms of the environmental conservation, a liability. As a result, when destocking measures in the African reserves reached the peak during the 1950s, the donkey became an obvious target. According to Machingaidze, government's seriousness to stock-control and conservation in African areas can easily be recognised through the way it bought donkeys at destocking markets, then slaughtered and buried them to ensure that donkeys did not "remain as a menace to the land".⁵⁸²

Nevertheless, farmers from Chipinga did not take any serious measures against their African tenants. This failure was, in Baybrook's opinion, a result of tradition, culture and lack of education. The view here was that the older generation of farmers were less willing to embrace change than younger ones:

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, Chipinga Intensive Conservation Area News Letter, No. 3, 20 April 1950.

⁵⁸² V.E.M Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 3, 1991, 564.

I have discussed this matter with a number of farmers of this district, and nearly all of them, especially the younger ones, professed themselves in favour of the idea. But their great fear was that if they tried to impose such conditions, their labour would all clear off to neighbouring farmers who were content with the old methods.⁵⁸³

Clearly, this was a clash of ideologies over the economics of labour. The perspective that Chipinga-Melsetter farmers could abolish tenancy overnight was mistaken. Of course, a permanent labour force which the NC advocated for had long become the norm in other parts of the colony such as in the Mashonaland farms and mines, a condition that did not come about as an event, but a process. Some of these processes involved forced labour, the gradual eviction of Africans from the land and a continuous recruitment of foreign migrant labour from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa.⁵⁸⁴ At the same time, this permanent labour evolved alongside the development of a more stable, profitable agrarian system. As noted earlier on, in Marandellas, tobacco and beef industry thrived on the accessibility to the market that was facilitated by viable communication links with Salisbury and beyond. Labour tenancy could not be abolished in the Chipinga-Melsetter farms because most farmers remained cut off from markets. As long as alternative high value commodities which could withstand the cost of transportation to the markets had not been found, labour tenancy was bound to stay.

Farmers also came into conflict with the NRB because of overstocking. In 1949, Rogers reported that practically every farm in the Cashel ICA was overstocked. He gave the example of a 1, 150 acre farm in the dry south western part of Cashel, which had more than 400 cattle. This farm was overgrazed and suffered from veld, soil and water supply problems.⁵⁸⁵ Similarly, a January 1950 report bemoaned that nearly every farm in the Chipinga ICA was overstocked, with some farmers owning between 1 500 and 2 000 cattle. The report further noted that “more cattle die of poverty than disease”.⁵⁸⁶ Consequently, Conservation and Extension Officers made regular calls, especially at the beginning of every winter season, urging the farmers to destock by selling excess cattle. In January 1954, the Director of CONEX, C.A. Murray joined in the call, reminding his subordinate in Umtali that:

You are aware overstocking in Chipinga area has been a problem for many years and I shall be grateful if you will arrange for all our local field staff in the area to do everything

⁵⁸³ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA file 2, Address to the Chipinga Farmers' Association, 1949.

⁵⁸⁴ Van Onselen, *Chibharo, African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia*.

⁵⁸⁵ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA file 2, Rogers, Annual Report, 31 December 1949.

⁵⁸⁶ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA file 2, Boucher, Annual Report, 31 December 1949.

possible to persuade farmers during the next month or two to destock to the maximum necessary.⁵⁸⁷

Hence, the opening of the Chipinga Demonstration Farm in 1948 and the Melsetter Pasture Research Station in 1949 marked the beginning of an intense campaign seeking to encourage farmers to grow fodder and high feeder grasses to supplement natural grasses. Advertisements were regularly posted in local ICA newsletters. The Cashel ICA also encouraged farmers to grow cattle feed such as Star grass, Napier fodder and Panicum Makarikari, which were doing very well at the research station. However, officials lamented that farmers were generally not proactive.⁵⁸⁸ The same campaign prevailed in Chipinga ICA, as noted in the Secretary for the ICA Committee, G. G Ferreira's October 1952 suggestion that:

...I feel that we could go to the farmers with some promise of assistance by government. Say a certain subsidy per acre, say available during 1953 - it would have a good effect and very few if any, would not avail themselves of that. I don't mean all the farmers when I say the farmers but the majority. There are those who already have laid down pastures you are aware. To mention a few, JC Kruger, CJ Gifford, Scott, Human, Edwards and I. There maybe more. The Demonstration farm of course is doing a wonderful job in that line and anyone visiting the farm must be impressed with what they have to show...I shall not relax my efforts until every farmer in this district greets you on approach with a few acres of kikuyu and clover.⁵⁸⁹

It was a pity therefore, that most farmers' responses remained slack, despite the encouragement and the support for the growing of cattle feeds.

Conservation Officers also grappled with the challenge of veld burning. Veld burning was both a national and regional issue, as noted by the Bubi/Inyati ICA, Conservation Officer D. A. Gammon.⁵⁹⁰ He noted with regard to Rhodesia that thousands of grazing and valuable forest lands, sometimes over 6 million acres, were ravaged annually due to uncontrolled veld fires. There were numerous causes of uncontrolled fires at local, national and regional scenes. For instance, the causes of fires in the Natal Midlands of South Africa included: smouldering dung and stumps on fireguards, ashes from African huts, children playing with fire, the smoking out of bees and failure to extinguish fires.⁵⁹¹ Fire outbreaks in Bubi, Inyati, Insiza and Shangaani

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, letter from Director of Conservation and Extension to Senior Extension Officer, Umtali, 6 January 1954.

⁵⁸⁸ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA file 2, Cashel ICA News Letter, 1 September, 1950.

⁵⁸⁹ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA file 2, letter from G.G. Ferreira to Murray, 9 October 1952.

⁵⁹⁰ D.M. Gammon, 'Veld Fire Control', in *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 59, 1962, 177.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

ICAs of western Rhodesia were caused by burnings meant to assist African hunting while others resulted from arson. Finally, most uncontrolled burning in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts arose from escaped intentional fires, African cooking, fires left for dead, whirl winds, and lightning.⁵⁹²

Gammon, however, argued with regards to pastoral economies within the region that, “when applied judiciously, fire was strategic in veld management.” When trees were not controlled, bush continuously encroached on the grass lands, leading to a decrease in grass cover. If left unchecked, this could deteriorate to an extent where bushes would lie beyond the reach of fire. Grass cover would be reduced to such an extent that an effective fire could no longer be used to control the bushes.⁵⁹³ Fires could therefore be useful in bush control. In addition it was also used to manage pastures, as Boucher noted:

Veld fires in this District are not accidental, but a usual practice, the contention being that early grazing is assured, and that ticks are destroyed. I have watched this burning very closely, and notice that the grazing although being palatable when young, has the tendency to grow coarse. This in my opinion is due to the best grass being burned out.⁵⁹⁴

Nevertheless, conservationists found the burning schedules of these strategic fires problematic. Grass burnings were normally done during the winter season, when the grass was dry, which resulted in high erosion, especially in cases where the burning was delayed and accompanied by late winter and early summer rains. Conservation Officers therefore consistently recommended that farmers replace grass burning with paddocking.⁵⁹⁵

Meanwhile, the Melsetter ICA, with the assistance of Police and Fire Rangers, launched an intensive fire control campaign. The campaign involved the adoption of awareness programmes that taught basics about fire control, as contained in the Forestry Act. Farmers were reminded not to burn fires indiscriminately and to give advance notice to police and their neighbours before setting fires, as well prepare standard fireguards.⁵⁹⁶ The entry of large scale timber plantations however, meant that investment in fire control became of great necessity. As a result, by October 1956, the Melsetter ICA had established Fire Towers for most of the

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁴ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA file 2, Boucher, annual report, 31 December 1949.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ Gammon, ‘Veld Fire Control’, 179.

plantation sites at Tilbury, Tarka, Glencoe, Chisengu and Lionhills, each of which had a fire control officer around the clock.⁵⁹⁷

Another contentious issue was that of deforestation. The abundance of natural vegetation, specifically trees and forests in these three ICAs cannot be overemphasised. Even colonial literature noted numerous *Gwashas*,⁵⁹⁸ which were high closed forests that were in abundance, some of which were venerated by Africans who associated them with the spiritual and ancestral world. These forests, which also provided shelter and food for game, birds and reptiles, were valued differently by local farmers, Africans and the NRB. Remnants of these indigenous include Chirinda, Haroni and Nyakwaa forests. The state's interest in the management and conservation of these timber resources was left to the local farmers, but it was during the 1930s that the state started showing an active interest in the conservation of these indigenous forests.⁵⁹⁹ In March 1950, Lester-Smith noted with regards to Cashel ICA that there was "far too little appreciation of the value of vegetation in combating soil erosion" and that it was imperative to keep patches of vegetation, especially in the hilly, steep and more erodible areas in order to intercept rainfall, slow down surface runoff and sheet erosion.⁶⁰⁰

In 1949, Rogers expressed worries over the rate at which timber, predominantly Msasa, was being harvested for both domestic use and tobacco curing. He cited the case of Leopard's Den Farm, at one stage thickly covered with Msasa but then "thinned out by ring barking".⁶⁰¹ Such destruction was perpetuated by the need for firewood and the farmers' ignorance of the legal parameters with regards to ownership and rights to timber on private farms. The Cashel ICA Chairman brought this out as noted here:

Many farmers are not aware that if they wish to cut timber on their land for sale, they must notify the Minister of their intention to do so, under section 24 of the Forest Act of 1949. If it is considered that the cutting of timber will, in any way, cause soil erosion or damage to water supplies, the Minister may give written orders as to what measures are necessary to prevent any such damage. This also applies to land which has been stumped for cultivation and it is later decided to sell the timber.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁷ NAZ, F151/ICA/MEL, Melsetter ICA, File 2, Melsetter ICA Newsletter, October 1956.

⁵⁹⁸ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter*, 7.

⁵⁹⁹ N. Ndumeya, 'Whose Forest? Nature, Conservation and Conflict: The case of Chirinda Forest in Eastern Zimbabwe, 1930s-2000, (MA Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 2010). G. Phiri, 'Forestry Commission: Origins and Development up to 1980'.

⁶⁰⁰ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA file 2, W.C. Lester-Smith, Report on Cashel ICA, 26 March 1950.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, Rogers Report, Conservation in Cashel ICA, (undated).

⁶⁰² NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2, Cashel ICA News Letter, 1 October 1950.

This resonates with Phimister's findings on the discourse of conservationism in Rhodesia. Phimister argued that although various environmental legislations were promulgated from the 1920s, implementation of conservation policy remained slack for years thereafter.⁶⁰³

The construction of contour ridges was initiated as one of the long term solutions to soil conservation. The ridges were the most ideal conservation method to minimise soil erosion in the eastern districts. The level of environmental damage was already high when the Chipinga ICA was declared in 1948. There were 102 major gullies and 122 minor ones, averaging 1 332 and 380 yards each, respectively, and it was clear that the conditions could not be improved overnight. A senior Conservation Officer who visited Chipinga in 1951 was disturbed by the existence of "extensive denuded areas, on the Canterbury and Landsdown Farms, owned by W.C. Kruger, and H. du Plessis respectively. As a result, the Conservation Officer decided that an experimental ripping carried out,⁶⁰⁴ and subsequently tasked the Conservation Officer of the area to look into this matter and produce a full report "as soon as possible". The NRB had an uphill struggle in this area, considering the general lack of interest in contour ridging. Rogers could not hide this as noted in the statement:

Progress in land protection has been most disappointing. Contour ridges are disliked as through lack of foresight and narrow- mindedness the disadvantages (such as difficulty of ploughing contour ridged lands), only is seen. Most farmers are deplorably ignorant of the value of contour ridges, and without any compulsion are not prepared to construct them. Towards the end of the year, however, some farmers have asked for their lands to be pegged out for contour ridges. Only about 23 % of the arable land is protected, leaving about 75% to be protected.⁶⁰⁵

However, the laxity to adopt progressive farming techniques needs to be properly contextualised within the economic geography of this region. The region had remained remote for a long period and cut off from the rest of the colony. Hence investment towards conservation could only effectively be carried out where financial resources could be justified by investment outcomes.

Irrigation farming was equally of concern. Of the three ICAs in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts, Cashel had the largest percentage of land under irrigation farming. As of December 1949, it had 39 irrigation schemes covering approximately 1,100 acres. These schemes were

⁶⁰³ Phimister, 'Discourse and the discipline of historical context', 265.

⁶⁰⁴ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA File 2, Letter from Director of Conservation and Extension to Chief Conservation and Extension Officer, 19 November 1951.

⁶⁰⁵ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2, Cashel ICA Annual Report 31 December 1949.

also the most strategically located in that Cashel was closest to the region's biggest urban market in Umtali, where Sunrho and Umtali Farmers' Cooperative were based. The Umtali-based markets bought most of the potatoes, vegetables and fruits from Cashel. On the other hand, the Chipinga ICA had about 500 acres under irrigation. The problem was that these irrigation schemes were not properly managed as there was clear lack of proper irrigation and soil management practice. Concerns were raised that "in all cases, water is gravitating on to the lands", thereby causing erosion. Poor land use planning also resulted in some farmers' irrigating steep gradients, thereby exacerbating soil erosion challenges.⁶⁰⁶ Boucher further lamented that, "No crop rotation is practised at all... in my opinion, nearly all irrigation schemes should be re-laid and a principle of crop rotation, compost and green manure adopted".⁶⁰⁷

Therefore, a number of recommendations seeking to improve the conservation practices were made. These include, firstly, the construction of contour ridges and terraces, and secondly, developing a system of ley farming to build up the structure of the soil. Thirdly, there was the need to plant trees in order to create windbreaks and shelter belts to protect fruit trees and curtail dry winter wind erosion.⁶⁰⁸ Furthermore, the growth of irrigation farming demanded that water rights licensing be strictly enforced, which subsequently resulted in 25 percent reduction in irrigation farming in Cashel, from 39 in 1949 to 29 by 1953. Land under irrigation also dropped from 1 100 to 717 acres during the same period.⁶⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the standard of irrigation farming remained poor, as the 1953 survey revealed:

In general, the standard of farming on the irrigated land is very low; the furrows are haphazard and in some cases vary in layout from season to season. Flood irrigation by gravity from a river or dam is universally used, often in a very inexpert way, leading in one case to erosion of the irrigated land. Three farmers possessed pumps at the time of the visit, but none was in use. On one small 2 acre plot on one farm, and on 20 acre field on another, irrigation using overhead sprays was being practised, but three farmers in the area who had used the system, including the owner of the 20 acre scheme, condemned it as being cumbersome and prone to defects.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁶ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2, Annual Report, 31 December 1949.

⁶⁰⁷ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA File 2, Annual Report, 31 December 1949.

⁶⁰⁸ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2 Survey of utilisation of irrigation facilities in the Cashel District, early 1953.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

In this case, blame was made directly on the white farmers. This also shows lack of adequate technical knowhow. While this could also be a commentary about inadequate state extension service, conservation officers, as shall be shown shortly, had very negative perceptions about the majority white farmers of this region.

Some conservation officers strongly believed that at the root cause of environmental negligence lay in the cultural practices of the majority Afrikaner farmers of this region. The cultural practices were further aggravated by the prevailing social and economic conditions of the region. In January 1954, Hugh A. Squire, who succeeded Boucher as the Conservation Officer for the Chipinga ICA, spelt out what he believed were the social and economic challenges affecting conservation work in Chipinga ICA. These include the district's occupation by Afrikaner farmers, whom Squire described as "conservative, and slow in accommodating change" and the fact that a majority of these had "a tendency for landowning as an end in itself".⁶¹¹ Squires further noted that the farmers' observation of the Roman-Dutch Law of inheritance, which stipulated that property should be shared equally amongst progenies, meant that they valued "larger and larger acreages of land, so that each child may inherit a decent property".⁶¹² This promoted labour tenancy and "squatter" systems which, Squire lamented, "now gives us our worst conservation problem in Chipinga." With regard to politics, Squires was disturbed by this Afrikaner community, which "valued free and uncontrolled life". He was further upset by their disloyalty to the state evident in their "continuously opposing government, and government initiatives... It is unknown in other parts of Southern Rhodesia, some of the pioneers also had a tradition of being anti-government, anti any organised government, and that tradition dies hard".⁶¹³

The isolation of the Chipinga-Melsetter white farming community from the rest of the country did not make conditions better. Squire lamented that "for more than 50 years these families lived in remarkable isolation from the rest of the colony, remote from the growing towns". Later on, the more enterprising ones left the district for areas such as Inyazura and Odzi, but the less enterprising remained in Chipinga where they could not make much progress because "the district did not have cash crops, cattle fetched very little, and disease was always a

⁶¹¹ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA File 2, The Social and Economic factors involved in working for conservation and better farming in a remote pioneer district like Chipinga, Paper read at Director's Annual Conference, January 1954.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ NAZ, F450/11, Chipinga ICA File 2, The Social and Economic factors involved in working for conservation and better farming in a remote pioneer district like Chipinga, Paper read at Director's Annual Conference, January 1954.

problem".⁶¹⁴ Hence, Chipinga's progress, in spite of the development of the cheese industry and other small enterprises remained unimpressive.

The progress of some of the region's farmers was also hampered by other cultural barriers, including the language issue. Since colonial occupation, white farmers in Chipinga and Melsetter highlands had been unwilling to learn English, despite the fact that it was the official language of the colony. A Government Inspector lamented this development early during the century, and was not amused that even influential people like a local Church Minister, Le Roux, and an influential leader, J. Martin, condoned this. The Inspector learnt a startling fact that some farmers, who could not read English, had their official letters translated to them by Africans who were educated at Mission Schools.⁶¹⁵ One local teacher, Phillip Cremer, remembered being under constant criticism for teaching English, instead of Afrikaans; a criticism he always tactically rebuffed by reminding his critics that it was to their benefit, as most of them would request his hand in official communications with state authorities.⁶¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, in 1954, Squires wrote the following concerning this language barrier:

The greater majority of farmers are definitely not conservation minded. As most farmers are Afrikaans-Speaking and do not read English or listen to English radio programmes, the NRB propaganda programmes have had little effect there. I personally feel that film on conservation, particularly if they were in Afrikaans, would be of great value. Perhaps these could be obtained from the National Veld Trust in the Union of South Africa.⁶¹⁷

The settlement of the Afrikaner community in this region some 50 years earlier might have played a crucial role to secure the region for the BSAC. But it also laid the basis for an environmental crisis 50 years later.

This section has shown that the state played a role in contestations with the white farming communities. It has further demonstrated that farmers' cultural conservatism and isolated nature of the Cashel, Chipinga and Melsetter ICAs also contributed to the ecological damages occurring on the commercial farming areas. The next section, examines the ways in which Africans on the crown land related with the conservation discourse and colonial officials. This

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Sinclair, *Story of Melsetter*, 53.

⁶¹⁶ NAZ Oral/CR1, Teaching at Farm Schools in Melsetter Area: 1919-1930s.

⁶¹⁷ NAZ, 450/11, Chipinga ICA, File 2, Squires, The Social and Economic factors involved in working for conservation and better farming in a remote pioneer district like Chipinga, Paper read at Director's Annual Conference, January 1954.

is contextualised within contributions of historians such as Beinart,⁶¹⁸ McGregor⁶¹⁹ and Phimister⁶²⁰ who analyse environmental challenges in colonial societies and the nature of state conservation intervention in the African communities.

NRB Relations with Africans on Crown Lands

The NRB constantly watched the conditions and agricultural practices of Africans residing on Crown Lands. The colonial state's concern was illustrated in one of Boucher's statements, in which he raised concerns about the activities of African tenants in the Chipinga ICA. He said:

With regard to squatters on Crown Land, these people have no supervision whatsoever, and naturally the areas occupied by them are steadily but very truly becoming a devastated piece of land, and immediate measure will have to be adopted to stop them from doing further destruction.⁶²¹

This was a usual concern among colonial officials. While they always criticised African agrarian practices, they did not place this criticism within the proper context of African economic marginalisation.

When the Chipinga ICA was declared in 1948, it consisted of 148 farms, 16 of which were unalienated and occupied by African tenants and "squatters".⁶²² Most of the un-alienated farms were in the lower Sabi Valley, bordering Mutema and Musikavanhu reserves to the north and south respectively. Though the soils on these farms were suitable for the production of a variety of crops, commercial agrarian activity could only be attained with irrigation, as the Sabi Valley is dry and hot. The farms were also in close reach of Tanganda, Chipangayi, Nyautsa and Nyambewa rivers, which originate from the Chipinga Highlands. It is within this context that in 1949, a Senior Extension Officer, R.H. Fitt, raised worries about the "serious erosion and siltation of the Tanganda River", which he attributed to the agrarian activities of Africans in the Mutema Reserve and the adjacent Crown Lands. He estimated that about 2000 to 3000 acres were being continuously cultivated by African tenants, which was a practice that

⁶¹⁸ Beinart, 'Introduction, the Politics of Colonial Conservation'.

⁶¹⁹ McGregor, 'Conservation, Control and Ecological Change'.

⁶²⁰ Phimister, 'Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context', 'Rethinking the Reserves'.

⁶²¹ NAZ, 450/11, Chipinga ICA File 2, letter from Boucher to Chief Conservation Officer, 18 February 1948.

⁶²² NAZ, 450/10, Chipinga ICA, File 1, Summary of questionnaire, Chipinga ICA, 1948.

extended deep into the valley and on to potentially irrigable lands. This contributed to strong rills and gullies that developed through flood water that originated from the highlands.⁶²³

The situation was considered equally bad in the Rupisi area of the Sabi Valley. Rupisi was declared heavily overstocked with livestock. It was also overcrowded as approximately 1000 families cultivated about 10 000 acres of land. In March 1950, Boucher noted deep gullies which had developed; thereby making travelling to the Rupisi Hot springs very difficult. When the Group ICA Officer, V.W. Curtin, toured the Sabi Valley in line with “the large Irrigation Scheme”, which was in the pipeline, he was perturbed by the extent of environmental destruction caused by “uncontrolled native agriculture”, along the Tanganda River. He said:

Leaving the old sisal plantations, and travelling on the top road to Rupisi Hot springs, it was clear that native cultivation has been unrestricted for years, and for one strip of that land of about 7 miles, all depressions have been ploughed through, and rills of erosion occur every two or three hundred yards. This must hasten runoff, and tons of silt are being carried to this river after each storm.⁶²⁴

A number of suggestions aimed at alleviating the land degradation were suggested. One proposal was the removal of all Africans from the Crown Lands in the most affected areas. Fitt recommended that the 12 miles land length earmarked for the Sabi Development Company, stretching up to Rupisi Hot Springs, be vacated. Murray’s suggestion, which was adopted immediately thereafter, was the appointment of a local African Ranger to work closely with the Land Development Officer. His tasks included the maintaining a fence around the Rupisi Hot springs; restricting cattle grazing within the permissible areas; and supervising Africans’ cultivation in the Crown Lands.⁶²⁵ Nevertheless, a more permanent solution that gradually triumphed was turning the African tenants into full time labourers. Capital achieved this through gradually restricting Africans’ access to land to a point when they ultimately became full time labourers of the estates. This can be traced to 1949, where the Group Conservation Officer was “...favourably impressed that the Manager [of the Sabi Development Company], Mr Whightwick”,

Who has appreciated the need for restricting the activity of his native squatters. Since these squatters now cultivate possibly 2000 acres, he will have a very big task in carrying

⁶²³ Ibid, R.H. Fitt, Report on Van Den Bergh Estate, to Department of Agriculture and Lands, 7 November 1949.

⁶²⁴ Ibid, Letter from V.W. Curtin, Group Conservation Officer to Senior Extension Officer, 4 November 1949.

⁶²⁵ NAZ, 450/10, Chipinga ICA File 1, Letter from Director of Conservation and Extension to the Native Commissioner, Chipinga, 18 October 1950.

out his plan to persuade them to live on compounds, even though he does make available ¼ acres of irrigation to each family.⁶²⁶

The Cashel ICA was not an exception. Upon its declaration in 1949, 12 out of its 78 farms were un-alienated. The stony and broken nature of the area meant that arable and grazing land was minimal. This explains why, more than 50 years after colonial occupation, white farmers had not taken up these farms. The area's infrastructure was also poor since the government leased these farms to African tenants, resulting in minimal conservation supervision.⁶²⁷ In 1949 Rogers reported about Africans ploughing watercourses and alongside streams, thereby degrading the headwaters of Nyanyadzi River, a significant source of water for the Nyanyadzi Irrigation Scheme. Similar concerns were made about Africans residing on Minyinga Farm, who cultivated *vleis*, while others practised “damaging hillside cultivation in this catchment area”.⁶²⁸

It should be underscored that the peculiar nature of these farms contributed to land degradation. Arable land and water supplies were not sufficient on most of these farms. For instance, a large part of Murari Farm was described as “very stony”, hence tenants confined their cultivations to areas alongside streambeds and watercourses. Other farms had this problem as well, as noted here:

The farms Boulderidge West, Curzon, Croner, Campedown and Shinja East are Crown Land Farms. These are occupied by a large number of native tenant farmers. Owing to the extremely broken nature of the country there is little arable land, and most cultivation is confined to stream banks and water courses. Due to the fact that there are no roads on these farms, constant supervision by the Conservation Officer is impossible. The Native Commissioner, Melsetter, is attending a meeting of the Cashel ICA Committee on February the 8th, and it is hoped that some scheme will be worked out to put a stop to erosion on these farms.⁶²⁹

Thereafter, a series of measures were pursued in an effort to minimise natural resources degradation. These included awareness campaigns and relocation of excess African populations from the affected Crown Land. In addition, a meeting on “good conservation

⁶²⁶ Ibid, R.H. Fitt, Report, 7 November 1949.

⁶²⁷ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2, Annual Report, 31 December, 1949.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, Memorandum, Conservation: Cashel ICA, (undated).

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

practice” comprising the NC, Provincial Agriculturalist, Land Development Officer, Conservation Officer, and the tenants, which was held in April 1950 at Shinja Bridge, resulted in the expulsion of unauthorised tenants.⁶³⁰ A similar expulsion of “unauthorised squatters” was carried out Madagascar Farm earlier on.⁶³¹ As with the Chipinge ICA, a more humane approach witnessed the appointment of an African Ranger, who kept constant checks on tenants’ agrarian activities. One of the African Ranger’s 1950 report indicated that the 79 tenant families owned 457 cattle, 186 goats, 164 donkeys and sheep, further noting that of the total 239 acres which were under cultivation, 70 were unfit. Henceforth, Africans were barred from cultivating them.⁶³² In the Shinja and Moosgwe valleys, the African Ranger demarcated land that was suitable for occupation, and tenants were subsequently forced to vacate the rest.⁶³³ The next section examines another site of contestation relating to the activities of the ABM.

The NRB and the ABM

Studies on land acquisition and ownership have shown that Missionaries were important players in the land history of Colonial Zimbabwe. For example, The Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican Churches acquired large tracts of land during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries and consistently argued that these acquisitions were motivated by humanitarian considerations. The Anglican Bishop for Mashonaland, Knight Bruce, argued that the Mission lands were intended as “Native Reserves”, in case Africans were continually squeezed out of their lands.⁶³⁴

In the same context, the ABM owned five properties on the Chipinge Highlands. These were Mount Silinda, Emerald, Chikore, Chikore Annexe and Dabukei which added up to about 34 000 acres.⁶³⁵ These farms were primarily occupied by African tenants. In 1948, 220 African families occupied approximately 12 000 acre Mount Silinda and Emerald Farms. Though they cultivated a total of 1 100 acres, only 900 were considered suitable for cultivation, as 600 were on slopes and thus needed protection.⁶³⁶ Curtin, who toured both farms in 1948, reported that they were fifty per cent overstocked, with Mt Silinda being more populated because it

⁶³⁰ Ibid, Memorandum, Crown Land: Cashel ICA, April 1950.

⁶³¹ NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2, Memorandum, Conservation: Cashel ICA, (undated).

⁶³² NAZ, F151/ICA/CAS, Cashel ICA File 2, Memorandum, Crown Land: Cashel ICA, April 1950.

⁶³³ Ibid, Letter from Director of Conservation and Extension, to Natural Resources Board, 4 September 1950.

⁶³⁴ R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), 19.

⁶³⁵ NAZ, 450/10, Chipinga ICA File 1, V.W. Curtin, Chipinga ICA Report: American Board Mission Farms, 27 May 1948.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

accommodated students who attended Mount Silinda schools.⁶³⁷ In addition, approximately 400 African families, with a combined 2000 cattle and 3000 goats, farmed on the Chikore, Chikore Annexe and Dabukei Farms, which all had a total of 23 000 acres, a condition reported by Curtin as both overpopulated and overstocked:

These farms are all now in the process of being ruined. If this continues, it is likely that at owner's expense, public opinion will force this Department to carry out, at some future date, what will then be costly recovery measures. The native tenant problem is not peculiar to the American Mission Boards properties. The Natural Resources Board has recently authorised I.C.A. Committees to engage African demonstrators for the purpose of assisting with control of native tenants on European areas.⁶³⁸

It should however be noted that European stereotyping of the African was evident in observations on the unfolding land degradation. Curtin indeed alleged that the overstocking and overpopulation on these farms were worsened by “the unenlightened farming methods of the population”, adding that Missionaries and others experienced in Rhodesia agreed that, “the native is not a good farmer”. He further lamented Africans’ conservatism, which he attributed to their unwillingness to learn and adopt new farming methods. At the same time, Soil Conservation Officer, H.R. Hack, castigated the practice of shifting cultivation;

The native system of cultivating a piece of ground until it is worked out and then moving on to a new area has been practised on this farm for many years, and it is the earnest desire of the Mission authorities to remedy this state of affairs by proper farm planning and the construction of approved conservation measures.⁶³⁹

But other studies carried out in Africa and the South America point to the fact that shifting cultivation had its own merits, which the colonial officials did not always appreciate. It allows land to regain fertility at the same time allowing tree regeneration.⁶⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Hack made a number of suggestions to arrest this environmental decay. He suggested the relocation of 50 or 60 families from the Musangazi Valley of the Mount Silinda

⁶³⁷ Ibid, H.R. Hack, Report: Mount Silinda Farm, 30 January 1948.

⁶³⁸ Ibid, V.W. Curtin, Chipinga ICA Report: American Board Mission Farms, 27 May 1948.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, Hack, Report: Mount Silinda Farm, 30 January 1948.

⁶⁴⁰ See O. Coomes, F. Grimard and G. Burt, ‘Tropical Forests and Shifting Cultivation: Secondary Forest Fallow Dynamics among Traditional Farmers in the Peruvian Amazon’, *Ecological Economics*, Vol. 32, Issue 1, 2000. J. Fox, D. Trong T. Rambo, N. Tuyen, and L. Leisz, ‘Shifting Cultivation: A New Old Paradigm for managing Tropical Forests’, *Bio-Science*, Vol. 50, No.6, June 2000. J.B. Rumtree, ‘Agro-Forest Pathways: Land Use, Shifting Cultivation and Sustainable Agriculture’, (Paper Presented at the International Consultative Workshop on Tenure Issues in Agro-Forestry, Nairobi, 31 May 1985).

Farm to the undulating 300 acres on Emerald Farm. He proposed that African settlements be centralised, and the setting aside of land to rent for African cultivation divided into 4 acre holdings which were protected with storm drains and contour grass strips. It was hoped, this would entail easier supervision of African agrarian activities, thus enticing them to adopt “the principle of good farming”.⁶⁴¹ The alternative, suggested by Curtin, was a complete change in land use practice, which involved a diversion into the commercial production of fruits like avocado pears, citrus and pineapples, which did not require annual tilling of the land.⁶⁴²

At the same time, the Natural Resources Act put the legal obligation to protect land on the land owner. Therefore, Curtin recommended that the ABM employ a competent Agricultural Extension Officers to assist the tenants. He, however, doubted the Mission’s capacity to improve and develop these farms, estimating that, “£10 000 or £12 000, spread over the next five years”, would meet only the minimum desired development for Silinda and Emerald farms alone. A proportionate amount was also required for Chikore and Dabukei farms. His doubts of the ABM’s capacity compelled him to recommend that it should sell some of its farms, “which would serve the double purpose of reducing responsibility and of making funds available for the proper development of the remainder”. He concluded that:

If no farming policy is decided on, either 50 % of tenants require to be evicted, together with their stock, or the responsibility could be passed to someone else by selling most of the farm land, retaining only a few acres round the schools. There is at present a demand for land.⁶⁴³

However, there was some optimism, as some communities were responding positively;

An excellent start has been made by fencing actual springs. A glance at the map will show how important it is that sponges and springs on Chikore should be protected. Twenty eight springs have been fenced; more remain to be dealt with. This policy should be extended to include the sponges. These properties are better served by roads than Silinda and Emerald, but a horse should also be the best aid to efficient supervision.

He noted, however, that other areas needed to protect arable land through storm drains, contour ridges, paddocking, and the construction of earth dams to conserve water. The next section dwells on conservation matters regarding the TTC’s New Years Gift Estates and the Mutema Irrigation plots.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Ibid, V.W. Curtin, Chipinga ICA Report: American Board Mission Farms, 27 May 1948.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

When Labour Interests Came First: the case of TTC

While Conservation Officers castigated tenants' activities in the ABM farms, they blamed "African squatters" on the TTC for the serious environmental degradation of the company's New Year's Gift Tea Estates. The Company's plantations, situated along the upper Tanganda River Valley, put most of its undulating land under tea leaving out the estate's steep slopes, which were subsequently occupied by Africans. There were 63 such "squatter families" in 1949,⁶⁴⁴ and to Curtin's displeasure, these were not supervised by TTC at all, resulting in environmental damage. Earlier on, in January 1949, Boucher could not hide his displeasure about this:

Firstly, I walked about a mile and a half up the Tanganda River Valley; I was appalled at the destruction being done by the natives. Slopes are being denuded of all timber and vegetation, and are being cultivated. The river bed is being cultivated and planted maize, and every small sponge has been ploughed up and planted. The secretary informed me that all the natives on the estate were warned not to plough within 100 feet of the high water mark of the river, but it is apparent that the warning was ignored. Even the swamps through the actual tea gardens have been cultivated by the natives, and as some of these are a mere matters of a few hundred yards from the Companies Offices, the natives could not have been impressed with the warning.⁶⁴⁵

There is no doubt that Africans ignored these warning because their options were limited. With the best land taken by the TTC, they cultivated along rivers where they had easier access to water which is essential for irrigating their vegetables, yams and other crops.

Boucher further on inspected the Nyarombe River, also known as the Waterfall, and found that the devastation was worse than in the Tanganda Valley. He described the water flow there as "a mere trickle" and expressed the fear that a continued degradation would make the river "dry up altogether".⁶⁴⁶ When the NC, Baybrook, also made a tour of the area, he confirmed the "injurious native cultivation on the Tea Estates themselves, both on the banks of the Tanganda and on the tributary known as the Waterfall Stream or Maiden Creek".⁶⁴⁷ As a result, Baybrook and Boucher, in the company of the Estates Superintendent, a Mr Storrar, and retired Managing

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid, letter from Senior Conservation Officer to Acting Chief Conservation and Extension Officer, 11 April 1949.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, letter from Boucher, to Senior Extension Officer, 4 January, 1949.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid, letter from the Native Commissioner to Natural Resources Board, 14 February 1949.

Director, a Mr Phillips, held a meeting with local headmen in an attempt to deal with this challenge. A warning over the ensuing ecological decay was made by Phillips, during which he reminded the audience about a number of places between New Year's Gift and Chipinge, which "twenty years ago were used as outspans, whereas now thanks to abuse in the headwaters these places are now all dry".⁶⁴⁸

Conservation Officers were also concerned about the activities of communities of the Mutema Irrigation Scheme and the Vanderbergs Irrigation Scheme further downriver. In the immediate post-Second World War period, the latter expanded the acreages under irrigation growing crops such as wheat, cotton and sunhemp. Therefore, a concern about the use of Tanganda River by communities along the river's headwaters arose. Thus in November 1948, Vanderbergh Estates wrote a letter to the TTC raising concerns about the activities of the Africans:

Apparently, the natives in the mountains are engaged upon a process of devastation which can have no other effect than to ultimately cause the eventual drying up of the river. All the little feeder streams upon which a river so much depends are being opened up to drain the small bags so important to the source of a good river. This is done in order that they can grow more crops. This leads, as you are all aware, to a very fast run-off when heavy rains occur, as they do in the mountains of the Eastern Districts. The results of this on the river itself are too obvious to need enlarging upon by me. Suffice it to say that the river continues its process of scouring progressively each year.⁶⁴⁹

The letter went on to suggest the eviction of people from this valley and institution of afforestation by growing trees such as the wattle. However, Baybrook, being an interested party, asked that he be involved so that the Mutema Irrigation Project which also had water rights from the Tanganda River may not be affected.

Aware though that the activities of these "African squatters" were not consistent with conservation objectives, TTC paid a blind eye to African cultivation. This was partly because of the labour intensive nature of tea production, especially the plucking process, which runs from August to March. Profit margins increased by cutting on the cost of labour, as Boucher realised:

The Secretary informed me that the Company encourages the natives to squat on the estate as these supply them with a certain amount of labour, although no labour agreement is entered into between the Company and the natives. Encouraging the

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, letter from Senior Conservation Officer to Acting Chief Conservation and Extension Officer, 11 April 1949.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid, letter from Vandebergh Estates to Tanganda Tea Estates, 30 November 1948.

natives to squat in the Tanganda Valley, in my opinion is very wrong, in spite of the fact that it is a sure source of labour, as the Tanganda Valley is too steep for any cultivation by natives and irreparable damage is being made.⁶⁵⁰

This clearly points to the conflicting interests of conservationists and capital. Thereafter, TTC had two options; either evicting or accommodating Africans in compounds. The fear with it was a total break with the past, and was likely to cause loss of cooperation with “squatters” losing labour in the process. Hence, TTC opted to put these people in compounds and transform them into full time labourers.

The Mutema Reserve, further down the river provides an interesting case with regard to eviction and proletarianisation of Africans. The reserve was set aside during the late 1890s when African settlement did not affect white farming interests. White settlements by then were confined to the well-watered highlands. However, the establishment of the Sabi Irrigation Scheme from the late 1940s onwards changed the situation. The scheme depended on the Tanganda River which passed through the Mutema Reserve. Therefore, debates from this time onwards centred on the need to move Africans from the Mutema Reserve. To this effect, in February 1949, the local Land Development Officer proposed that all Africans in Mutema Reserve who lived along the Tanganda River be relocated.⁶⁵¹ It is however, not clear whether this suggestion was finally implemented.

The Chipinga townlands was another site for contestation. In March 1949, Boucher raised apprehensions about cultivations that were being done by Africans from the African Location of Gaza Township to the Chipinga Town Management Board. Their activities were very detrimental to the Nyakora River as noted below:

Erosion and destruction of natural resources caused by location natives on the catchment of Nyakora River is appalling. Natives have ploughed up sponges, denuded slopes. Two natives De Sousa, who owns an eating house on town, and Mutisi who is a gardener have taken out an irrigation furrow from one of the springs, and have vegetable gardens right in the bed of the river, which are being irrigated, are thoroughly drying up one of the sponges. There are numerous native paths leading down to the river, and as the slopes are steep, terrific erosion is taking place. At the river crossing a donga has washed out, this in place is eight feet deep, and is cutting back with each rain.⁶⁵²

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, letter from Boucher to Senior Extension Officer, 4 January, 1949.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid, letter from Boucher to Chief Conservation Officer, 4 February 1949.

⁶⁵² NAZ, 450/11, Chipinga ICA File 2, letter from Boucher to Secretary, Chipinga Town Management Board, 9 March 1949.

The Nyakora River, together with several other streams in this watershed area is important tributaries of the Budzi River. Africans were subsequently ordered to stop all cultivation on the townlands. This also put a stop to land preparations such as veld burning, which arrested further erosion that was caused through the removal of vegetation. According to the Conservation Officer, most Africans complied, as cultivation in the Nyakora catchment area and the commonage area had subsequently been stopped by December of the same year.⁶⁵³

These environmental concerns are a commentary on the inequitable distribution of land and water resources in the Chipinga, Melsetter and Cashel ICAs. The cultivation of steep slopes shows the marginalisation of Africans from the prime land they and their forefathers had been cultivating since time immemorial. At the same time, the case of the Tanganda River clearly illustrates complexities associated with multiple needs of communities and the management of a river system. The livelihood needs of the African “squatters” inhabiting the Tanganda River headwaters, labour needs of the TTC, irrigation needs of Mutema Irrigations Potholders and the Vanderbergh Estates further downriver, were all centred on how the Tanganda River was managed. All these parties had to negotiate for their varied and often conflicting interests in context of the NRB’s natural resources conservation movement. Another site of contestation was the Chirinda Forest, which is the subject of the next section.

Contestations over Chirinda Forest

Chirinda Forest, covering 950 hectares, was another site of struggle between Conservationists, the ABM and the local African communities.⁶⁵⁴ The forest’s uniqueness emanates from that fact that, though situated in a typical savannah climate, it was largely a tropical rainforest and the only one of its kind in Southern Africa. The forest was distinctive in many ways: it is a layered rainforest with a diverse range of trees that provides a variety of resources to its community and food to its wildlife; had a diverse structure noted in its maturity, variety, density, and size of its trees; supports an equally diverse wildlife, ranging from small to medium sized animals, reptiles, birds, and insects; and was the source for three rivers, hence, the state conserved it for its aesthetic, scientific, educational and recreational values. In 1949, its first Warden, R.B. Hack, opened up one of his early reports as follows:

⁶⁵³ Ibid, letter from Boucher to Chief Conservation and Extension Officer, 12 December, 1949.

⁶⁵⁴ Chirinda Station File (CSF), Chirinda Forest File, ‘Chirinda Tropical Rainforest in South Eastern Zimbabwe’, (anonymous: undated).

It has been said that man's idea of heavenly bliss is to forever pursue, and to forever be evaded by beautiful Maidens fleeing before him through the eternal woods. If this is true, then the forest of Chirinda could qualify for those eternal woods. For sheer beauty, it is difficult to imagine anything in nature to surpass this tropical forest which is known as Chirinda, and when walking in it, the sublime lines of Sydney Laneer's poem: *The Marshes of Glynn*, come readily into mind.⁶⁵⁵

The forest had four layers with a diverse range of trees. The canopy rose to between 55-60 metres.⁶⁵⁶ The second layer had trees of between 10-40 metres,⁶⁵⁷ while the third had trees of up to 10 metres. Evergreen small shrubs, dracaena fragrans, wild ginger, ferns, mosses and creepers dominated the fourth layer,⁶⁵⁸ which also had a large stratum of mulch which the surrounding farmers valued as manure for their gardens. The forest was also traversed by a variety of creepers, climbers, twisting vines and leafy ropes which crisscrossed trees from the fourth layer to the canopy. Climbers like wild coffee and species belonging to monkey ropes,⁶⁵⁹ also hanged from the tops of the tallest trees. A tourist, E.G. Hopper, referred to climbers as Monkey ladders presumably because monkeys clutched them during their jumpy-style movement.⁶⁶⁰ The commonest climbers belonged to the grape family called *ciccus*, about which Hack said, "These vines have great tensile strength, and will easily support the weight of a man when hanging from branches 50 feet from the ground".⁶⁶¹ Hopper likened them to those he found in South America, which were used to build suspension bridges across gorges.⁶⁶²

The Chirinda trees served the community with a number of purposes. They were a source of fruits and herbs, used to make furniture and wooden implements, used as firewood, and supported a wide range of wildlife. Describing one tree, *strychnos mitis* (Mutambabungu), Hack said:

...the trunk has gnarled appearance, resembling somewhat the muscles of the arm when the fist is clenched. The leaves are simple, opposite, entire, glabrous, tough and dark green. The flowers are creamy-yellow and appear during January. The fruit is a small yellow berry.

⁶⁵⁵Hack Report, 1949.

⁶⁵⁶Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Report by District Forestry Officer (DFO), May 1939.

⁶⁵⁹Hack Report, 1949.

⁶⁶⁰*The Sunday Mail* 16 January 1949.

⁶⁶¹Hack Report, 1949.

⁶⁶²*The Sunday Mail* 16 January 1949.

Though seeds are produced abundantly, this tree appears not to reproduce itself readily and the fact that blue monkeys and hornbills are fond of these may be accountable. The timber is hard and heavy, and very resistant to nails when seasoned. It is useful building timber but must not be exposed to damp.⁶⁶³

Plainly, this description captures the multi-significance of the forest; its aesthetic value; source of food for wildlife and multi-purpose timber. The western portion of the forest was called the Valley of the Giants, named so because the largest trees were concentrated there. Among these was the Big Tree, which was estimated to be 1000 years old then and considered the largest indigenous tree in Southern Africa.⁶⁶⁴ The Valley's peculiar nature, evidenced by the presence of the largest trees and its great aesthetic value, led to its declaration as a national monument in 1939.⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, because it was durable, this specie was, "an excellent furniture wood".⁶⁶⁶ Thus people who lived along the Budzi River in neighbouring Portuguese East Africa used it for making canoes.⁶⁶⁷

There were conflicting interests over Chirinda trees. The *trichlia chirindensis* (Mutsikiri) produced a soft light orange timber, treasured by the White community as flooring material, while the Africans needed oil from its seed.⁶⁶⁸ The *craibia brevicandata* (Mushamba), which had a round light-green crown, produced "sweet pea-like flowers which gave the forest top a white appearance" and its seed, when ripe, "gave a loud creaking sound which could be heard by someone some 100 metres away",⁶⁶⁹ obviously a fascinating experience for tourists. The *albizzia fummitera* (Munjerenje), besides beautifying the forest outskirts by its "large flat-crowned top", was tough and of medium hardness, hence prized by the Africans for making hoe handles, pounding sticks, and yokes.⁶⁷⁰ At its peak, the *celtis durandii* (Guniti) became large, strongly buttressed, hard, and durable. It was also known as "Chirinda Stinkwood", because of the objectionable smell it emitted, its timber, though good, was rarely used".⁶⁷¹ However, some Africans believed that the smell scared away reptiles like snakes and protected families from evil spirits and witchcraft. Because of these, "medicinal" properties, it was highly

⁶⁶³ Hack report, 'Notes on the Trees of Chirinda Forest', May 1950.

⁶⁶⁴ NAZ, Records Centre, Location 25.12.6.F, Box 92151, File 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, Letter from Orner to Henkel, 23 October 1920.

⁶⁶⁵ L.J. Mullin, 'Chirinda Forest in Legend and History', in J. Timberlake and P. Shaw (eds), *Chirinda Forest: A Visitor's Guide* (Harare: Forestry Commission, 1994), 25.

⁶⁶⁶ Hack Report, 1949.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Interview, Shumba, Patrol Officer, Chirinda Forest, Chirinda, 10 July 2010.

⁶⁷¹ Goldsmith, 'Trees of Chirinda', 43.

sought by Africans.⁶⁷² It is this type of differential perception and value systems about the forest which fostered conflict over its use.

Beinart notes with reference to colonial Zimbabwe that the killing of vermin; lions, leopards, hyenas and jackals, was encouraged as they endangered settler stock farming.⁶⁷³ This was however, illegal for peasant farmers around Chirinda Forest. There was, hence, conflict over the forest's fauna, which include the blue duiker, warthog, hare, rabbit and mammals of the squirrel family. Animosity was inevitable because while Forestry Officers emphasised animal protection, the community felt justified hunting them.⁶⁷⁴ For instance, baboons and monkeys, which lived in groups of up to 30, were ubiquitous. As a result, Africans who hunted the comestible Samango Monkey species accused the state of double standards because while they were denied the right to hunt, they were aware that whites often collected game from this forest, sometimes for museum display purposes.⁶⁷⁵ Notable among the reptiles were snakes which ranged from the harmless to the deadly.⁶⁷⁶ Conflict arose between Africans and state conservationist over the harmful snakes killed instantly on sight by Africans who held a common belief that witches used snakes to harm their victims.⁶⁷⁷

Birds of the Chirinda Forest were quite eye-catching. Among the locally cherished were guinea fowls, which were so plentiful that during his patrols, Hack met separate flocks, "in practically every area of the forest".⁶⁷⁸ The owl, considered wise but shy in western myth, was active at night, but Africans, who associated it with witchcraft and sinister forces of darkness, killed it whenever they saw it.⁶⁷⁹ Among the conspicuous birds were weavers, usually identified by their nests hanging from tree branches and through their "wheezy calls".⁶⁸⁰ The canopy was also home to hornbills; "the noisiest, most conspicuous and mobile" and the *chirinda apalis*, which was usually heard, "calling all over the forest canopy".⁶⁸¹ Since birds consistently devoured gardens, the surrounding community trapped them. Concerns were again raised regarding forest ownership because, while African bird trapping was illegal, white visitors

⁶⁷² The medicinal properties of this tree were confirmed by many informants.

⁶⁷³ Beinart, 'Introduction: the Politics of colonial conservation', 151.

⁶⁷⁴ Interview, Gwenzi, Former Patrol Guard, 10 July 2010.

⁶⁷⁵ NAZ, File 68.6, General Correspondence, letter from Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) to DFO, Melsetter, 29 June 1962.

⁶⁷⁶ G. Broadley, 'The reptiles and amphibians of Chirinda Forest', *Rhodesian Science News*, 10 (2), 1976, 51.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁸ Hack Report, April 1950.

⁶⁷⁹ Interview, Gwenzi.

⁶⁸⁰ P.S Irwin, 'The Birds of Chirinda Forest', *Rhodesia Science News* (10) 2, 1976, 59.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

collected them on easy terms. In fact, the Forester in Charge, R. Finch, admitted in 1959 that the country was losing valuable specimens and data due to collection laxities.⁶⁸² Apart from the birds, the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe was home to a wide range of butterflies, wasps and bees, yet approximately 80 percent of these were found in Chirinda Forest.⁶⁸³ These attracted tourists from both within and outside the colony.

There were other clashes over access and use of some the forest's products. For example, Fungi, invisible and visible; poisonous and edible; were important as decomposing agents in forest ecology, but were a threat when they attacked live trees.⁶⁸⁴ The non-poisonous fungi produced mushroom which was "poached" by local communities, thereby causing endless battles with Forestry Officers. The forest was also source for the Zona, Musangazi and Chinyika Rivers, providing water to the surrounding ABM, Chako Business Centre, Zona and Jersey Tea Estates. Dams were, therefore, constructed to this effect.⁶⁸⁵ Therefore, apart from purely scientific and aesthetic value, the forest's value was multi-faceted.

There was eternal animosity between local Ndaou people and the state over ownership and use of the forest. The autochthone Ndaou people claimed ownership of the forest, on grounds that it was a natural heritage passed on to them over generations.⁶⁸⁶ Therefore, most local people venerated creatures of this forest; the eagle, python and porcupine, which were regarded as personifications of the ancestors".⁶⁸⁷ The Ndaou of Chirinda also believed that the forest, formerly a burial site for the chiefs and other notables, was inhabited by ancestral, just as J. Fontein's informants associated the Great Zimbabwe site with their ancestors, who revealed themselves through, *Mhondoros*; lions, leopards and baboons.⁶⁸⁸ The forest was also considered sacred; a site for rain making ceremonies and ancestral appeasement. Indeed, local songs, epics, poems and salutations continued to venerate the forest in relation to the Ndaou people of Mapungwana chieftdom. Yet, with colonisation, the Mapungwanas lost it legally, as the forest was initially divided into four properties, with the ABM legally granted the Mt

⁶⁸² CSF, File 68.6, General Correspondence, letter from R. Finch to Edwards, 8 June 1959.

⁶⁸³ A. Gardiner, 'Insects', Timberlake J. and Shaw P, (eds.) *Chirinda Forest, A Visitors' Guide*, (Harare: Forestry Commission, 1994), 110.

⁶⁸⁴ A. Masuka, 'Fungi', Timberlake J. and Shaw P, (eds.) *Chirinda Forest, A Visitors' Guide*, (Harare: Forestry Commission, 1994), 71.

⁶⁸⁵ J. Timberlake and C. Musokonyi, 'Forest conservation and utilisation', in Timberlake and Shaw, (eds.) *Chirinda Forest, A Visitors' Guide*, (Harare: Forestry Commission, 1994), 119.

⁶⁸⁶ Interview, S. Chibhaahlengwe, Chirinda, 11 July 2010.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸ J. Fontein, *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe: Contested Landscape and the Power of Heritage* (London, University College of London, 2006), 91.

Silinda section in 1902. White farmers J. G. Raath, W. N. Odendaal, and J. N. Labaschaque, took up Emerald, Houtberg and Ngungunyana respectively.⁶⁸⁹

Nevertheless, there was pressure for the Chirinda Forest's national asset status. In 1920, the Melsetter District Commissioner expressed concern stating that "...it is a great pity that the whole forest was not originally reserved for public purposes".⁶⁹⁰ In 1924, Henkel, opined that while other indigenous forests could give way to commercial agriculture, Chirinda Forest, just like other famous heritage sites including Victoria Falls, Chinhoyi Caves and the Zimbabwe Ruins, should become a national asset. Henkel cited examples of "the famous Giant Hardwood Trees of California", and the fact that throughout the USA, "there are numerous national parks and beauty spots which are maintained at public expense for the public" in his prediction that the Chirinda Forest would be visited by scientists from all over the world.⁶⁹¹ A Chipinga resident castigated the ABM for commercial exploitation of the forest, and wondered why the forest, "...which is a valuable asset to Rhodesia, went, in the first place, to private hands".⁶⁹² This advocacy was indeed in conformity with the changing regional perspectives. Beinart notes that by the 1910s and 1920s, Scientific and Aesthetic motives about game, trees and forests, underwent significant change, under the influence of men like James Stevenson-Hamilton, the first Warden of Sabi Reserve in Eastern Transvaal, and began increasingly to dominate the discourse of preservation.⁶⁹³

Procedures to purchase the Ngungunyana portion of Chirinda Forest began in mid-1938, following the death of its owner, C.F.M. Swynnerton.⁶⁹⁴ The National Museums of Southern Rhodesia lobbied for the forest's National Monument status,⁶⁹⁵ and, following the District Forestry Officer, G.M. McGregor's strong recommendations, it was purchased in 1939 and

⁶⁸⁹ L.J. Mulin "Chirinda Forest in Legend and History", Timberlake and Shaw, (eds.) *Chirinda Forest, A Visitors' Guide*, (Harare: Forestry Commission, 1994), 15.

⁶⁹⁰ NAZ, L: 25.12.6.F, B92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, Extract from Annual Report of Cecil Commissioner, Melsetter to Secretary for Agriculture for year-ending 31 December 1920.

⁶⁹¹ NAZ, L: 25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1 Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, memorandum by Henkel, 12 December 1924.

⁶⁹² *Rhodesia Herald*, 29 December 1926.

⁶⁹³ Beinart, 'Introduction: the Politics of colonial conservation' 150.

⁶⁹⁴ Though not necessarily falling within the period under study, the history of Chirinda Forest will not be complete without a note on C.F.M. Swynnerton. He managed Ngungunyana Farm from 1909 to 1920. When it was subdivided in 1921 he purchased sub-division "A" which included part of Chirinda forest. He is considered a great naturalist who conducted extensive studies of the forest flora and fauna and made many collecting trips to Chimanimani Mountains and Mozambique, at one time he walked to as far as Beira through the Budzi Valley. Hence, many trees and bird species in Chirinda which are named in his honour, most of which have the affixed name "swynnertonii".

⁶⁹⁵ NAZ, L:25.12.6F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, from Secretary, National Museums of Southern Rhodesia to Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, 18 April 1940.

subsequently proclaimed a national monument 1940. In addition, the financial challenges which the ABM faced after outbreak of the Second World War in 1939⁶⁹⁶ provided an opportunity for the state to purchase the Mount Silinda section of the forest in 1948, with the agreement of sale guaranteeing the ABM rights to timber and firewood.⁶⁹⁷ Though the Houtberg section was purchased last in 1951, it had been on offer since 1930, but the state considered its price absurd, because, “if the forest were acquired, it would be for its scientific and aesthetic interest, and not to exploit the timber it contains”.⁶⁹⁸

The acquired portion of the forest was handed over to the Forest Department which became the RFC from April 1954. The Forestry Department set up a fully-fledged administrative apparatus in 1949, when it appointed R.B. Hack as its first warden in July 1949.⁶⁹⁹ Hack had extensive responsibilities, including educating the local communities to conform to the conservation objectives of the RFC, supervising the construction of fireguards, arresting and sending offenders for trial, studying forest biodiversity for an ecological balance, supervising fencing, road and path construction, labelling the most unique trees and making signposts, overseeing the collection of indigenous tree seeds and managing tree planting along the forest margins.⁷⁰⁰ However, Hack’s demarcation of the forest’s boundary resulted in fifteen households staying within the forest receiving a year’s notice to vacate.⁷⁰¹ This raised animosity with the local community, which located its sentiments within the broader discourse of colonial hegemony. Hack was also sensitive to the relocations:

Below, I submit a complete list of the native men in or near the area. With the exception of No 3 (Chibatira Sixpence) who is a government servant and No 6, 7 and 8 (Mundane Basket, Kudyenso Jonas and Munyenyiyi Sugera, respectively) who are decrepit. They are working for the mission. The mission authorities and the natives themselves would want to know if the forestry department will allow them to keep on living in Government area.⁷⁰²

Apart from forcefully evicting people from their ancestral land, colonial and post-colonial African states have relocated Africans from conservancies, forced them to destock, or fenced

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, from J.S. Marsh, Secretary, East African Mission of ABM, to Minister of Agriculture and Lands, 13 September 1940.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid, Chirinda Forest No.1, Memorandum of Agreement made and entered into between the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Government of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, 29 December 1948.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, from CFO to Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 11 December 1935.

⁶⁹⁹ NAZ, L25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Chirinda Forest File No.1, from A.J. Orner to G.M. McGregor, 06 April 1949.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid, memorandum by McGregor, 1 February 1950.

⁷⁰¹ Hack Report, August, 1949.

⁷⁰² Hack Report, August, 1949.

them off. However, the contrast with European Union conservation policy is striking, for “European conservation efforts allow settlement and use to continue”.⁷⁰³

The Forestry Department began fencing off the forest from mid-1950s. It started along the border with Dimire tenants’ area, where a 5 strand barbed wire, with a cumulative cost of £156.0.0, was set up.⁷⁰⁴ Though, in accordance with the Fencing Act, the ABM agreed to share the cost, it was discontented as it considered the amount too high and that it was not consulted in tender selection process.⁷⁰⁵ While the ABM raised these concerns over costs of erecting the fence, the Africans objected because it was a deterrent measure and a technology of power which signified appropriation of a common property by a colonial and repressive state. As a result, Chief Mapungwana consistently argued that it was taboo to fence his forest and his community sabotaged the colonial project by destroying the fence.⁷⁰⁶

By May 1950, the most unique trees were numbered and their characteristics documented for easier identification. From September, 1950, Hack embarked on an on-going construction and expansion of roads and pathways.⁷⁰⁷ These constructions facilitated easier movement, not only of tourists and patrol guards, but also of the local members of the community, who travelled to ABM run hospital and schools. However, the heavy volumes of people aided by the road infrastructure made it difficult for the forest guards to differentiate “poachers” from non-poachers, for they all used the roads.⁷⁰⁸

The forest was prone to fires along its margin, despite its moist nature. There were, indeed, regular reports of these fire outbreaks. On 17 April 1950, a major fire that broke out on the forest’s south-western corner burnt twenty acres of bush land and Bekapi, who started it, was convicted and fined £4 by a Chipinge magistrate.⁷⁰⁹ Guards also fought a fire that burnt sixty acres on the 6th of October 1950 and a woman held responsible was convicted and fined by the same court.⁷¹⁰ Hack, therefore, expanded and maintained fireguards on a yearly basis.

⁷⁰³ R.P. Neuman, ‘Stories of nature’s hybridity: Implications for forest Conservation on the Global South’, in S.B. Hetcht, K.D. Morrison and C. Padoch, (eds.), *Social Lives of Forests: Past, Present and Future of Woodlands Resurgence*. (Chicago and Londpn, University of Chicago Press), 43.

⁷⁰⁴ NAZ, L 25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Chirinda Forest No. 1, from McGregor to Superintendent, Mount Selinda Mission, 17 July 1950.

⁷⁰⁵ P. Scott, ‘The Fencing Act interpreted’, in *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, XLIII (2), 1946, 139-5.

⁷⁰⁶ Interview, P. Gwenzi, Chirinda, 10 July 2010.

⁷⁰⁷ Hack Report, September, 1950.

⁷⁰⁸ Interview, M. Zikhayo, Chirinda, 10 July 2010.

⁷⁰⁹ Hack Report, April, 1950.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

The RFC left an indelible mark on the Chirinda Forest landscape. The marks included roads, tracks, fence, signposts, tree labels and tree plantings. This was indicative of its commitment to conserve and market the forest. However, the approach was flawed because left out the grass root. As the Africans, who were significant stakeholders of the forest, were relegated to the status of mere observers, they resisted the changes in ways that were mostly covert, which is the focus of the next section.

Chirinda Forest and the Local Peasant Farmers

Some Africans in the Chipinga District, especially those associated with the Chirinda Forest, harboured huge grudges against the ABM and the state over the ownership of Chirinda Forest. Most local people regretted the fact that they welcomed the missionaries only to lose the forest which they valued so much. One of them explained:

When the missionaries came here, they were amazed by the nature of this forest. They went on to ask Chief Mapungwana, “are you the one who planted these trees with your wives”, to which he said “No”. They asked for a place to set up a mission station and they were given. We were then horrified when the missionaries and government denied us the right to hunt, collect firewood and poles. Both the mission and government said they bought the forest and we asked, “from whom?” Our chief never sold the forest to anyone but gave the mission a place to set up a school for free.⁷¹¹

As W.M. Murphree argues, conflicts always arise when Western conservation norms are imposed on subsistence-oriented communities.⁷¹² Therefore, when Western conservation norms were imposed on Chirinda, conflict became inevitable, a situation that was not unique to Rhodesia. In South Africa, hunting was a significant livelihood activity within African societies as well as both Afrikaners and the British settlers during the early colonial period. Therefore, when game reserves were introduced, illegal hunting, which became poaching, persisted especially from the African and poor white communities. Such hunting became conceived as laziness by those who wanted to avoid wage labour.⁷¹³ Similarly, David Anderson and Richard Groove argue that developing indigenous economies have remained predominantly subsistence oriented and dependent on the natural environments for their

⁷¹¹ Interview, Gwenzi.

⁷¹² M.W. Murphree, ‘Considerations in linking African environmental scholarship policy and practice’, in N. Christofferson, D. Campbell and R. du Toit (eds.) *Communities and Sustainable Use: A Pan-African Perspective* (Harare: The World Conservation Union, 1996), 4.

⁷¹³ Beinart, ‘Introduction: the Politics of colonial conservation’, 150.

livelihood needs.⁷¹⁴ Therefore, conservation efforts have to consider the needs of these communities. When policy makers miss or ignore this point, as was the case with Chirinda Forest, conflict becomes inevitable.

The forest supported the local Ndaou people's livelihoods. A large percentage of the local community treasured it as a source for game meat, mushroom, honey, fruits, and edible insects. It was also a source of herbs which were used to cure a variety of ailments. The community also needed timber to construct houses, cattle kraals, make domestic items such as yokes and for furniture making. Basketry material was also abundant in the forest and when faced with a shortage of pasture land, local cattle owners would encroach onto the forest margin for browsing and grazing their livestock.⁷¹⁵

Nevertheless, the locals' reaction to both the Missionary and colonial appropriation of the forest varied over time; from open defiance to passive resistance. For instance, the acquisition of the Ngungunyana portion in 1939 and the associated reduction of African land and stock⁷¹⁶ resulted in increased pressure on the forest. While a 1939 survey on Ngungunyana farm showed that erosion due to African cultivation was practically nil,⁷¹⁷ by 1949, ten years after it had been acquired by the RFC, erosion had become topical with the headwaters of Chinyika, Zona and Musangazi Rivers degraded. One Forestry Officer wrote that "natives in Ngungunyana area, estimated to number 200 families, are ruining the soil by their erratic methods of cultivation".⁷¹⁸ A fortnight later Boucher confirmed this, writing:

When making an inspection of Zona tea estates, I noticed that the slopes and headwaters of the Zona River are being cultivated and as the headwaters rise on the Ngungunyana, which belongs to the Division of Forestry, I would like to know what steps to take to move the natives from the area. Mr Clarkson, the tsetsefly ranger, informs me that he does not know how many natives are on this farm, but judging by the amount of cultivation, they are many of them. He is dependent on them for cutting the fly belt but, as he admits, he is quite sure that only about a quarter of the number living on Ngungunyana turns out when called upon

⁷¹⁴ D. Anderson and R. Grove *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 8.

⁷¹⁵ Compiled from documents kept in Chirinda Station and Chirinda Forest Files.

⁷¹⁶ NAZ, L: 25.12.6. F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, Agreement of Tenancy signed under section 28(2) of the LAA of 1930 entered between CNC and Ngungunyana Tenants, 9 February 1940.

⁷¹⁷ NAZ, L 25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, from Williams, Entomologist, to Chief Entomologist, 4 October 1941.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid, Chirinda Forest No. 1, from DFO, Umtali to CCF, 22 February 1949.

to do so. The Mt Silinda Mission also has several families ploughing the slopes along this river.⁷¹⁹

The subsequent denial by the Chief Conservation Officer, McGregor, was probably a face saving exercise. Boucher made a second tour of the area, and reported that "...in spite of the statement made by the Chief Conservator of Forests to the effect that NO, NOR has, there ever been any cultivation of the above river banks, I again report that both the Zona and Ngungunyana River banks and slopes are cultivated extensively by natives".⁷²⁰ Another officer, G.L. Guy, concurred with Boucher, adding that an estimated 100 families living on Ngungunyana farm were cultivating the slopes.⁷²¹

Though, again, the Forestry Department illegalised hunting in 1939, Africans defied the ban. In January 1940, McGregor revealed that hunting parties were frequent, with Africans hunting "...in gangs of about a dozen with assegais, bows and arrows and accompanied by packs of dogs".⁷²² Opinions on a solution differed. While the Assistant Director of RSS, L.A. Normandy, suggested a census of the African population and relocation of the excess, after considering a planned afforestation scheme which was imminent, the DFO suggested they retain future labour by entering into a new tenants' agreement with these Africans.⁷²³

Meanwhile, Hack mounted awareness campaigns. In the company of Boucher, he approached Chief Mapungwana at his homestead in October 1949 to bring on board the traditional leadership in the awareness campaigns. An under pressure Chief Mapungwana, "agreed to cooperate in carrying out this plan".⁷²⁴ But, long held practices could not be abandoned overnight. Two months later, a three day tour comprising Hack, Chief Mapungwana and some forest guards, convinced Hack that:

As far as I could see, the tenants have taken very little notice of my instruction and were planting in and near water sources, and also in the garden just as they have done in the past. It is doubtful if this practice will cease until a white man is placed permanently on the farm. I gave instructions that the mealies which have been planted contrary to my instruction

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, from Boucher, Conservation and Extension Officer, Chipinga to CCO, 5 March 1949.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, from DFO to CCF, 28 February 1949.

⁷²² NAZ, L: 25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, from McGregor to CCF, 3 January 1940.

⁷²³ Ibid, Chirinda Forest File No.1, from Normandy to CF, 7 March 1949.

⁷²⁴ Hack Report, October, 1949.

should not be cleaned by hoeing, and my patrol boys have been instructed to see that this is carried out. It appears to be useless to rely upon the Chief in this matter.⁷²⁵

However, some mission converts complied, as they quit gardening on the headwaters of the Musangazi River.⁷²⁶ Indeed, all avenues were used to disseminate information, including written notices, announcements in schools, church services and other public events. It appears that the approach was more of the stick than the carrot, as communication emphasised punishment and fines.⁷²⁷ Nevertheless, the notices were vandalised on numerous occasions because the campaign's objectives were a direct attack on the local peoples' long held culture on forest use.⁷²⁸

If, nevertheless, one thing has to be emphasised about the Chirinda community's response, it is their adoption of subtle strategies of subverting the colonial conservation laws. Open defiance, which was common during the early years of state control, were soon replaced by subtle approaches. Local peasant farmers adjusted from hunting in large groups to small groups or individuals. This was because large group hunting involved pack of dogs, many weapons and shouting, which exposed the hunters. Individual hunting, involving the use of wire and sisal traps used to suffocate the game with a noose became the common. By 1960, snaring had become so common that, "...any dog that leaves the main road runs a 50 percent chance of not coming out".⁷²⁹ As a result, destroying traps became a key task and the guards removed up to 400 snares monthly.⁷³⁰

Poaching activities continued partly due to loopholes within forest security system. The number of guards remained three, in spite of the increased pressure on the forest.⁷³¹ Furthermore, they were "armed with pen and paper", used for recording identity details and trial dates of the accused.⁷³² This necessitated engaging local guards who knew the inhabitants and their villages. However, on another hand, this was a flawed strategy, as Gwenzi clarified:

Yes, we would arrest our own relations. It was very common...Both relatives and non-relatives would make all sorts of pleas often times while holding their catch. Yet deep inside our hearts [sic] we knew that ours was just a job. Depending on circumstances, sometimes

⁷²⁵ Hack Report, December, 1949.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ CSF, File 68.6, General Correspondence, letter from Wilkins, Chief Afforestation Operations to Forester-in-Charge, 23 February 1955.

⁷²⁸ CSF, Chirinda Forest File, from Black, to Chief of Research, 9 July 1980.

⁷²⁹ CSF, File 68.6, General Correspondence, from Finch to DFO, Umtali, 27 November 1960.

⁷³⁰ Hack Report, June, 1952.

⁷³¹ Interview, Shumba.

⁷³² Interview, Gwenzi.

we would look around and if convinced that *baas* Hack was nowhere nearby, we allowed them to quickly disappear.⁷³³

Another subtle form of resistance involved the use of subtle communication such nicknames, and song to denigrate the guards. The effect, as one officer explained, was that:

It showed the tricky nature of our job. It was also a warning that we had to perform our job with restraint, especially the treatment of offenders, considering that we remained part of the community. We board the same buses to town, bought foodstuffs like vegetables and tomatoes from the community; we met at the same shops, at funerals and weddings, where we shared meals.⁷³⁴

The local people also weighed the risk of poaching, considering that penalties ranged from warnings, fines, to imprisonment. In October 1950, for instance, a man who was caught setting snares in the forest was tried by the magistrate, but he was let off due to old age.⁷³⁵ Those who were caught collecting firewood for the first time were usually pardoned. The security system was again flawed in that, where an offender was fined for setting traps, he could not remove the rest of the traps and could follow up on these afterwards.⁷³⁶

The local Africans claimed the forest was theirs and as such had no guilty conscience for 'poaching' forest treasure. Elaborating on this, Chibhaahlengwe pointed out that:

The Forestry Commission was supposed to be ashamed. It deprived us of our resources, some of them lifesaving. Imagine when a child suffered hallucinations caused by evil spirits, which could be cured by *guniti* [forest tree species], which is available in the forest... herbalists go and get it...even God can not punish them because it is a lifesaving activity.⁷³⁷

Chibhaahlengwe was resolute that denying the local community access to herbs was retrogressive. To emphasise that the forest was a communal asset, he gave examples of trees whose barks, latex, leaves and roots cured a variety of ailments such as minor scars, diarrhoea, abdominal pains, colds and venereal diseases. He concluded that knowledge concerning medicinal properties was a monopoly of few traditional healers, *n'angas*, hence the exploitation was sustainable because only a few healers exploited them for the larger society.⁷³⁸

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Hack Report, October, 1950.

⁷³⁶ Interview, S. Chibhaahlengwe.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

In a related study, F.M. Matose notes that no matter how many people were employed to police the activities of communities surrounding the Mafungabusi Forest Reserve in Gokwe District of western Zimbabwe, people developed ingenious means of gaining access to the forest. He outlines a typical “weapons of the weak” strategy, when the Forestry Protection Unit met a group of women weeping in the forest, claiming to be going for a funeral. However, after some distance, the Forest Protection Unit was surprised to hear the same women laughing, only to learn that they had feigned crying so as to escape prosecution for collecting clay, which they had concealed in a nearby bush.⁷³⁹

Arguably, the activities of African communities around Chirinda Forest fit into James Scott’s framework, centring on master-subordinate relations. Scott postulates that oppressed classes do not always confront their oppressors but feign compliance while expressing their discontent through “hidden transcripts”, meaning, “...discourse or activities which take place off-stage, beyond the direct observation of the power holders”.⁷⁴⁰ Therefore, through pretends, the oppressed, “consistently chip out a niche for themselves within the system without openly challenging the dominant master”.⁷⁴¹ On the whole, the Chirinda community realised that confronting the state was risky because the coercive state apparatus could catch up with them; hence the community adopted clandestine manoeuvres.⁷⁴² Contestation over Chirinda Forest was not only confined to the surrounding peasantry. As shall be demonstrated shortly, the RFC also fell into conflict with the ABM, tourists and the business community generally.

Chirinda Forest, the ABM, Tourists and Business

Up to 1948, all the ABM’s timber needs were practically acquired from the Chirinda Forest. The ABM’s Industrial Department opened a saw mill in 1909, which processed timber for woodwork and building studies as well as for sale. It introduced carpentry and joinery courses in 1939 and 1949 respectively and its furniture “found its way into many homes, winning high praises for its beauty”.⁷⁴³ The educational infrastructure expanded rapidly during the 1950s, with the opening of a Secondary School and a Higher Teacher Training course in 1955 and 1959 respectively. Again,

⁷³⁹ F.M. Matose, ‘Local Peoples’ Uses and Perceptions of Forest Resources: an analysis of a state property Regime in Zimbabwe (Msc thesis, University of Alberta, 1994), 88.

⁷⁴⁰ J. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, 4.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴² Interview, S. Chibhaahlengwe.

⁷⁴³ Taringana, ‘The Socio-Economic Impact of the American Board Mission Activities in Chipinge’, 24.

during the late 1940s, it opened a new secondary school at Chikore Mission, which led to a higher demand for more timber. E.D. Alvord, then Chairman of the ABM Rhodesia Mission, explained the organisation's timber needs in one of his several requests:

In view of the fact that you shall not be able to supply the timber we require until end of September, would it not be possible to grant us permission to cut some from the Silinda Forest? The position here at Chikore Mission is serious. We have two houses all completed and waiting for the roofs. If we do not get them covered and protected before the rain begins, there will be considerable damage to the brick work as the bricks were laid on ordinary mud only.⁷⁴⁴

The Chirinda Forest was therefore an invaluable asset to the ABM's activities and parting with it in 1948 was a last option.

The State-ABM relations were however largely hostile. Both institutions had conflicting interests and interpretations of the 1948 agreement of sale. The agreement guaranteed that:

The purchaser shall make available to the seller for its reasonable requirements for instruction, for building purposes and carpentry, a supply of timber at a tariff rate of 2d per cubic foot for standing timber trees or such other rate that may be mutually agreed upon from time to time on the understanding that such timber will not necessarily be provided from the forest itself. The purchaser shall be entitled to make a charge against the sellers for the cost of felling trees and or transporting the timber.⁷⁴⁵

Antagonism centred mostly on the quantity, type and price of timber, as well as the fact that every timber request underwent strict scrutiny. For instance, in its March 1949 request for more timber to complete a classroom building and boys' hostel at Chikore, a dwelling house at Mt Silinda and other smaller jobs, the ABM was asked to account for the previous allocation first. The ABM went on to explain, "...this may seem like a large quantity but it is only what we have been doing year by year... we've been conservative in our cutting and the forest would have benefited by more cutting than we've done".⁷⁴⁶ Further disagreement arose regarding the definition of "reasonable requirements", with Forestry Officers alleging that the ABM was wasteful. This is noted in the June 1953 District Forestry Officer's complaint that while the maximum requirements for mission timber stood at 4200 cubic feet, its average annual

⁷⁴⁴ NAZ, L: 25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest No. 2, from E.D. Alvord to CCF, 28 August 1953.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid, from G.L Guy to CCO, 7 February 1953.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid, from Meachem to CCO, 23 March 1949.

consumption was, in fact, between 1250 and 1700 cubic feet, thus alleging that the ABM exaggerated its requirement.⁷⁴⁷ Earlier on, in 1950, the mission had cut 9110 cubic feet, which was more than double the agreed allocation.⁷⁴⁸ In addition, by mid-1951, the ABM had already felled 3669 cubic feet, which were considered as extravagant by the Chief Conservation Officer, who then instructed his subordinate to investigate “whether the timber required by the mission was for the use of mission purposes and not for resale”.⁷⁴⁹ A subsequent report exonerated the ABM after the investigations noted that timber was being used for mission purposes only.⁷⁵⁰

The hostilities also extended to a price war. For instance, the RFC increased the price of timber during hostilities over quantity, to which Meacham, the Secretary of the ABM, responded:

I did not realise we would have to pay 15/6 a cube. The agreement said nothing about the price, but does guarantee a supply of timber from the forest here and some other source. I don't know whether those who made the agreement had in mind that we might receive the timber at a reduced price or not. But it seems rather queer to pay 15/6 when we live on the top of a forest where timber might be cut.⁷⁵¹

The District Forestry Officer, Wilkins, dismissed Meacham's appeal as unfounded, and claimed: “his statement about living on top of the forest where timber might be cut has no meaning”.⁷⁵² Nevertheless, disputes raged into the 1960s. For instance, in June, 1963, the ABM reiterated that its timber quota be reviewed upwards, while the RFC insisted that the ABM was being accorded a favour as government continued offering timber below market price.

Another source of conflict related to timber species. The 1948 agreement was silent on the type of timber the ABM could get. As a result, the ABM always stipulated the timber species it required. The state often rejected such stipulations as evidenced by this August, 1953 refusal:

The mahogany should be for final year students, and only the best of these. As the objective of the course is to teach Africans to earn a living all over the colony, would it not be better to use more refractory timber, whose properties nearly resemble those they are expected to use in practice...would you therefore restate your requirements for instructional timber based on the above.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid, from DFO, Stapleford, to Superintendent, Mt Silinda, 12 June 1953.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest No.2, letter from CF, Umtali, to CCO, 7 August 1951.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid, from CCO to CF, Eastern, 10 August 1951.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid, Report from Guy, Conservator Eastern, to CCF, 30 August 1951.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid, from Meacham to DFO, 11 November 1952.

⁷⁵² Ibid, from Wilkins to CCF, 3 February 1953.

⁷⁵³ Ibid, from Acting CCF to Principal, Mt Silinda Mission, 10 August 1953.

The ABM dismissed the state's argument as baseless and lacking.⁷⁵⁴

Further hostilities emanated from clause 2 of the agreement of sale, which read:

As compensation for the supply for fuel purposes which the sellers shall be deprived by reason of transfer in pursuance of this sale, the purchaser will, at its own expense, immediately establish a ten acre plantation of trees. Pending this plantation reaching such maturity that it can be a source of supply of wood for fuel purposes, the seller shall have the right to remove free of charge from existing sources of dead wood. If existing source of dead wood is not sufficient, then sellers shall be entitled to Mushamba, gardenia species, Mukanhlu, Munyabotobola and Buwe.⁷⁵⁵

The approach was to let dead wood rot in the forest on the rationale that, apart from enhancing the aesthetic and scientific value, this was part of the forest ecology. Therefore, the RFC had to establish an exotic plantation to substitute the ABM's right to forest firewood.⁷⁵⁶

The meaning of "establishing a plantation" later became controversial. Seven months after the plantation that was set up it had gaps, which became thickly invaded by non-wattle trees. Hostilities arose regarding its maintenance, as Hack ridiculed:

I have spoken to Mr. Meacham about it several times but nothing is being done...Do you want me to do anything about it? The mission does not seem to have the time, the inclination or the money. All their energy is spent in praying and talking so they don't have any left for work. As Lauder milk remarked, the missionaries and their converts may be going to heaven, but the land is going to hell.⁷⁵⁷

The RFC later acknowledged responsibility, "...we shall, of course, fill in the blanks etc, but on the strict understanding that the mission authorities are not to use the ten acre for agricultural/crop, otherwise we shall consider that our responsibilities have ceased".⁷⁵⁸ Finally, the RFC terminated the ABM's right to collect firewood in October 1955, after it had felled the first batch of timber from the plantation.⁷⁵⁹ This heralded a new dispensation of illegal firewood collections.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid, from Meachem to CF, Eastern, 17 June 1953.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid, Chirinda Forest No.1, Memorandum of Agreement made and entered into between the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Government of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, 29 December 1948.

⁷⁵⁶ Interview, B. Razunguzwa, Assistant Station Manager, Muguzo Forest Research Station, Chimanimani, 28 August 2008.

⁷⁵⁷ Hack Report, May, 1950.

⁷⁵⁸ NAZ, L 25.12.6 F, B 92151, F 1680/1, Chirinda Forest No.1, letter from McGregor to Meachem, 12 July 1950.

⁷⁵⁹ CSF, File 68.6, General Correspondence, letter from Chief Afforestation Operations to the Principal Mount Selinda Mission, 24 October 1955.

Meanwhile, the RFC turned down certain project proposals that it considered detrimental to forest conservation. Firstly, a request by Mr Madison, to open a store at Ngungunyana farm was rejected because it was feared that this would increase the traffic of Africans passing through the forest, thereby make it difficult to monitor offenders.⁷⁶⁰ Secondly, a Bulawayo-based sawmilling and plywood firm, the African Lumber Company, had several of its timber logging requests turned down on grounds of “National Park status” of the forest.⁷⁶¹ It shows the concerns with which the state was eager to keep the forest with possible minimal human intervention.

Tourists were also at loggerheads with conservationists over the collection of forest species and tree engravings. Apart from being a way of appreciating nature, tree engravings had historical significance. The Missionary-Explorer, David Livingstone, carved his initials on the large Baobab tree at the Victoria Falls.⁷⁶² Carvings were also made on a tree at the spot where the Shangani patrol lost a battle and all 34 white soldiers were killed during the Anglo-Ndebele war of 1893-94. Davidson, who buried their remains two months later, “carved a cross and words, “TO BRAVE MEN”, on a tree at the spot”.⁷⁶³ Not surprisingly, tourists who visited Chirinda forest also carved their initials on trees, chiefly, the Big Tree. Some actually brought pre-inscribed metal plates for nailing. This became an issue when foresters noted that bacteria and fungi attacked standing trees through cuts caused by the incisions.⁷⁶⁴ McGregor raised these concerns in 1939:

I wish, however, to draw attention to real damage being done by the carvings of initials and dates in the bark. This discretion has now reached alarming proportions and the fungus which is attached is polyporous sp, which was growing from the initials of one W.S, who visited the big tree in 1933 ... I consider that this continual carving on trees is the only real damage to which the trees are subjected.⁷⁶⁵

The practice was banned forthwith, but it continued. In 1953, Finch had no kind words to the culprits:

⁷⁶⁰ NAZ, L: 25.12.6F, B 92151, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, memorandum from CF, 15 January 1940.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid, Chirinda Forest File No. 1, from CCF to Managing Director, African Lumber Company, 1 December 1950.

⁷⁶² CSF, Chirinda Forest File, ‘Notable Trees of Zimbabwe’, memo from L. J. Mulin, to Black, Ngungunyana Forest Research Station, 1 April 1982.

⁷⁶³ P.E.N. Tindall, *A History of Central Africa* (Salisbury: Longman, 1968), 164.

⁷⁶⁴ Masuka, ‘Fungi’, 73.

⁷⁶⁵ NAZ, L: 25.12.6 F, B: 92151, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest, Report from DFO to Acting Conservator of Forests, 28 April 1939.

The following vandals carved their names on the Big Tree on an afternoon of Sunday the 11th or 12th July – C.S.M, E.M.M, W.N, E.K.R, J.C, C.du P, and J.D.P. It is hoped that they gained sufficient satisfaction from knowing that their names are recorded for the next 3 or 4 years. This is downright hooliganism. Their interest is for future visitors to know that they have visited the area.⁷⁶⁶

Prior to this, a guard was employed to protect tourists' cars at the main car park, following frequent thefts from cars. Enraged by the continued engravings, Finch had little respect for them, to whom he said: "It is obvious that by putting a native at their disposal to protect their property left in their cars, what they really needed was a piccanin or nanny to stop them from indulging in childish pranks".⁷⁶⁷ The District Forestry Officer suggested that the BSAP from Chipinga could intensify security through patrols during weekends and public holidays.⁷⁶⁸ But, apart from being costly the operational framework of the BSAP made apprehension difficult, as McGregor had lamented earlier on:

The big tree continues to receive a quota of initials, and at the moment, supports an arrow about 401' (1.016m) up to its hole. I know the culprit and reported to the police but they stated they could not take action unless someone saw the arrow leaving the bow. I do suggest, however that the offending individual should be required to remove the arrow by the Secretary of Historic Relics and Monuments Committee. I shall furnish his name and address.⁷⁶⁹

Other controversial issues regarded the quantity and use of treasures that were collected from the forest. Tourists and colonial officials collected birds, butterflies, monkeys, and ornamental shrubs. After the collections, many never gave feedback regarding the value of the specimens, "thereby losing what I think might be information of scientific value".⁷⁷⁰ There were also illegal collections. In 1959, the Director of Museums, R. Smithers, protested strongly against visitors who purported to be collecting for the National Museums.⁷⁷¹ Stringent measures were thereafter adopted, which include declaring all resources collected before departure. The Deputy Director of Museums, Roger Summers, embraced the by-laws and added that "anything that can be done to stop this nefarious practice has our complete approval".⁷⁷² That the state

⁷⁶⁶ CSF, File 68.6, General Correspondence, to CF, Eastern, 13 July 1953.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid, from CF, Eastern Districts, to Forester, Gungunyana, (undated).

⁷⁶⁹ NAZ, L: 25.12.6 F, B: 92151, F 1680/1, Mount Selinda and Chirinda Forest to CF, 27 November 1940.

⁷⁷⁰ CSF, File 68.6, General Correspondence, letter from Chief Afforestation Operations to Director, National Museums of Rhodesia, 17 January 1959.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid, to FO, 2 February 1959.

⁷⁷² Ibid, to Chief Afforestation Operations, 27 January 1959.

fell at loggerheads with a wide range of communities speak volumes about the significance of Chirinda Forest. It was a resource which was perceived differently by various interest groups.

Conclusion

This Chapter has shown the challenges of environmental conservation in a district that was located far from the main centres of agrarian development in colonial Zimbabwe. It has shown the nature of the conflicts between conservationists, white farmers, missionaries and African tenants over land, water, timber and wildlife. It has also been argued that there was reluctance by white and black communities to adopt conservation principles mostly because they were informed by economic imperatives, rather than that it was because they lacked progressive ideas, as often claimed by colonial officials. Labour tenancy remained an alternative agrarian activity since the region that was still relatively undeveloped in terms of agrarian infrastructure. This differs with conservation concerns elsewhere in Mashonaland, where, Phimister has shown that environmental degradation was largely a result of an over cultivation of crops such as tobacco and maize. The chapter has evaluated the Africans clashes with the state and also shown that the white farming community of Cashel, Chipinga and Melsetter ICAs were equally at loggerheads with conservation official. The clashes, however, can only be fully understood within context of the geographical, cultural and economic systems of this region.

Chapter Five

The Coffee Industry, Land Use Transformations and African Response, 1961- 1969

Introduction

Coffee was grown in the south eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe since the arrival of Afrikaner farmers at the turn of the 20th century.⁷⁷³ However, it was not until the 1960s that greater attention was paid towards its intensive commercial production. Although the coffee industry was initiated by individual commercial farmers, the state became an interested part and thus adopted policies seeking to promote its expansion. This chapter therefore examines circumstances surrounding the state interest in promoting an industry which, for long, had been side-lined. It also explores the nature of support that government provided. Therefore, the coffee sector is used as a window to view the national and regional political, economic and social dynamics that led to the commercialisation of this crop. The chapter also interrogates local and regional ingredients promoting the Rhodesian coffee sector during a period when the African continent was experiencing what Harold MacMillan called “winds of change”.⁷⁷⁴ In addition, it examines the broad impact of commercial coffee production on the socio-economic and political history of this region, especially the impact on the long established system of labour tenancy.

The period from late 1950s in Rhodesia was also characterised by a rise of modern African nationalism, which witnessed the formation of African political parties, rising political activism, arson and other politically motivated protest activities. South eastern Zimbabwe was a significant site of these struggles. For instance, Ndabaning Sithole, the first president of ZANU, which was formed in 1963, came from this region.⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, William Ndongana, who led the “Crocodile gang”, which sabotaged white commercial enterprises in the Chipinga

⁷⁷³ NAZ, S1193/C6K/1, Coffee, 1923-1926. NAZ, S1193/C6K/2, Coffee, 1929-1930.

⁷⁷⁴ J. Brown, *The Empire Project, The Rise and Fall of the British World –System, 1830-1970*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁷⁷⁵ Ndabaning Sithole was a leading African Nationalist and the first President of ZANU, which was formed in 1963. He finished schooling at Dadaya Mission and after a short teaching at Mt Silinda Mission, (1953-1955), he was sent to the USA where he trained as a Church Minister of the ABM. Upon his return to Rhodesia in 1959, he was appointed principal of Chikore Mission Primary School and in the same year, published a book, African Nationalism which was to inspire many future nationalists, also propelled him into a leading role in the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe.

and Melsetter Districts, also came from this area. The chapter, hence, examines conditions and events explaining why a region that had long been described as comprising “the most law abiding citizens in the colony”,⁷⁷⁶ suddenly became a site of intense political activism and struggle.

The Role of the State in Development of the Coffee Industry

From the late 1950s, Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands developed into one of the most significant regions in Rhodesia, producing timber, tea and coffee for the country’s domestic and export markets. A 1982 Commission of Inquiry into the agriculture industry, among other issues, made a crop by crop evaluation of the farming sector in Zimbabwe.⁷⁷⁷ While noting the dominant position of maize, tobacco, beef and cotton, it described coffee as a fairly new crop of high value which, in 1982, was “the 5th leading agricultural export crop in Zimbabwe”. Though the report noted that tea was relatively minor in terms of area planted, it recognised its importance because of its “high unit value and export earnings”. Tea ranked between 6th and 9th most valuable export crops in the 5 years prior to 1982.⁷⁷⁸ Tea and coffee, which became the leading export crops particularly from Chipinga District, had their roots in the 1930s and 1950s respectively.

Individual farmers, and not Government, initiated the production of coffee in Rhodesia. Nevertheless, from the early 1960s the Government became actively involved in facilitating the expansion of an agrarian sector that had been initiated by private capital. The coffee industry had already flourished in east African British colonies, especially Kenya, and thus Rhodesia gained much from the experiences of the east African countries. Coffee experts from Kenya, such as A. R. Melville, an Agricultural Chief Research Officer, were hired to advise on the country’s coffee sector. Melville surveyed the Eastern Districts in 1958 and noted that there was great potential for the development of coffee agriculture. He also advised that a two acre coffee plot developed at Martin Forest Reserve in Melsetter, which the RFC intended to

⁷⁷⁶ NAZ S246/796, Melsetter Farmers Association, Withdrawal of Certain Civil Servants from Melsetter, letter from Station Officer, BSAP to Secretary, Law Department, 12 November 1930.

⁷⁷⁷ Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Agricultural Industry, under the Chairmanship of Professor G.L. Chavhunduka to the President, 1982.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 67.

dispose, be kept for experimental purposes.⁷⁷⁹ In October 1959, Government subsequently appointed a horticulturist to Melsetter to maintain this plot and advise emerging coffee growers in the district.⁷⁸⁰

During the same period, the Chipinga Experimental Farm became more involved in the development of coffee production by carrying out trials and advising growers. Having realised challenge associated with the use of the small coffee harvests from both the Martin Plot and Chipinga Experiment Farm, from April 1964, harvests from these stations were sold as seed to emerging growers through the Rhodesia Coffee Growers Association (RCGA),⁷⁸¹ an arrangement that remained in place up to 1967.⁷⁸² Other Government initiatives include the 1962 appointment of a coffee specialist, Arthur Pratt from Kenya, who had 30 years coffee experience.⁷⁸³ In December 1963 government went on to open a fully-fledged coffee research unit at the Chipinga Experimental Station, thereby arousing “considerable interest” in the production of coffee, particularly in the Eastern Districts.⁷⁸⁴ At the same time, the RCGA formed a co-operative society that established and operated a central coffee mill at Umtali.⁷⁸⁵ Thus, the rise of coffee production in the region was facilitated by a combination of coffee farmers’ initiatives and government policies and interventions seeking to expand the sector.

The role of big capital in the development of coffee industry is also quite salient. The diverse ecological potential of the Eastern Highlands meant that plantations established here pursued diverse agrarian activities. Peter Godwin, who grew up in the Melsetter Highlands, demonstrates that Silverstream, the headquarters of the RWC, traditionally engaged in the processing of timber and wattle bark, but would process sugarcane grown in the lower Chipinga Valley at its factory during the three months of every winter.⁷⁸⁶ He elaborates further that:

⁷⁷⁹ NAZ, L: 6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Crop: Martin Forest Reserve; Letter from A.W.C. Teague, Regional Conservation and Extension Officer (Eastern), to Chairman, Forestry Commission of Southern Rhodesia, 20 July 1959.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid, from A.R. Godwin, Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture to under Secretary of Works, 6 November 1969.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, from A.O. Crook, Group Conservation and Extension Officer, Eastern, to Regional Conservation Officer, Eastern, 29 March 1961.

⁷⁸² Ibid, from J.A.K. Powsie, Secretary to treasury to secretary for Agriculture, dated 10 January 1967.

⁷⁸³ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee Growing, 1964, Rhodesia Wattle Company, Ltd, Memorandum on Coffee Growing on the Company’s Estates, 1 April 1964.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid, R.H. Hack, Senior Planning Officer; Coffee production in Southern Rhodesia and a preliminary survey of the proposed Chipinga Coffee Scheme, paper number 69, 3 February 1965.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid, Rhodesia Wattle Company, Ltd, Memorandum on Coffee Growing on the Company’s Estates, 1 April 1964.

⁷⁸⁶ Godwin, *Mukiwa, A White Boy in Africa*, 116.

Wattle and sugar weren't the only products of Rhodesia Wattle Company. We were also cattle ranchers. We ran Aberdeen Angus and Herefords for beef and, a dairy herd of Guernsey. The best cattle though, were the Afrikanders, a local breed that was hardy and resistant to disease.⁷⁸⁷

It is within this context of diversification that we need to understand how, during the 1960s, the established plantations companies diversified into coffee production. In 1964, the RWC narrated how it entered the coffee industry:

Some 7 or 8 years ago, an Estate superintendent on Smaldeel Estates in the Chipinga district planted about half an acre to coffee for his own use. The plants flourished and produced high yields of palatable coffee. It was this small area which led the company to think in terms of something bigger, at that stage on Smaldeel, but subsequently on Vumba Estate.⁷⁸⁸

Though Vumba was not part of the Chipinga District, it was part of the eastern Highlands and also diversified into coffee production. Thus, planting trials were undertaken at Vumba and other parts on the Eastern Highlands' border, including Chipinga. In 1964, the RWC, which had more than 600 acres under coffee, expressed its appreciation of the government's role in this endeavour in the statement that: "Generally, results have been so encouraging in that, just over a year, government appointed a coffee expert to advise and direct the development of a private industry aimed eventually to bring 20 000 acres under coffee".⁷⁸⁹ The RWC's future target was Charles Wood Estate in the Melsetter District, where it intended "to eliminate all wattle over the next 8-10 years, gradually converting the property to general agriculture, with 250 acres of coffee as the corner stone of its economy".⁷⁹⁰ This Wattle Company also had an immediate plan to acquire suitable land for coffee production. Nevertheless, it should be noted that while this diversification is indicative of the huge agricultural potential of this region and a positive development in line with the Rhodesia's post Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) diversification policy, it increasingly nourished the seed of contention within Africans, who continued to be robbed of the remaining fertile and cultivable land on the highlands.

Though not necessarily the focus of this chapter, it should be noted that coffee production developed alongside the expansion of the tea industry, which was also facilitated by private capital. "Tea barons", such as Malcolm Burrow, established Southdown Tea Estates and

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 123.

⁷⁸⁸ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee Growing, 1964, Rhodesia Wattle Company, Ltd, Memorandum on coffee growing on the Company's Estates, 1 April 1964.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

proceeded to encourage the surrounding farmers to enter into tea production, while providing a ready market at his Southdown factory that processed the tea and exported it to international markets.⁷⁹¹ Burrow created “considerable interest in the Chipinga District regarding tea production”, but was unsuccessful in his bid to establish a government sponsored tea settlement scheme. Farmers were nevertheless convinced that tea production was lucrative, considering that the industry, pioneered by the TTC during the 1930s, was already well established. In addition, tea production was advantageous from a labour perspective, because it is dormant when coffee is at peak, and vice versa, hence casual labour could be shared between coffee and tea growers.⁷⁹² Another catalyst for tea expansion came from B. du Plessis of Clearwater Estates. He, like Malcolm, opened a tea factory on his Clearwater Farm which became Clearwater Tea Estates and also provided a market for locally grown tea.⁷⁹³

We cannot fully appreciate the rise of Coffee Agriculture in Eastern Zimbabwe without contextualising this within the political transformation of East Africa. The attainment of national independence by coffee producing East African states, particularly Kenya, contributed to the development of the Coffee Industry in Eastern Zimbabwe. This occurred in two phases. First, the national independence was followed by a general exodus of experienced white coffee farmers into Rhodesia.⁷⁹⁴ These skilled and experienced coffee specialists and farmers facilitated the expansion of the Rhodesian coffee industry. Government deliberately contacted these farmers, offering them attractive land purchase terms.⁷⁹⁵ Secondly, with east African independence, the Southern Rhodesian farmers hoped for a decline in both quality and quantity of east Africa coffee, whose market Rhodesia was eager tap. The RWC expressed this in 1964:

...It is believed that because of the Africanisation in Kenya, quality deterioration will inevitably take place, not only in the field, but more importantly still in the processing of the bean. To a certain extent, therefore, S.R. is gambling on this factor.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹¹ NAZ, L: 42.13.4R, B: 126962, Tea Planting in Southern Rhodesia, Letter from D. Espach, secretary for Agriculture to secretary for mines and lands, 27 July 1965.

⁷⁹² NAZ, RC, L: 32.15.9F, B: 126949, Lands, Coffee Settlement Scheme, Vol.4, letter from W.D. Going, Horticulturist, to Director of Lands, 24 June 1968.

⁷⁹³ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, Confidential, from W.V. LACEY, Ministry of Agriculture, to secretary, Chief Agricultural Economist, 6 August 1968.

⁷⁹⁴ J. Handford, *A Portrait of an Economy under Sanctions 1965-1975*, Salisbury, Mercury Press, 1976, 116.

⁷⁹⁵ NAZ, RC, L: 1.7.4F, B:93835, Coffee General, Vol.1, Minute from C.B. Metcalf, Land Tenure Officer to Director, Lands/Attorney General's Office, Coffee Production in the Eastern Districts, undated.

⁷⁹⁶ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee Growing, 1964, Rhodesia Wattle Company, Ltd, Memorandum on coffee growing on the Company's Estates, 1 April 1964.

While campaigning for an expansion in the coffee scheme, one P.P. Dufrenoy advocated for the formation of a coffee authority to work with various bodies like the Land Bank and the Sabi Limpopo Authorities to support coffee farmers in the country. Dufrenoy was of the opinion that it was the most pragmatic future objective after considering the changing regional political dispensation:

From the international point of view, I believe it is now we must take every effort to take the place left vacant by the new independent states of Africa. The Congo, in 1960, has exported 60 000 tons of coffee, and in 1966, according to "General Mobutu", 10 000 tons.⁷⁹⁷

Coincidentally, the International Coffee Market became more favourable for the industry just as the coffee industry in Rhodesia was "taking off". A 1962 International Coffee Agreement was signed between 12 major coffee consumers, mostly from the Industrialised West, and 20 major exporters from Africa and South America. The main coffee importers here included Britain, the United States of America, Germany and France, while the main African producers include countries such as Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Uganda.⁷⁹⁸ The executive board of the 1962 signatories met and decided on a number of issues, such as setting the coffee prices, production, export and import quotas. These measures resulted in the stabilisation of world coffee prices and therefore enhanced the viability of the coffee industry.⁷⁹⁹

Rhodesia enjoyed a lucrative South African market from the onset, in spite of the obvious benefits accrued from the International Agreement. However, the industry had other established producers, such as Colombia, Ivory Coast, Kenya and Angola. By 1967, it was becoming increasingly clear that the coffee trade landscape was shifting, as noted in a June 1967 report, which indicated that most of the 13 000 tons of coffee imported by South Africa in 1966 came from Angola and not from the usual Ivory Coast, Kenya and South America.⁸⁰⁰ While Rhodesia was competing with other producers for the South African market, its biggest advantage was that it was closest to South Africa. This is discernable from the logistics of coffee processing and marketing as explained by the Secretary for RCGA, H. U. Fennell in 1968:

⁷⁹⁷ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga, Vol. 1, Letter from Paul Petit Dufrenoy, to John on Production of More Coffee, undated.

⁷⁹⁸ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee growing, 1964, Bowring and Drew Ltd, Report on world Coffee Environment-A word about the International Coffee Agreement, 28 February 1969.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid, R.H. Hack, Senior Planning Officer; Coffee production in Southern Rhodesia and a preliminary survey of the proposed Chipinga Coffee Scheme, paper number 69, 3 February 1965.

⁸⁰⁰ *News/check*, 16 June 1967.

...growers send their crop to the mill at Umtali, where it is hulled and graded. The mill sends the samples to our brokers Messrs W.M. Cahn in Johannesburg, Cahn finds a buyer, sends a contract note to the grower, who indicate his acceptance of the price by signing and returning the contract note. One copy of the contract note is send to Manica Trading Company, Umtali, who then arranged for the coffee to be shipped. Cahn then collects payment from buyer, and forwards this direct to the grower. As far as possible, Manica Trading Company ship as much coffee as possible in a consignment, but, of course, our crops are still very small and transport costs are inevitably higher.⁸⁰¹

Interestingly, during the mid-1960s, eight farmers from the Compensation District of Natal in South Africa began growing coffee and harvested the first crop of 15 tons in 1966. There was also another coffee production scheme at Richmond Farm in Eastern Transvaal, which, by 1967, had 400 acres under coffee.⁸⁰² Nevertheless, the future of this nascent South African industry soon became bleak, for though it was producing 1.5 per cent of the country's coffee by 1968, it got "in the doldrums", as this effort proving to be "an expensive flop".⁸⁰³ A local newspaper elaborated on this flop:

Firstly, the country is a dumping ground for cheap surpluses coffee during the continuing world coffee glut. Secondly, while South Africans drink high quality tea, the growing taste is the third rate coffee with admixtures, with lessening interest for the expensive high quality Arabica coffee grown here. The third obstacle is that the country does not have the hot climate for the coffee 90 per cent of its inhabitants drink, cheap Robusta.⁸⁰⁴

However, this South African misfortune was a blessing for the Rhodesian Coffee sector. It assured Rhodesian coffee growers of a ready market thereby creating enthusiasm among the farmers, leading to further growth of this industry.

The demand for Rhodesian coffee went beyond South Africa. In 1965, Peter Jones hinted that as long as Rhodesian Coffee was of high quality, it could be exported to Germany where there was another market.⁸⁰⁵ In 1967, Chairman of the RCGA, J.E. Mazorati assured the coffee growers of the German market, further informing them that before thinking of exporting to Germany, they would have to put up to 4 000 acres under production to satisfy the South Africa

⁸⁰¹ NAZ, RC, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga, Vol. 1, letter from H.G. Fennell, to secretary for Agriculture, dated 27 March 1968.

⁸⁰² *News/check*, 16 June 1967, 40.

⁸⁰³ *The Star, Johannesburg*, 4 March 1968.

⁸⁰⁴ *The Star, Johannesburg*, 4 March 1968.

⁸⁰⁵ NAZ, L: 32.15.9F, B: 126949; Lands, Coffee Settlement Scheme Vol. 4, Discussion with Peter, Jones, 7 May 1965. NB: Peter Jones, originally from Kenya, was the Deputy Director of Agriculture in Swaziland, hired by the Rhodesian Government to advice on the prospects of Coffee Agriculture in Rhodesia.

market first.⁸⁰⁶ In May 1968, H. Duncan Abraham, a member of “the Friends of Rhodesia”, wrote to the Secretary for Agriculture, inquiring whether Rhodesia had the capacity to produce coffee to supply a large coffee dealer in America, who was at the same time, “a strong supporter of the Rhodesian cause”,⁸⁰⁷ no doubt referring to the sanctions imposed on Rhodesia after signing the UDI in 11 November 1965.⁸⁰⁸ H.D. Abraham wrote:

Could you please advise me if Rhodesian coffee is available for export overseas, and if so, could I be supplied with samples which I would forward to the party concerned? I do not know if coffee is included in the American sanction regulations, if it is, I could perhaps act as an intermediary.⁸⁰⁹

While it is unlikely that Rhodesia ever exported coffee to the USA, this gives insight into the lucrative nature of the coffee market.

The Rhodesian coffee industry is also a window through which we can view the nature of the state-settler agrarian relations. As has been demonstrated earlier, the coffee market was not a challenge, but the expertise was not always assured. It is true that Southern Rhodesia always promoted white commercial agriculture, but sometimes faced challenges in recruiting and retaining expertise. It has been demonstrated in the previous Chapter that the NRB and the ICAs Schemes always encountered challenges in retaining expertise for conservation schemes.⁸¹⁰ Thus the coffee specialist who was appointed by the Rhodesian Government in 1962, resigned in 1965. Therefore, the vacuum left out by a high turnover of experts led to contentions within the Rhodesian coffee industry.

The shortage of coffee experts continued affecting the coffee industry. It also created animosity among farmers and between farmers and government. When it was known that one coffee expert, Pratt was about to resign, a horticulturist Taylor, was asked to understudy him. However, the Rhodesia National Farmers Union (RNFU) soon cried foul over this arrangement as it viewed the understudying of a specialist post by somebody who had only had 2 years as an undue risk. The RNFU actually argued that this was tantamount to “the blind leading the

⁸⁰⁶ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, Minutes taken at a meeting held in the Ministry, 24 January 1967.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, from H. Duncan Abraham to secretary for Agriculture, 21 May 1968

⁸⁰⁸ About UDI and the Rhodesian Sanctions, see D.M. Rowe, *Manipulating the Market: Understanding Economic Sanctions, Institutional Change and Political Unity of White Rhodesia*, (Michigan, Michigan University Press, 2001).

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, from H. Duncan Abraham to secretary for Agriculture, 21 May 1968.

⁸¹⁰ S. Maravanyika, ‘Soil Conservation and the White Agrarian Environment’,

blind” arguing that, “He will only be able to give the vaguest superficial advice on coffee”.⁸¹¹ C.G. Tracey, the Vice President of the RNFU elaborated on these concerns:

I know from my travels in the eastern districts that confidence has been shaken in coffee because of the knowledge that Pratt may not be succeeded by a man of equivalent calibre, and whilst I do not even know Mr Taylor and have no criticism of him as a horticulturist, my remarks are made on the matter of principle. I believe that the early appointment or the knowledge that an appointment is going to be made of an experienced Arabica Coffee man will do much to stimulate development in Eastern districts, and if we are going to expand and extend the crop to the Africans sector, this becomes even more important.⁸¹²

Equally aggrieved was “the Eastern Districts Coffee King” and chairman of the RCGA, Mazorati,⁸¹³ who went on to criticise the Public Services Board for the “short sighted policy” of underpaying agricultural specialists. At one of its Annual General Meeting, he announced that members of the association had prepared to plant up to 1 228 acres, a project which represented “no mean effort and expense on the part of 59 members of this association”. The absence of a coffee specialist was therefore, “a dark side of this picture”. He, thus, argued that the Public Service Board should follow the example of industry and commerce, where specialised men were paid, “the salary they are worth to country”.⁸¹⁴

Similar concerns were raised by the Rural Land Board, (RLB) which, after a tour of the coffee settlers in the Chipinga area, considered the services of a government coffee specialist “most urgently required”.⁸¹⁵ A response from the concerned Ministry reiterated that coffee experts were “extremely scarce commodities” adding that, following the departure of most such people from Kenya, “we are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit anyone with coffee experience”.⁸¹⁶

Joseph Kurebwa notes that the tobacco industry’s dependence on the export market made it very vulnerable after the imposition of sanctions after Smith’s declaration of the UDI. Hence, farmers, who had predominantly grown tobacco diversified into other crops.⁸¹⁷ One of these

⁸¹¹ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee Growing, 1964, from C.G. Tracey, Vice President, R.N.F.U, to Ministry of Agriculture, 15 July 1964.

⁸¹² Ibid.

⁸¹³ *The Umtali Post*, 9 June 1967.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, letter from F. Kirtin, for Director of Lands, to Secretary for Agriculture, 8 November 1967.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid, from D. Espach, Secretary for Agriculture to Director of Lands, 13 November 1967.

⁸¹⁷ J. Kurebwa, *The Politics of Economic Sanctions on Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), 1965-1979*, (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2012), 187.

was Geoff Courtney, who left tobacco for coffee farming in the Vumba area. For Courtney, the problem laid with government poor remuneration. He gave a 1952 case when Dr Simpson, who was hired from the USA to advise tobacco farmers in Rhodesia, was paid £5 000, “in the days when the £ was a £”. He therefore considered it “ridiculous” that more than fifteen years later, the coffee specialist was paid £1 500.⁸¹⁸ As a compromise, the RCGA suggested that should government provide it with the salary allocation for a specialist, it was prepared to make up for the salary difference.⁸¹⁹ This offer is a clear indication that the RCGA was eager to see this industry grow.

Coffee growers were also concerned about the challenges confronting the Chipinga Coffee Research Station. This station carried out field trials on and off the site, focusing on coffee pests and diseases; propagation for improved varieties; as well as cultivars and clones. At the same time, the tea research foundation of Malawi was the main source of expertise for tea production and research, with the Chipinga experimental Station serving as a liaison between the foundation and local tea growers. Information for both coffee and tea production was disseminated through visits to farmers, annual field days and newsletters.⁸²⁰ However, the coffee growers’ body protested that the station was both poorly funded and staffed. For instance, in 1966, the experiment station reported that its research activities “have continued much along the same lines as in previous years... expansion and development being limited by a small budget and the difficulties of recruiting staff.”⁸²¹ Consequently, the farmers could not get the best services, especially with regards to critical areas like variety, herbicide, and fertiliser trials as noted in the lament: “We will not get the best out of this experimental station unless it is run by a qualified man”,⁸²² as noted at the “first class standards” of Kenya’s Jacaranda station.⁸²³ Comparing it to one South African Research station, Mazorati said:

On my recent visit to the Nelspruit Citrus and tropical fruit Research Institute, [South Africa] I found there conditions of research far in advance of anything we have on our Research Station at Chipinga. They appear to be tackling the coffee experiments in systematic and intelligent way.⁸²⁴

⁸¹⁸*The Umtali Post*, 3 August 1966.

⁸¹⁹*The Umtali Post*, 9 June 1967.

⁸²⁰NAZ, S4201, Rhodesia, Chipinga Experiment Station, Annual Report; 1969/71.

⁸²¹ NAZ, S4201, Rhodesia, Chipinga Experiment Station, Annual Report; 1966.

⁸²²*The Umtali Post*, 9 June 1967.

⁸²³ NAZ, L: 1.7.4F, B: 93835, Coffee Settlement Scheme, RCG Coop Company, Minutes of the Second A.G.M.; 29 July 1966.

⁸²⁴ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, RCGA, 6th Annual General Meeting, Chairman’s report; 9 June 1967.

However, the paradox, as noted earlier, was that South Africa never made headway in coffee production, and continued to be a coffee importing nation.

The RCGA, however, went beyond remonstrations. It proceeded to form a technical committee consisting of ten members that were drawn mostly from the coffee growers. The committee met regularly during the course of the years,⁸²⁵ thereby enabling farmers to participate more actively in the affairs of the research station.⁸²⁶ As a result, the Rhodesia Coffee Industry witnessed phenomenal growth, despite the challenges encountered, and the availability of a lucrative South African market was a crucial factor in this development. The acreage under coffee, for instance, doubled from 866 acres in 1966 to 1 872 in 1967.⁸²⁷ The total output for that year actually trebled, with 28 growers producing 493, 767 lbs, from 154, 539 the previous year. It is also interesting to note that the Chipinga growers produced the bulk of the 1967 crop, 315 232 lbs, followed by Umtali and Melsetter, which produced 149 671 and 22 533 lbs respectively.⁸²⁸ Table 6 below shows the expansion in Rhodesian coffee industry from 1963 to 1968.

Table 6: Expansion of Rhodesian Coffee Industry, 1963-1968

⁸²⁵ NAZ, S4201, Rhodesia, Chipinga Experiment Station, Annual Report; 1968/69.

⁸²⁶ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, RCGA, 6th Annual General Meeting, Chairman's report; 9 June 1967.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 14 March 1968.

Year	Area Planted (acres)	Area Productive (acres)	Crop reaped (tons)	Yields per Acre
1963	520	190	25.7	278
1964	570	320	61.0	382
1965	460	340	57.0	340
1966	900	385	72.0	374
1967	1 660	390	130.0	667
1968	2 880	880	210.0	477

Source: Location, C8.3.4F, Box, 98586; Coffee Production Vol. 6, from E.W. McKinlay to Secretary for Commerce and Industry.

In May 1971, the *Farmers Weekly* magazine published a story about “Rhodesia Coffee Beat Boom”, which highlighted the growth of this industry,

Only 8 seasons ago, the area planted to coffee in this country covered less than 160ha. In the intervening years, the area fairly increased rapidly until today it is not far short of the immediate target of 2 400 ha. The value of the annual crop at the moment is conservatively estimated at R 300 000, and is expected to rise to more than R 2 million within the next 8 years.⁸²⁹

Interestingly, despite this growth, Rhodesia remained a net importer of coffee. In January 1967, Fennell indicated that coffee growers were not interested in the internal market, adding that only low grade coffee and broken beans may be sold locally.⁸³⁰ The coffee sector continued lobbying for suspension of duty for coffee imports, which meant that cheaper coffee continued flowing into the country. This promoted local coffee growers who then exported better quality coffee, allowing them to earn higher prices and consolidate the sectors’ export market.⁸³¹ This condition was not unique to the coffee industry. Kurebwa notes that it was a common policy during the UDI to export high quality products while replacing them with cheaper imports.⁸³² As a result, the Rhodesian tea industry, like the coffee sector, also continued expanding during

⁸²⁹*The Farmers Weekly*, 26 May 1971.

⁸³⁰ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, Minutes taken at a meeting held in the Ministry, 24 January 1967.

⁸³¹ Ibid, from E.W. KcKinlay, for Secretary of Agriculture, to Secretary for Commerce and Industry, 15 November 1967.

⁸³² J. Kurebwa, *The Politics of Economic Sanctions on Rhodesia*, 189.

the UDI, exporting high quality tea, while importing cheaper Malawian tea mostly to satisfy the local African market. According to Kurebwa, “it made good commercial sense to import large quantities of Malawian Tea in order to fill the gap created by the exportation of high quality Rhodesian brands,” and also had the effect of undermining sanctions.⁸³³ Therefore, coffee was strategic for the sanction busting politics of the post 1965 Rhodesian state.

At the same time, a big question developed on the need to regulate and establish quality control measures within the coffee industry. This is an area which shows the struggles within the coffee growing industry. While the majority of the growers were members of the RCGA, some remained outside the armpit of this organisation. Consequently, it was difficult to monitor those outside the organisation, although their activities could affect the outlook of the Rhodesian coffee industry. The RCGA was therefore eager that legislation be framed to reverse this, as its Chairman explained;

We think that all coffee growers should be obliged to join the association, that a seed and plant register should be maintained and growers be obliged to notify the association if they dispose of any seed or nursery plant; the control of pests and diseases should be made compulsory; that all parchment coffee be hulled and graded by the cooperative company; and that coffee roaster and wholesalers be licensed to operate the co-op.⁸³⁴

It was argued that legislation was necessary so as to set and maintain standards. Kenya was a reference point again, “...as is the case in Kenya, where coffee is graded to one standard”.⁸³⁵ That legislation was also necessary for the maintenance of standards was justified on grounds that: “Otherwise individual growers would grade their coffee differently from each other, and as a result coffee production from Rhodesia may get a bad name”.⁸³⁶ This issue was indeed discussed at RCGA meetings, reported in the media and taken up with the legislators. Sound and convincing as it may have appeared, it aroused ill feelings and animosity among some coffee growers. For instance, K.E. Marshall of Muganhu Farm was of the view that this was motivated by selfish interests and would promote monopoly of business opportunities in this sector. In a confidential letter to the Director of RSS, Marshall expressed strong reservations arguing that the proposed clause to limit coffee roasts and wholesales to those licensed by the Cooperative Company was aimed against two earliest growers who, for some years, roasted

⁸³³*Ibid.*

⁸³⁴*The Umtali Post*, 9 June 1967.

⁸³⁵*Ibid.*

⁸³⁶ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, Minutes taken at a meeting held in the Ministry, 24 January 1967.

and sold coffee locally. He further argued that denial of this right would conflict with government policy that “almost every product of the land may be sold by the farmer to whom he pleases” and that, “it would be a dangerous precedent”.⁸³⁷ He also criticised Mazorati for dominating the committees of both the RCGA and the Coffee Growers Cooperative Company, adding that; “the dictatorship in coffee affairs is likely to become absolute if government gives way...” As a result, Marshall was adamant that in the interest of small growers, neither the Chipinga Experimental Station nor any specialist who may be employed should come under the control of the RCGA.⁸³⁸

Thus, the Southern Rhodesian Coffee industry grew out of the decline of east African industry. It also had the blessings of the Rhodesian state, which assisted by creating an environment supportive for its growth. The fact that there were also limitations to this development is noted through the contestations between the RCGA and the state. The next section explores state initiated coffee settlement scheme developed in Chipinga District with the objective of stimulating interest in coffee production in the country.

The Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, 1964-1969

In 1964, Government came up with the Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, a five year project under which it sponsored ten farmers for intensive coffee production. It was hoped that this would stimulate further interest in the coffee sector. Government availed loans to the farmers so that they could put at least 50 acres under coffee over a five year period. In addition, it made arrangements for the purchase of land from owners who had agreed to transfer their farming units to government, which then leased the lands to selected applicants with options to purchase.⁸³⁹

The programme began with choosing the appropriate land. During the course of 1964, CONEX examined the climate, soils and topography of the region as part of the land delineation exercise. Specialists, such as one Billard, were hired to survey the region and, as noted in

⁸³⁷ Ibid, confidential from K.E. Marshall, Muganhu Coffee farm Vumba, to Director of Research and Specialist Services, 13 June 1967.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ NAZ, L:32.15.9F, B:126949, Lands, Coffee Settlement Scheme, Vol.4,R.R. Jack, Director of Lands to secretary of Lands, (undated).

Billard's report of the Vumba, Melsetter and Chipinga areas, the region compared favourably with coffee growing regions of east Africa. Billard also noted with regards to Chipinga that:

...an area of 25- 30 miles radius of Chipinga itself, has, in my opinion, vast potential. It has been proved that coffee, tea, maize, peas, in fact all the ingredients which go to make a successful farm, economy, can all be grown in this area. Cattle do well; beekoners are being got away at 51/2 months, which is good by any standards. It must be one of the very few areas in the world where coffee, tea, tobacco, wheat, maize, citrus, etc. will grow on the same farm, with livestock doing equally well.⁸⁴⁰

Likewise, members of the RLB made similar inspection tours of the Eastern Districts. They came to similar conclusions, but specified that Chipinga, Melsetter and Vumba had 10 000, 3 000, and 2 000 acres suitable for coffee production, respectively.⁸⁴¹ Another pertinent observation was that "privately owned farms in this region are, generally speaking, far too large for any individual to develop", hence they recommended that government should encourage the subdivision of such properties, "so that the industry can be developed to the optimum extent".⁸⁴² Following these recommendations, CONEX sent a circular to all farmers who owned land that was suitable for coffee production. Government also enquired whether the landowners were willing to subdivide their units for coffee production purposes. In response, more than 50 farmers offered their land, totalling 50 000 acres.⁸⁴³ Government's facilitation role in this process involved negotiating with the landowners to lease the land with or without option to purchase. The minimum lease period was 40 years at 6 percent of capital value. In addition, each lease was free of any rental for the first five years, the period requested for a coffee tree to come to bearing.⁸⁴⁴

In December 1964, government flight an advertisement, which was widely publicised in two issues of each of the *Government Gazette*, *Rhodesia Farmer*, *Bulawayo Chronicle* and *Rhodesia Herald*. The advertisement summarised person specifications and the government support package for the project:

Applications are invited for persons interested in leasing land, with an option of purchase for the purpose of producing coffee in the Chipinga District. Applicants should have a

⁸⁴⁰ NAZ, L: 1.7.4F, B: 93835, Coffee General, Vol. 1, Rhodesia Wattle Company, Billard Report, 20 July 1965.

⁸⁴¹ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee growing, 1964, from D.G. Goddard, Chairman RLB to Lord Gruhan, Report on the Coffee Potential of the Eastern Districts, (undated).

⁸⁴² Ibid, From H.R. Hack, senior Planning Officer, to Chairman, Rural Land Board, 23 March 1965.

⁸⁴³ Ibid, R.H. Hack, Senior Planning Officer; Coffee production in Southern Rhodesia and a preliminary survey of the proposed Chipinga Coffee Scheme, paper number 69, 3 February 1965.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid, from D.G. Goddard, Chairman RLB to Lord Gruhan, Report on the Coffee Potential of the Eastern Districts, (undated).

general farming experience, and a minimum uncommitted capital, machinery, including the value of relevant farming equipment, of £2 500. Preference may be given to those with capital in excess of the minimum. Government is prepared to assist approved applicants in obtaining leases of suitable land, and by making available loans during the first 5 years, after which period the crop should be in economical production. Farms are expected to be about 250 – 400 acres in extent, and will contain a minimum of 50 acres suitable for growing coffee as well as some other arable land...by 11 January 1965.⁸⁴⁵

The scheme aroused widespread interest, although it had targeted only ten farmers. There were more than forty enquiries, mostly about capital requirements, government assistance, climatic conditions, rainfall patterns, soil types and potential markets. Some of these came from southern and east African whites. Most of those from east Africa wanted to escape possible reprisals by relocating to Rhodesia. Their letters provide clues on their challenges, experiences and expectations. F.P. Hvass's doubt over his future in Kenya;

I have been working with coffee for over 15 years in East Africa and now, after my farm has been taken away by Government for African settlement, am managing 13 000 acre with 465 acres under coffee, I am interested. One never knows how long it will be possible to stay here in Kenya.⁸⁴⁶

A number had wide experience in coffee production, processing and marketing. The 47 year old H. Bucher, who had lived in Tanzania since 1934 wanted to pursue a career in Southern Rhodesia, either on an advisory capacity or as a prospective independent planter. Bucher bemoaned the “current developments in Tanzania”, which “are such as to prompt me to look for possible alternatives for a livelihood elsewhere”. His experience in the coffee industry was impeccable:

During the whole of my residence in this country, I have been connected either the coffee industry, and for the last 17 years, I have held, and still hold, the post of General Manager of this country's largest individual coffee plantation, with nearly 1000 acres under coffee and an annual production of 600 tons. I have also been, since many years, a member of Tanganyika Coffee Board, a statutory board controlling the marketing of the whole of Tanzania's coffee crop”. I am also a member of the Board in the Tanganyika's Coffee Curing Company Ltd, in Moshi, in whose mills the whole of Tanganyika's Arabica Coffee is processed and prepared for export. I am for the third year running the President of Tanganyika Coffee Growers Association, Ltd. A body of some 300 plantation owners with an aggregate production of some 8-10 000 tons annually and one of the four

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid, Ministry of Mines and Lands, Land Settlement Scheme based on Coffee, draft Advertisement.

⁸⁴⁶ NAZ, L: 32.15.11F, B: 126961, Coffee Settlement Scheme, Enquiries, letter from F.P. Hvass, Kenya, to Ministry of Agriculture, 18 January 1965.

“designated societies”, through which the whole of the country’s coffee production is channelled.⁸⁴⁷

In another case, Roca-Ferran claimed that he had been in the coffee sector since 1940, when his father bought a coffee estate in Spanish Guinea. He wished to come to Rhodesia for good and “make Rhodesia my homeland”. He lost his coffee estate in the Beni area of Zaire after which he managed coffee estates in Tanzania for 6 years. He added that “during all that time, I won several times the “top quality price”, and been second in production throughout the whole of Tanzania”.⁸⁴⁸ Enquiries also came from settlers who had just left east Africa and were searching for countries to settle. The Knowles couple and ex-Kenya farmers sold their coffee estate and, in September 1964, settled in South Africa. Mrs Knowles was frustrated as “... the sugar people appear to have acquired nearly all the land which is suitable for coffee” adding “South Africa seems more sugar conscious than coffee conscious”. With dim prospects for coffee production in South Africa, this family soon considered South Africa as a temporary stop, “till we get permanently settled”.⁸⁴⁹ These are just a few examples of several hundreds who were willing, or who did relocate to Rhodesia. They only serve to show that decolonisation triggered a wave of migrations. White interests for settling in Rhodesia was also aroused by Ian Smith’s UDI, which provided wide prospects of a new home for the white communities.

A number of Rhodesians were also interested in this scheme. These included D.W. Hay, who having served 4 years in the BSAP, wanted to join the farming industry.⁸⁵⁰ Other farmers from the Chipinga District also wanted to diversify into coffee agriculture. These are exemplified by S.W. du Plessis, an owner of a 2 100 acre farm situated 11 miles out of Chipinga town. His interest was aroused by a radio broadcast in January 1965 to the extent that even though he did not have the required capital; he felt he could raise it from his 150 head of cattle.⁸⁵¹ The Rhodesian effort to stimulate coffee agriculture had thus begun on the right track. After identifying suitable land in Chipinga District, landowners subsequently offered their farms on terms Government had anticipated.

The initial two coffee settlement sites were close to Chipinga town. This was deliberately meant to facilitate easy access to power and roads. Interestingly, most surrounding landowners offered to sell or lease their farms, an indication that the properties were underutilised. Government

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, from H. Bucher, Arusha Tanzania, to Ministry of Agriculture, 18 January 1965.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid, from G. Roca-Ferran, Spain, to Mr Doug Garner, 23 March 1967.

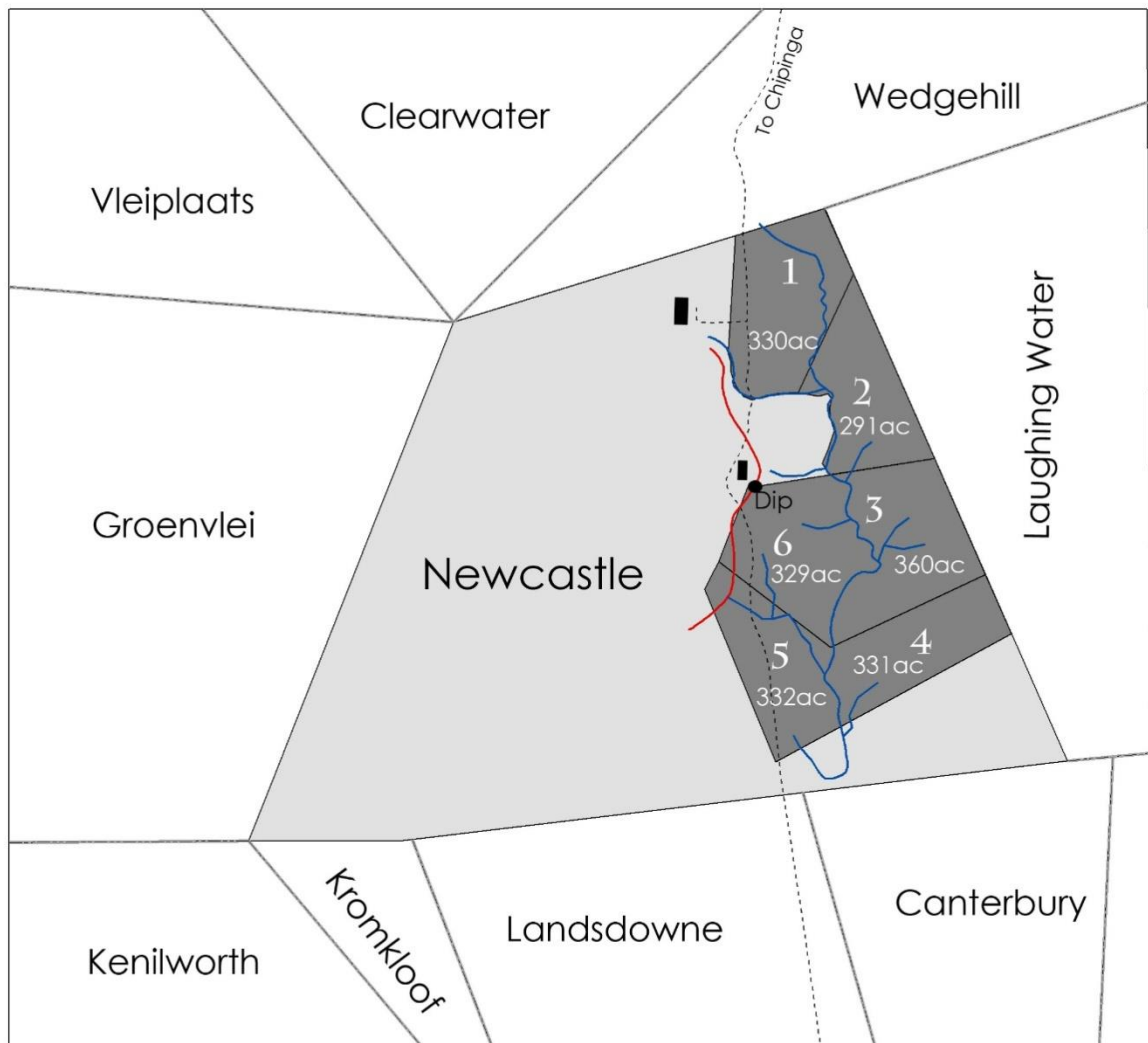
⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, from R.V. Knowles, South Africa, to Secretary of Agriculture, 4 March 1965.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid, from D.W. Hay, Harare to Ministry of Agriculture, 28 July 1965.








⁸⁵¹ Ibid, from S.W. du Plessis, Wankie, to Ministry of Agriculture, 23 January 1965.

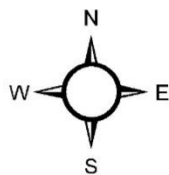
had the choices of Newcastle, the Meadows, Fortuna and Gooie Hoop. It finally settled on Newcastle, where the owner, Z.F. Joubert, offered half the farm, which produced six units, averaging 330 acres each. Five of these units were subsequently occupied during the course of 1965. This scheme, situated in the north eastern Chipinga town, became known as the Newcastle Coffee Block, as shown in Map 4 below.

Map 4: Initial Plots, Newcastle Coffee Settlement Block 1965



Key

-  River
-  Furrow
-  Road
-  Other plantations
-  Newcastle subdivisions
-  Newcastle plantation
-  Building

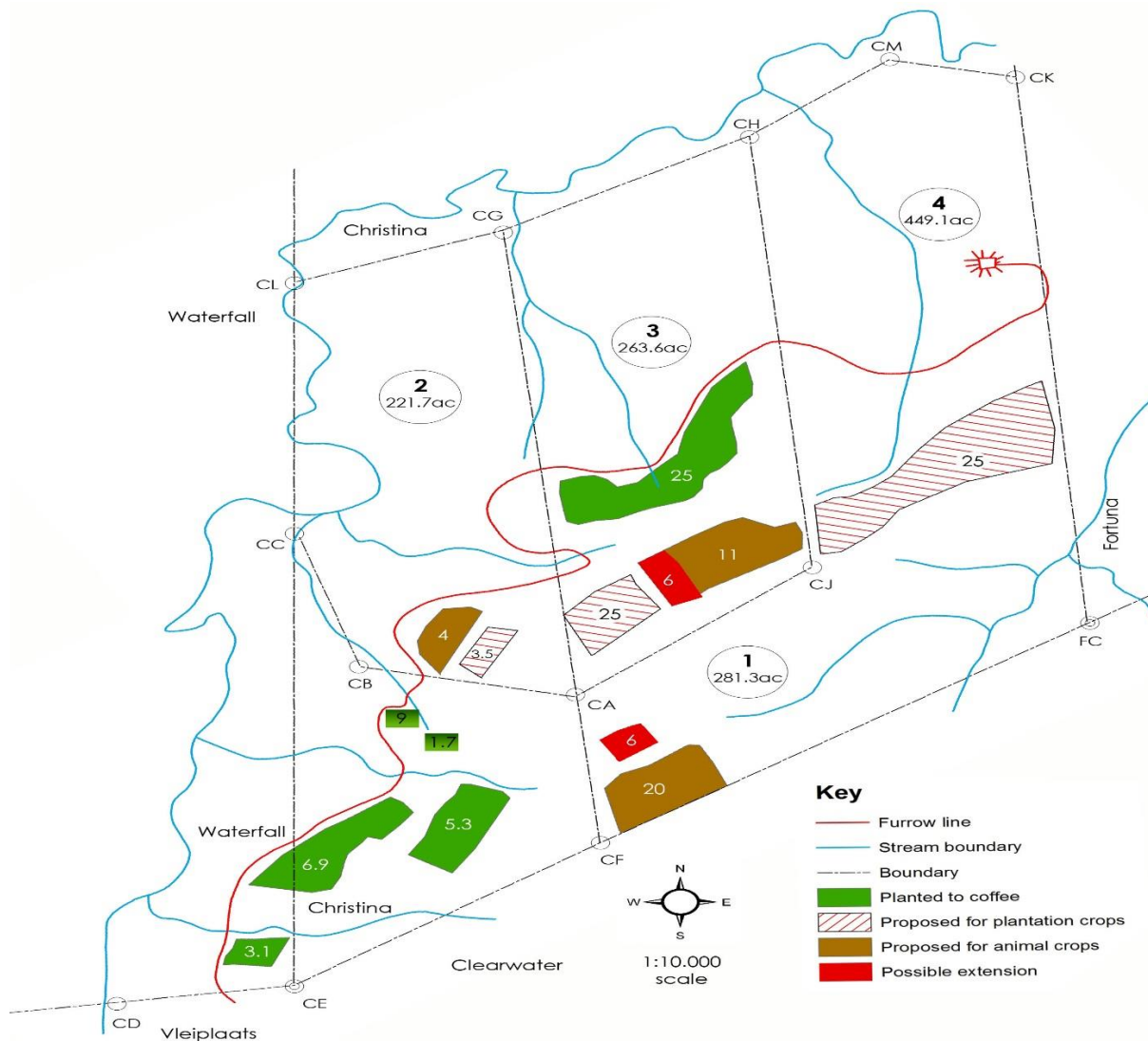


1: 50,000
scale

Source: NAZ, L: 4.6.7R. B: 81139 Joubert Z.F. Newcastle Subdivisions No. 1

The second property was Fortuna Farm, where Government competed with Malcolm Burrow of Southdown Tea Holdings, who wanted to develop it into a tea estate.⁸⁵² Government acquired the 1 200 acre farm and joined it with an adjacent Christina Farm. It was during the course of 1966 that four growers occupied these Lots, which became known as the Christina Block, and is shown in Map 5.⁸⁵³

Map 5: Christina Coffee Settlement Block



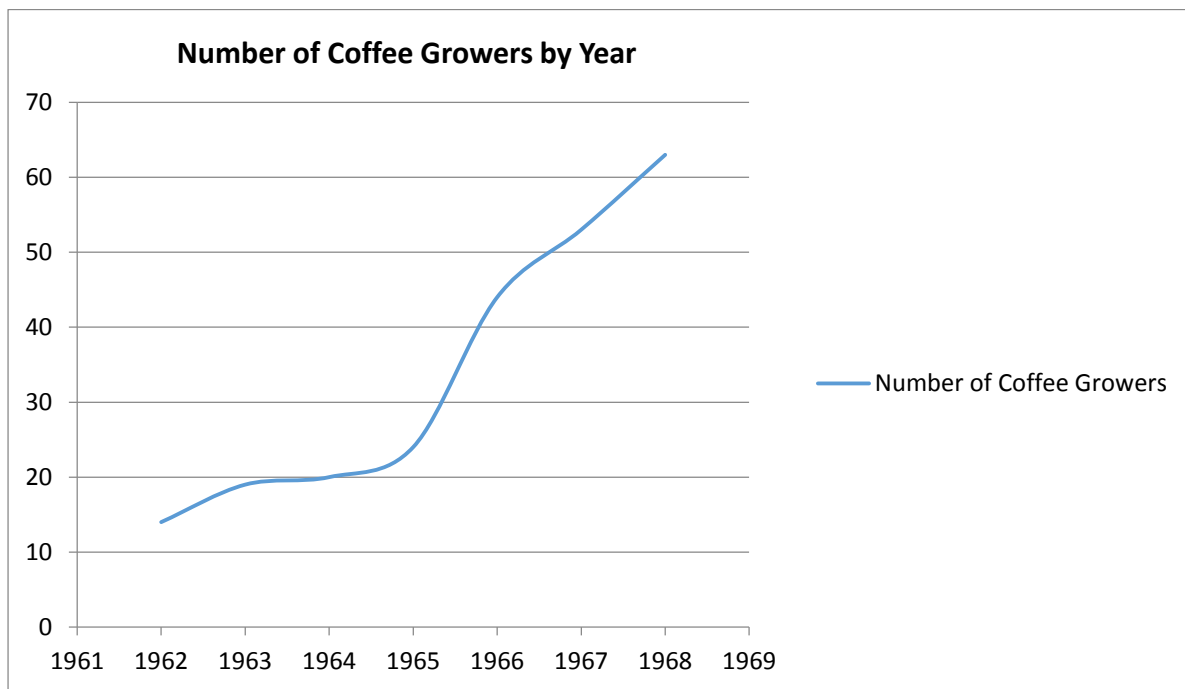
Source: NAZ, L: 31.6.11F B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga, Vol.1

⁸⁵² NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee growing, 1964, Report on the visit to Chipinga, W. Teague Conex, and I. Stansby & P. Murphy, Economists), 19/20 November, 1964.

⁸⁵³ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, W.V. Lacey, 'Minute Sheet', Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, 8 January 1968.

The Government Coffee Settlement Scheme was therefore implemented within the context of a rising coffee growing sector. The impact of the coffee settlement scheme for the coffee sector is shown in Graph 2 below.

Graph 2: Growth of the Coffee Growers



Source: Constructed from RCGA, June 1968, Monthly Newsletter, No. 66.

The coffee settlement scheme brought marked change on the landscape and on land use activities. For Z.F. Joubert of the Newcastle Farm, this raised another issue of taxation which he raised with the commissioner of taxes. Before offering his farm, Joubert raised more than 2 000 cattle on this property. He entrusted most of these to some of his tenants, who were scattered across the farm.⁸⁵⁴ Upon offering the farm, Joubert had to drastically reduce his stock, compelling him to write to the Commissioner of taxes, drawing attention to the tax implications of large scale disposal of his livestock. His concern was that the large scale stock disposal would bring his annual income tax into the super tax bracket. He therefore asked for a concession, as was the case with exceptional drought induced disposals, to allow his sales income to be spread, for tax assessment purposes, over three years.⁸⁵⁵ The Director of Lands supported the request. This was in view of the fact that, in negotiating with landowners for the coffee scheme, the government was dependent on their good will to availing suitable land for

⁸⁵⁴ Interview, Chengetai Mutidye, 26 December 2014.

⁸⁵⁵ NAZ, L: 38.8.9F, B: 69596, Coffee growing, 1964, from J.L Reid, Director of Lands to Secretary for Mines and Lands, 16 February 1965.

the coffee scheme. He explained, "... it may well be that some owners will be deterred from offering land, if they feel that the profits from consequential sale of their livestock will be seriously reduced by increased taxation".⁸⁵⁶ This state's willingness to waiver standing policy is indicative of its determination for the success of the project.⁸⁵⁷ The section that follows discusses the experiences of the coffee growers who were under this state sponsored scheme.

Settlement, Progress and Challenges

By July 1967, farmers were at loggerheads with Government, as it became clear that the scheme was more expensive than originally envisaged in 1964. The five year budget, originally set at £14 000, was subsequently revised up to £18 000 to cater for the initially underestimated labour, fertiliser, fuel, oil and overhead as well as domestic living expenses. Additional budgetary costs were also incurred in the purchase of irrigation equipment and provision of mulch material, which were later on found to be essential.⁸⁵⁸

Additional side-line activities also increased the costs of the scheme. It soon became imperative for Coffee growers to diversify into side-lines activities. This is a process whereby growers had to raise incomes through utilising idle land while waiting for their coffee to mature.⁸⁵⁹ However, this disadvantaged the African labourers as they lost the extra land which they used to cultivate supplementary food crops. The main side lines included dairying, sheep breeding, fruit, maize and vegetable production.

The settlement scheme was under the watchful eye of Government officers. The government kept regular reports on farmers' activities as part of its surveillance on the settlement scheme. These reports provide insightful information regarding the early challenges to coffee farming, state-farmer and farmer-farmer relations, the contribution of white women as well as climatic and other challenges. A striking feature of the reports is that this was a new type of settler, some of whom left the scheme because they could not withstand hardships of rural life, an experience, quite contrary to the experiences and endurances of the earlier Afrikaner community. In February 1968, a government agricultural economist, I. Ricklands visited all

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ This should be contextualized within the UDI diversification measures that were meant for a self-sustain economic system.

⁸⁵⁸ NAZ, RC, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, W.V. Lacey, Chief Agricultural Economist, Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, assessment of the capital requirements of Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, 13 July 1967.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga, Vol. 1, letter from A.V. Oates, Assistant Director, Fields, to Secretary for Agriculture, 23 December 1966.

the farmers and made contrasting observations about their progress. On the Newcastle Block, he was impressed by C.B. Prince's, headway, further describing the farmer as hardworking, proud of achievements, and adding further that "he has already started building his factory and hopes to reap a crop this year". Ricklands also praised Prince for being "very money wise" because, "has not completed his house ... will not do so until he has some spare cash".⁸⁶⁰

However, state-farmer and farmer-farmer relations were not always harmonious. There were animosities between farmers and the state just as acrimony also prevailed between neighbours. This is evidenced by Ricklands' report on Prince, in which he noted that:

His long moan and worry is that Mr Harvey is dense planting and without proper spraying may encourage diseases which may eventually affects his crop. His plantation is neat and in excellent condition. It would be a grave pity should his crop be affected by diseases through no fault of his own.⁸⁶¹

As a result, Ricklands regretted why this farmer, T. Harvey, was accepted in the first place. He was annoyed that Harvey was more concerned about "...the precious gladioli and rose trees than coffee for which the unit was allocated to him". He was also not pleased by Harvey's inappropriate agricultural practices:

It was observed that Mr Harvey was cultivating downhill with no contours. On being questioned about this by Mr Oubory, he replied that he had done this with Conex approval and stated that in fact, there were flat contours. Conex at Chipinga denied this and an order will be served upon him during the next visit.⁸⁶²

Finally, Ricklands made the conclusion that "...quite frankly, it would be a good thing if he did pull out. He has concentrated more on his bulbs than coffee and I feel that he has used the scheme in order to grow his precious gladioli and roses".⁸⁶³ Ricklands' concerns shows that the state was primarily concerned about the coffee scheme. It was therefore not amused when coffee growers show greater interest in other activities apart from coffee.

There was also animosity with extension service staff that provided advice to the coffee growers on a more regular basis. For instance, T.J. Rutherford wrote to Assistant Director of RSS, P. Donovan, protesting against the Officer in Charge of Chipinga Experiment Station, L. Green's visits to his farm. The highlights of the complaint are that:

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid, I. Ricklands, Memorandum to the Rural Land Board, 12 February 1968.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ Ibid.

Several times recently and in the past, your Mr Green has visited my farm without prior knowledge or permission. I object to this most sharply and so not intend to tolerate this sort of behaviour. I would be grateful therefore if you would be kind enough to see that this is not repeated in the future.⁸⁶⁴

Green, however, expressed shock at Rutherford's letter, insisting that he visited the farm three times with other Agricultural Officials, including a March 1968 visit when a disease, Fusarium, was confirmed on his farm. Green demanded that Rutherford should substantiate his case or make a public apology.⁸⁶⁵ Pressed to give, in strict confidence, specific reasons for not wishing to have Green on his farm,⁸⁶⁶ Rutherford responded,

What leaves me aghast is that your Mr Green has taken it upon himself to move confidential reports of my farming activities, which finds their way to the Ministry of Lands. I do not work for government. I do not intend to be subjected to these dubious antics.⁸⁶⁷

When Green later resigned from Government and Donovan had to inform Rutherford⁸⁶⁸ and the RCGA about this development:

I would also like you to know that, apart from being attracted by a higher salary, I am convinced Mr Green's decided to leave us because he has found most unpleasant the animosity and antagonism he has encountered while in charge of Chipinga station. I do hope the next incumbent of this job will be given kinder treatment by certain growers.⁸⁶⁹

Coffee growers received great measure of state support, probably different from the support earlier farmers got. Despite this, here was a new class of settler ready to confront the state whenever he felt his rights were being interfered with.

The state also fell into conflict with farmers with expensive tastes. This particularly applies to those who found it difficult adjusting to rural farming lives. The farmer T. Harvey's case in which he sought financial support for improving living standards on the farm is a clear example. In April 1967, Harvey complained that the financial support given to the coffee growers was inadequate, insisting that the budget for coffee production was a complete underestimation. He explained that the £1, 000 loan he received previously had been expended on lime and fertilizer,

⁸⁶⁴ NAZ, L: 1. 7. 4F, B: 93835, Coffee General Vol. 1, From T. J. Rutherford, stamped, to Assistant Director of Research and Specialist Services, 20 December 1968.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid, from L. Green, Chipinga Experiment Station, to Director, RSS, 7 January 1969.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid, from P.A. Donovan, Assistant Director, RSS, to J.J. Rutherford, 21 December 1968,

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid, from T.J. Rutherford to Department of RSS, 6 January 1969 (emphasis not mine).

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid, from P.A. Donovan, RSS, to T.J. Rutherford, 30 January 1969,

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid, from P.A. Donovan to Chairman, RCGA, 30 January 1969.

yet he still needed to develop the irrigation infrastructure. Moreover, there were other costs associated with his 50 acres side-lines project on velvet beans, fodder, meals, soya beans, gladioli bulbs, rose trees and coffee plants. Harvey added:

Now, I get down to the million dollar question. After all the above information, is it possible for me to have a further £1, 000 this year? The reason I require this money is that I have to start building my house. I have got up to roof height and all paid for but have not enough money to finish the house. I will have to use the house for two or three months to store my cash crops in, so it is very urgent that I finish it. With my money from this year's crop and I hope an extra £1, 000 from the Director of lands, I will have enough money to fertilise my coffee, cash crops, and finish my house. The house will cost in the region of £600 to make it habitable, and I will improve it as money becomes available.⁸⁷⁰

The report on J.A. Taylor was very critical of the grower's "lavish lifestyle";

An Irishman, also ex-civil servant with expensive tastes. As previously reported in a matter of 18 months, will have received over £8, 000, and still wants more! He was uneasy when I approached him on finance. I gather he had approached F.I.F. for £2 000 for an additional loan for irrigation...he has built a very expansive homestead- which is not yet completed.⁸⁷¹

As a result, there were concerns about the need to monitor farmers' expenditures closely. One Senior Economist of the Economics and Markets department, W.V. Lacey, noted that while some farmers made determined efforts to minimise expenditure, others were irresponsible. This observation is noted in his statement that: "Ideally, there should be a man on the spot who holds the purse strings and who would decide whether expenditure on particular items is really necessary for the operation".⁸⁷² Earlier on in July 1967, Lacey had expressed reservations concerning "considerable variation in development costs, especially regarding high expenditure on dwelling houses" and that, "it strikes me that as much supervision of credit is required for these European farmers as there is for African farmers".⁸⁷³ Consequently, the Land Inspector of Umtali, Mr Oubory, was asked to make a thorough check on previous payments

⁸⁷⁰ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol.1, letter from T. Harvey, Director of Lands, 30 April 1967.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid, Ricklands, Memorandum to the Land Board, Coffee Settler Scheme, 12 February 1968.

⁸⁷² Ibid, W.V. Lacey, 'Minute Sheet', Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme 8 January 1968.

⁸⁷³ Ibid, V. Lacey, Chief Agricultural Economist, Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, assessment of the capital requirements of Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, 13 July 1967.

to farmers, as it was “alarming to note how much money some of the settlers have received in a short space of time and still want more”.⁸⁷⁴

The coffee settlement scheme also shades light on the role played by white women in the Rhodesian farming sectors. Among the growers who made a significant progress right from the onset was J. D. Whitney of Christina Block. Whitney gave up a directorship position at a private company in 1966 to settle for coffee production. He was described as “determined to succeed” and perceived positively in that “He is very hardworking man and we were impressed with his coffee...”⁸⁷⁵ His side-line comprised seven dairy cows. However, the contributions of Whitney’s wife need to be appreciated. Mrs Whitney had a job in Chipinga and so drove there regularly, taking milk from the farm for delivery to the Cheese factory, “from which the family got an income of £18/£22 per month”. She also paid for the education of their daughter, who was in her final year at the teachers’ college. The report ended with the view that “He [Whitney] is the least of our worries- an asset to the scheme”.⁸⁷⁶

Villaprino’s case, however, shows the other side of the coin. Villaprano took over Newcastle’s Lot 3, in October 1967, following the death of Van der Meeburg. Although Villaprano knew “coffee farming very well”, he had difficulties with English language as he was Spaniard. He also encountered other challenges such as calculations involving the British Pound Sterling and writing and translating official letters. But more burdensome was his wife:

What is very worrying indeed is that his young wife is used to city life and is not prepared to remain on the unit. She finds life too quiet and uninteresting and it was very evident that she is most unhappy. This has an adverse effect on Mr Villaprino who is very keen on making a success and he approached me for permission to have a manager... She is quite prepared to live in Salisbury and he talked about exporting items such as skimmed milk to Spain and thus brings in foreign currency. Unless his problems are sorted out very soon, I fear that we will have a serious problem on our hands.⁸⁷⁷

Unsurprisingly, by June 1968, Villaprano had quitted the coffee settlement scheme and was replaced by J. Nissen.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid, I. Ricklands, Memorandum to the Land Board, Coffee Settler Scheme, 12 February 1968.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ NAZ, L: 32.15.9F, 126949, Lands, Coffee Settlement Scheme, W.D. Going, Horticulturist, to Director of Lands, report on frost and cold damage to coffee plantation, p.65, 24 June 1968,

Debates on white women and commercial farming are not unique to the white coffee growers of Chipinga. Farm life has been described fictionally by writers, who include Doris Lessing.⁸⁷⁹ Lessing's novel, the *Grass is singing*, set in the Ngezi area of Central Zimbabwe, represents a monotonous, dispirited view of farm life. The novel describes the experiences of a failed white farmer and his wife, Mary, a town woman who hates the boring rural life. The wife suffers heavily from isolation, poverty and depression, and the plot culminates in the murder of the wife by a black house servant. Related to this, Deborah Kirkwood's⁸⁸⁰ work discusses the broader colonial context, especially the difficulties confronting white rural farmers in general. She argues that the isolated nature of rural life made farming a precarious occupation where failure and bankruptcy were often close. Farmers were ruined by natural disasters such as droughts, floods, locusts and epidemics of animal diseases and their own incompetence. Lack of labour caused farm collapses as workers would boycott a farmer "for reasons difficult to discern".⁸⁸¹ She, therefore, maintains that the farmer and his wife had to be partners in this enterprise and concludes that:

Frequently, ruin was avoided only by the wife's work with poultry, dairy and vegetable garden and the immediate cash which this produced. From observation it is clear that a wife's attitude to workers and their family could be crucial. If she handled morning 'clinics' and other encounters with patience, sympathy and interest, a genuine rapport developed between the two worlds of white and black.⁸⁸²

That aside, the story of coffee agriculture was also a story of racial domination. It entailed the appropriation of land and state resources to benefit a white race at the expense of the black communities. A 1968 farmer appraisal report unwittingly gives glaring evidence of the very meagre wages which the Africans earned. For instance, one Newcastle grower with a basic labour force of 24 paid a fixed wage of £4, per month per worker, with no food rations provided. A boss boy and tractor driver received £6 and £7 respectively.⁸⁸³ Yet, during the same year, coffee settlers got between £50 to £70 monthly living allowances from a government support loan.⁸⁸⁴ Therefore, the developmental nature of the coffee scheme needs to be examined in the context of the inherent racialised socio-economic inequalities that came with coffee

⁸⁷⁹ D. Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*, (London, Harper Collins, Publishers, 2007).

⁸⁸⁰ D. Kirkwood, "Settler Wives in Southern Rhodesia: A Case Study", in H. Callan and S. Ardener, (eds.) *The Incorporated Wife*, (London, Croom Helm, 1984).

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid*, 151.

⁸⁸² *Ibid*.

⁸⁸³ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1P.W. Thomas, Chief Agricultural Economist, Economic Appraisal of Lot 3, Newcastle, 7 May, 1968.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid*, W.C. Lacey, Report on J. Whitney, 28 July 1967.

agriculture. The next section is about natural challenge to the coffee settlement scheme, focusing on the Christina Block.

When Nature Takes its Course; the Frost Challenge on Christina Block

The vulnerability of the region to natural disasters became a major challenge for the success of the coffee scheme. Two consecutive frost attacks hit the Christina Coffee Block in 1967 and 1968 leading to intense debates about the future of the Christina Scheme. The first attack, which occurred on 14 June 1967, hit two units severely as temperatures reached freezing point, “subjecting plants to frost injury for more than 6 hours”.⁸⁸⁵ Government officers were concerned and the October 1967 tour of the affected Christina Schemes by members of the RLB resulted in an official acknowledgement of the hazard posed by frost on the scheme. The official team also noted that the government ran the risk of paying out compensation in two years’ time, “if it became apparent that coffee cannot be grown on these two farms because of frost”.⁸⁸⁶ However, it remained resolute that the risk was worth taking and that the scheme should continue, arguing that “There was evidence to substantiate a contention that not all the damage was due to frost”.⁸⁸⁷ There were also problems emanating from use of weak seedlings, premature planting out and lack of frost protection; all pointing to the lack of adequate expertise for coffee production in this region. Nevertheless, the propaganda or public relations motive to the decision that discontinuing the scheme was unwarranted, should be underscored “particularly in view of the effect it would have on the coffee scheme as a whole”.⁸⁸⁸

The frost attack indeed sent waves of panic within both government officials and the coffee farmers. On 5 July 1967, a meeting with all coffee scheme settlers was held in Chipinga.⁸⁸⁹ This was followed by a field day at Chipinga Coffee Experimental Station. Among the attendants was the Minister of Agriculture who sympathised with the settlers and also reminded them that the Mazoe and Premier Citrus Estates were also hit by frost.⁸⁹⁰ Nonetheless, morale of the Christina Block farmers was already low. In July 1967, Loudon had already expressed

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid, I.R. Ricklands, Confidential Memorandum to the Rural Land Board, Coffee Scheme, 8 August 1968.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁷ NAZ, RC, L: 32.15.9F, B: 126949, Lands, Coffee Settlement Scheme, Vol. 4, Frost Damage on Coffee Farms; Memorandum, 10 October, 1967.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid, (emphasis/underlining not mine).

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁰ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, Confidential Memorandum from I.R. Rickland, to Rural Land Board, 8 August 1968.

the desire to pull out of the scheme, fearing that frost could strike again in later years.⁸⁹¹ He had already sacked 12 labourers resorting to contract labour. Louden insisted, however, that he was prepared to stay on the scheme if an alternative crop could be found and wanted “prompt attention to this matter”, warning that if he pull out, he would claim compensation on the grounds that Government misled him about the suitability of the farm for coffee growing.⁸⁹² Another grower, H. Willers thought along the same lines as Louden. In addition, Taylor, whose farm on the Block was not badly hit, was still keen on coffee but apprehensive about the possibility of losing his crop in the future. As a result, Taylor was interested in making a 50/50 proportion between coffee and tea. Others, like Whitney, were still keen on coffee, while Harvey decided to scale down by planting half the anticipated acreage.⁸⁹³ By February 1968, Louden had pulled out and sued government for “a considerable sum”.⁸⁹⁴

Two senior officers of the Economics and Markets Department, I. Ricklands and W.V. Lacey toured the area and produced a detailed assessment of possible alternatives. They discouraged resettling the farmers, arguing it was fraught with difficulties because considerable development in the form of irrigation furrows, roads, land clearing, land preparation, dwellings and conservation works, had already taken place on this Block. Farmers had also committed a considerable proportion of both their own savings and state funds. Furthermore, resettlement involved negotiations for suitable farms while replanting of the coffee was considered a calculated risk because frost damage could occur again. While another alternative was to restrict coffee growing to less frost prone areas, lack of adequate climatic data meant that an accurate delimitation of such areas was difficult. The two economists also considered the option of growing crops that were less susceptible to frost. However, the old challenge remained: Christina, being over 100 miles to railroad at Umtali, required high value-low bulk crops, which could withstand transportation costs. A further problem was the steep terrain at Christina, which restricted the acreage of annual cropping without serious erosion risk. Finally, although tea could be an alternative, it was far from being a frost hardy plant.

The Ricklands-Lacey report further considered possibilities of adopting frost protection measures. These included the use of fire to maintain temperatures at safe levels. However, pilot

⁸⁹¹ NAZ, L: 32.15.9F, 126949, Coffee Settlement Scheme, Vol. 4, MacKenzie, Senior Inspector, Manicaland, Confidential report on the Christina Farm by dated 26 July 1967.

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid, letter from I. Rickland, for Director of Agriculture, to Ministry of Agriculture, 24 February 1968.

studies done by the Meteorological Department confirmed that this was highly uneconomical, as 50 litres of fuel were required per acre. Though irrigation was considered the most effective method, it was still costly, as water had to be simultaneously applied to the whole plantation for the entire period of frost danger. Nevertheless, Lacey's contribution to the report shows that he was doubtful of the future of the Christina Scheme, as can be inferred from one of his confidential letters:

You are probably aware that during the severe frost of Mid June 1968, the Chipinga Coffee Settlement Block was very badly hit and there appears to be considerable doubt as to whether a coffee venture on Christina Block is going to succeed. The effects of this on the coffee settlement scheme are immediately apparent.⁸⁹⁵

The frost attack also gave valuable lessons for coffee growers in Chipinga. It was noted that the conditions for farmers who had planted Dahl for frost protection and Silver Oak for shade presented "...a completely different picture to the settlement farms". Senior Inspector, Mackenzie concluded that "I would strongly recommend that any future inspection of the coffee should include this as a comparison. I was most impressed".⁸⁹⁶ Though the Fennell Brothers were outside the Coffee Settlement Scheme, a visit was made to this plantation, which was located some 40 kilometres away from Christina Block, and had survived a similar frost hazard in 1965. The visit established that mature coffee plants were strong enough to withstand frost.⁸⁹⁷ Interestingly, the Newcastle Block, situated only about 15 Kilometres East of Christina, was not affected. It remained a promising scheme, with Topography played a significant role here, as the Newcastle Block lay on a lower altitude and was shielded by two hills to the east and west, while Christina was on a higher altitude, thus exposing its coffee plants to higher levels of frost attack.⁸⁹⁸ Clearly, micro climates along the Chipinga Highlands had a direct effect on the coffee scheme.

That frost challenge was widely discussed among Government officials speaks to the fact that it was an issue for great concern. In August 1968, R.A Griffith, Secretary for Agriculture, shared his views on this:

I agree that the coffee settlement scheme is a story of disappointment and mishaps. However, I think we should bear in mind that there is no need to get into a wild state of

⁸⁹⁵ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, Confidential, from W.V. Lacey, Ministry of Agriculture, to secretary, Chief Agricultural Economist, 6 August 1968.

⁸⁹⁶ NAZ, L: 32.15.9F, 126949, MacKenzie, Senior Inspector, Manicaland to Chief Inspector, Lands, 5 October 1967.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid, from W.D. Going, Horticulturist, to Director of Lands, 24 June 1968.

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid, from A Mackenzie, Senior Inspector, Manicaland to Chief Inspector, Lands, 5 October 1967.

panic because of one very severe frost, the like of which is far from normal occurrence. I don't know at what stage, if any, the coffee tree can withstand frost or what precautionary measures could be taken by planter and their costs. I think both these points need to be considered. When I was in Chipinga not so long ago, there seemed to be a general desire on the part of those interested in coffee to switch to tea because of the apprehensions caused by severe frost.⁸⁹⁹

Nevertheless, considerable progress had already been made. The five year coffee settlement plan envisaged that each of the ten state sponsored farmers would have at least 50 acres under coffee within five years. Most of these farms were on Newcastle and Christina Coffee Blocks, except L. Green J. Cameroon's farms that were located in Melsetter and Mt Silinda. In fact, when frost hit the coffee units in June 1968, the Newcastle and Christina Blocks had 170 and 168 acres under coffee respectively, which constituted a cumulative 88.5 per cent success.⁹⁰⁰ The details of the coffee settlement scheme's production progress are shown on table 7 below:

Table 7: Acreages, Chipinga Coffee Settlement Scheme, 1968

Name of Block	Growers's Name	Lot Number	Acreage under Coffee
Newcastle Block	T. Rutherford	Number 2	50 acres
Newcastle Block	J. Nissen	Number 3	50 acres

⁸⁹⁹ NAZ, L: 31.6. 11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, letter from R.A. Griffith to Chief Agricultural Economist, 7 August 1968.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid, report on frost and cold damage to coffee plantation, from W.D. Going, Horticulturist, Director of Lands, 24 June 1968.

Newcastle Block	D. Prince	Number 4	50 acres
Newcastle Block	J. Harry	Number 5	20 acres
Christina Block	C. Louden	Number 1	43 acres
Christina Block	H. Willers	H. Willers	30 acres
Christina Block	J. Taylor	Number 3	45 acres
Christina Block	J.D. Whitney	Number 4	50 acres
Total	8	8	338

Source: NAZ, W.D. Going, Horticulturist, to Director of Lands, report on frost and cold damage to coffee plantation, 24 June 1968,

Because the government was concerned by the frost attack, Louden's withdrawal and the general decline in the moral of the remaining farmers, it decided to provide some incentives to the remaining farmers. The major incentive involved government provision of free water for five years from January 1969. The government offered to meet all domestic and commercial water costs, maintain and develop water furrows, repair piping and pay the associated electricity charges.⁹⁰¹ The Director for Water Development, S.W. Loewenson, subsequently requested a detailed budget of these services, including copies of farmers' offer letters so as to include this in the Water Department's budget plans.⁹⁰² However, because the response to this request was late, it came with an apology, and more to that, probably a surprise:

...I regret delay in replying, reason due to me, being away on sick leave. I understand the situation has changed again and the coffee scheme in Christina is to be wound up at the end of this month. When the land has been transferred to government, I believe it is the intention to offer the units for sale. In this way, it is hoped that government will be able to recoup monies already spent on the unit. The cost of the canal was £12, 000.⁹⁰³

Zimbabwe's South Eastern Highlands is classified as "diversified, intensive farming region one. The broken nature of this terrain supported several micro climates and so there was need for a thorough appraisal of specific micro ecologies, so as to determine agrarian systems that suited these micro climates. A coffee scheme had failed and been abandoned on the Christina

⁹⁰¹ Ibid, from R.R. Jack, Director of Lands to Director; Water Development; RE: Christina Coffee Holdings, dated 7 March 1969.

⁹⁰² Ibid, from W. Loewenson, Director of Water Development, Director of Lands, 14 March 1969.

⁹⁰³ Ibid, letter from I. Lands Department to Director of Water Development, 6 June 1969.

Block, while a similar state sponsored scheme, the Newcastle Block, located less than 15 kilometres away, succeeded. Coffee production had also succeeded among other commercial farmers and estates, such as TTC's New Year's Gift Estate, which were adjacent to Christina but on a lower topography. Though one can speak of the Chipinga/Melsetter region as an economic zone, it is not proper, however, to regard it as a single geographic block, as can be done with the "tobacco regions of Mashonaland", the "cotton belt of Kadoma", the "Maize triangle of South Africa", or the Prairies of USA and Canada. This is so because it has various micro climates that supported diverse agrarian activities.

However, taking off some 70 years after colonial occupation, the coffee industry did not occupy empty land. It developed on land that was already owned by an earlier class of white settlers. The greatest losers here were those Africans who had resided and utilised this land as tenants. The next section, explores how the coffee industry transformed land tenure system that had been in place since the turn of the 20th Century, and the how Africans tenants responded to the alienation that resulted from this land use change.

Coffee Agriculture and the Demise of Labour Tenancy in Chipinga Highlands

Up to the 1960s, labour tenancy, in which African families traded farm work for access to land for grazing and crop production, was the dominant form of farm labour mobilisation throughout most of Chipinga Highlands. For the farmers who were into extensive farming operations and lacking operational finances Labour tenancy represented a successful effort to capture African labour at minimum cost. However, from the 1960s onwards, a sizeable number of English speaking farmers acquired farms in Chipinga Highlands, venturing into intensive coffee production. These farmers joined an already land owning and mostly of Afrikaner community, whose forefathers had expropriated land from African inhabitants during the late 19th Century. The more adaptive of these Afrikaners also joined coffee and tea production.

The introduction of intensive farming resulted in changes to the land tenure systems and land use practices. Coffee production led to the rise in land values and prices, hence most coffee farms were smaller than the original farms carved out when settlers arrived during the 1890s. As noted earlier, Joubert's Newcastle Farm, which had 3667 acres,⁹⁰⁴ was subsequently

⁹⁰⁴ NAZ, F450/10, Chipinga ICA, File 1, Farm List.

subdivided into coffee averaging 300 acres. Therefore, with smaller farms, the coffee growers could not keep labour tenants who provided marginal labour at the same time demanding extra land for livestock and crop production.

It is also worth noting here that, despite its advantages to the poorer commercial white farmers, the onset of coffee production began at a time when labour tenancy was beginning to fail. This was primarily because of the broader economic transformation being experienced in this region and within the African social set ups. From the mid-1950s, there was a flight of growing numbers of young men to better paying jobs in the colonial towns and in the emerging timber and expanding tea plantations, where they worked as drivers, clerks, shopkeepers, and hotel attendants.⁹⁰⁵ Oral evidence suggests that, with growing employment alternatives; heads of households could no longer bind their sons' labour to the landowners. For instance, Jack Masirande left Groenvlei Farm in 1958 and settled in the Ndima reserve, a section of the Ngorima Reserve after falling at loggerheads with the landowner, A.S. Joubert. At about 65 years, Joubert insisted that Masirande was old, and should not work anymore. Instead, Joubert asked Marisande to avail one of his sons if he wished to continue staying on the farm. Meanwhile, Masirande's sons had better paying jobs: one was a petrol attendant in Chipinga, while the other worked at a Harare hotel. Consequently, Masirande who could not convince either of his sons to take up this responsibility was left with no option but to migrate and settle in the Ndima Reserve.⁹⁰⁶

On another note, with coffee production came new work process, which entailed new labour regimes: seasonal, contract and full time. These were different from those of the traditional labour tenancy that had been in place since the arrival of white settlers at the turn of the 19th Century. Coffee production entailed massive land preparations, which involves cutting timber and stumping, removing debris from cleared land, levelling and general preparation work. Other intensive job tasks involved filling up seedling pots, nursery construction and maintenance, the digging of holes for coffee seedlings, planting, fertilising and spraying. Other general plantation maintenance jobs included pruning, irrigation, cutting and laying mulch and scouting for pests. Among the seasonal tasks were weeding, coffee picking, processing, grading, drying and packing. Contract labour was also vital in the initial development phase for making bricks, digging irrigation trenches, constructing houses, warehouses and other farm

⁹⁰⁵ Interview, Nisbert Masirande, Ndima area, 19 December 2014.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid.

structures.⁹⁰⁷ Oral evidence has it regarding Newcastle Block that African tenants residing on this farm were not physically chased away. As land was being pegged out for coffee nurseries, fields, homesteads, dam sites and roads, they were asked to move into compounds, construct their own huts and provide labour for the new settlers. However, while some moved into the compounds, others “realised it was time to go”, and even though most of the reserves were getting overpopulated by then, there were still hopes that they could find space to settle, keep livestock and eke out a living.⁹⁰⁸

In fact the RCGA, in its monthly newsletters, published regular articles that provided advice on some of the essential coffee production operations. A number of these articles emphasised the need to pay meticulous attention to certain critical tasks as noted below:

...notes on picking and processing appeared in the last 2 newsletters. We cannot do more than to emphasise the need for care and attention to detail, without which one can only expect poor quality coffee and poor prices. When the parchment is on the drying table there is an excellent opportunity for the discoloured and damaged beans to be picked out; it only needs one off type bean in a small sample to influence a buyer’s offer.⁹⁰⁹

Another one emphasised that:

Pick ripe cherry in order to produce the best possible quality. Cleanliness of the factory building and machinery cannot be over emphasised. The receiving hopper, pulp discs, knives, sieves, graders, channels, tanks and floors should be thoroughly cleaned each day before starting to pulp... Drying should be done on tables above ground; spread the beans evenly to a depth of ½ an inch and turn them regularly so that the parchment is evenly dried.⁹¹⁰

Most of these seasonal operations were undertaken by women and juveniles who would also be engaged in picking coffee. It is also interesting to note how the production of coffee transformed traditional gender settings. Women who provided most of the seasonal labour as coffee pickers, worked on the drying tables, packed dried coffee or as manual labourers involved in weeding and fertilising began to have greater access to a cash economy. This had a dual effect on the marriage institution. Firstly, women had traditionally been deprived of land which sustained families, but now their earnings supplemented the meagre earnings of their husbands. They used their earnings to purchase foodstuffs and material goods like kitchen

⁹⁰⁷ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1, W.C. Lacey, Economics and Markets Branch ‘an estimate of coffee production costs on a fifty acre basis’, (undated).

⁹⁰⁸ Interview, Batsirai Dhliwayo, Rusitu, 21 December 2014.

⁹⁰⁹ RCGA Monthly Newsletter No. 53 May 1967.

⁹¹⁰ RCGA, Monthly Newsletter, No. 67, July 1968.

utensils, clothing and blankets.⁹¹¹ Secondly, women's entry into the colonial economy as labourers loosened traditional marriage bonds, which used to be cemented by women's dependency on their husbands. Marriages also broke up more easily owing to the fact that women were no longer as dependent on their husbands' incomes as they had been during labour tenancy.⁹¹²

Parallels can be drawn with colonial Kenyan situation, where coffee and other cash crop rose to become significant to the country's cash economy well before the Second World War. According to Sharon Stichter,⁹¹³ while skilled work in agriculture: ploughing, driving, pruning, dairying as well as operating pulping and husking machinery was done by men, women did most of the unskilled work. They were engaged in tasks like hoeing, weeding, and harvesting. Furthermore, as this type of work was seasonal, most of these women were wives or relatives of "squatters", or labourers paid daily from the Kikuyu Reserves, which adjoined European farms. The dominance of women on Kenyan industry is glaring as Stichter shows:

The main sphere of employment continued to be coffee, where they did weeding and were thought to be the best pickers. It was estimated in 1934 that at the height of the picking season, some 14 000 women and 10 000 children were employed. When coffee estates were not situated next to the Kikuyu reserves, wives of resident labourers were employed.⁹¹⁴

The resort to female and child labour by plantation owners resonate with what took place in other parts of colonial Zimbabwe. A number of reasons have been put forward to explain the significance of this type of labour. This labour is cheaper because in the case of wives, they stayed with their husbands, while juveniles would be under the care of parents. Therefore, employers would pay both women and juveniles lowly as they are cushioned by the main breadwinners on accommodation, food, clothing and other necessities.⁹¹⁵ Steven Rupert has noted how most of the tobacco farms of Mashonaland engaged wives of male employees because "otherwise you would have to employ more actual workers", and, if an employment

⁹¹¹ Interview, Batsirai Dhliwayo, Rusitu, 21 December 2014.

⁹¹² *Ibid.*

⁹¹³ S. Stichter, 'Women and the Labour Force in Kenya, 1895-1964,' (University of Nairobi, Discussion Paper number 258), 11.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹¹⁵ See D.G. Clarke, *Agricultural and Plantation Workers in Rhodesia, A Report on the Conditions of Labour and Subsistence* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977). R. Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture, Corporate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, (London and New Jersey, Zed Books, 1992),

seeker arrived with two wives “he was a godsend”, because, “there were three pairs of hands”.⁹¹⁶

The intensive coffee agriculture also transformed the physical and social landscape of the Chipinga Highlands. Labour tenancy meant tenants resided with their families in homesteads scattered around the farms, but with coffee production came compounds. Hence, workers built their own mud and thatch huts on the farm sites which were set aside for that purpose. These were usually portions like the hilly and rocky patches of the farm that were most unsuitable for cultivation. Though not as rigidly controlled as the barrack like compounds of the South African mines and plantations,⁹¹⁷ these compounds made it easier for employers to control labour. Every morning of each working day, the supervisor or boss boys rang a bell, reminding every labourer to wake up and report for work. Alternatively, the supervisor walked around the compound, shouting for the workers to report for work. Related to this was the fact that prostitution also went on the rise, leading to the spread of venereal diseases and that of cases of divorce.⁹¹⁸

Another striking feature of the new labour systems was the rigid control of the working day. Farm work was back breaking labour and depending on the farmer and season, work went on from 5 am till 5 pm, and this was generally consistent with farm and plantation work elsewhere in the region. The work of L.Vail and L. White⁹¹⁹ on colonial capitalist enterprises in the Quelimane District of northern Mozambique makes for an interesting comparison. Their work shows how, when confronted by the exploitative agrarian enterprise, African labourers resorted to subtle protest ways, characterised by poem, dance, and nicknaming. These elusive protest activities were targeted at agents of capitalism; foremen or “Capitaos”, the policemen, cotton overseers and company officials.⁹²⁰

The development of capitalist coffee and tea agriculture was also closely associated with labour exploitation. Nomenclature, which was quite glaring, also gives a clue on the living and working conditions of the Africans. One coffee farmer in southern Chipinga District became

⁹¹⁶ S.C. Rubert, *A most Promising Weed, A History of Tobacco Farming and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1945* (Ohio University, Centre for International Studies, 1998), 148.

⁹¹⁷ See M.J. Murray, ‘Factories in Fields: Capitalist Farming in the Bethal District, 1910-1950’, in A.H. Jeeves and J. Crush, (eds.), *White Farms Black Labour, the State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910-50*, (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1997), 87.

⁹¹⁸ Interview, Batsirai Dhliwayo, Rusitu, 21 December 2014.

⁹¹⁹ L.Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique, A Study of Quelimane District* (London, Heinemann 1980)

⁹²⁰ *Ibid*, 352.

popularly known as *Magodo*, meaning “bones” and he was named so because, “no matter how hard Africans worked, the farmer would not appreciate, and would always give them bones, instead of quality meat for ration.”⁹²¹ Another farmer called *Mutakura*, which refers to “boiled maize grain”, “because this was the standard ration given to workers by this farmer.”⁹²² A third example is of a farmer who was called *Mugubera*, denoting “Saturday”. This was because, while the normal practice was for Africans to work for half a day on Saturdays, the farmer, *Mugubera*, always insisted “there is no Saturday on my farm,” and “it was like any other working day when workers were dismissed at sunset.”⁹²³ This nomenclature also became part of the knowledge systems, as job seekers used it as clue when deciding where to seek employment, and where to avoid.

This constituted the protest voice of labour in the face of the power of capital. Labour did not aim, at this stage, to overthrow capital, but to carve a niche within the prevailing exploitative system. It was by and large, not confrontational and as such falls into what James Scott terms, “Subordinate discourse in the presence of the dominant”. Scott went on to use the term, ‘hidden transcript’, to characterise “discourse that takes place off stage, beyond direct observation by policy holders...It consists of those off stage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict or inflect what happens in public transcript”.⁹²⁴ Therefore, issue about nick naming was clearly part of African protest and this resonates with established knowledge about master-subordinate relations.

In addition, the compound became a socially different type of landscape altogether. Laws affecting the Africans, which were earlier on relaxed by landlords, were now enforced. For instance, while, during tenancy, some landlords paid a blind eye on Africans brewing beer in their scattered homesteads, they were no longer allowed to do this in the compounds. They were told, instead, to purchase traditional alcohol from the nearest farm beer halls.⁹²⁵ More often than not, the beer halls belonged to the farm owners, and like grocery shops, were income generating project, often run by the wives of the farmer. Labour was retained by offering credit facilities to farm worker.⁹²⁶ Health wise, there was also not much to write home about. Accommodation facilities were quite poor, with workers constructing their own mud and thatch

⁹²¹ Interview, Chengetai Mutidye, Chipinge, 26 December 2014.

⁹²² Ibid.

⁹²³ Ibid.

⁹²⁴ Scott, *Hidden Transcripts*, 4.

⁹²⁵ Interview, Batsirai Dhliwayo, Rusitu, 21 December 2014.

⁹²⁶ Ibid.

huts. Sanitary facilities in the compounds were equally for there were no toilet facilities. Workers collected water from nearest rivers or springs, while they also bathed in the nearby rivers, leading to the spread of water borne diseases like bilharzia. Health facilities were also scarce with the clinics located some kilometres away at the mission stations in the two districts and one at Chipinga town.⁹²⁷

The built environment on the developing coffee farms mirrored the relations of power subjection and differentiation in the colony. Right from colonial foundations in the 1890, settlers and planners aspired to erect modern, comfortable dwelling units, which were glaringly better than those of their African subordinates. In July 1967, Lacey complained about a white farmer, who, under the state assisted coffee settlement scheme, had spent £1 200 of his loan fund on the construction of his homestead, a sum he said was, “considerably more than was originally contemplated”.⁹²⁸ Yet, the 1965 plan for tea planting in the Melsetter District envisaged a compound of 20 African homesteads to 2 Europeans. The costs for erecting European houses was estimated at between £1 500 and £3 000, against Africans’ of between £100 and £300 each.⁹²⁹ This had the effect of dividing farming communities into two socio-cultural worlds, keeping a social distance between farmer and worker, thereby reinforcing the master and the servant relations of production.

The Africans, who were exposed to poor working and living conditions, developed an array of creative forms of livelihoods. The ICM, which had been established earlier during the 1930s, continued to expand, penetrating into the farms as Africans continuously lost grip on the means of production. This growth was closely watched by the NCs. For instance, the NC for Chipinga had reported earlier on in 1952 that, apart from a few refusals to be vaccinated against small pox, the Zionist and Apostolic sects practising in the district offered no trouble to authorities. He however, noted that the independent church members were on the increase, as “there were always bearded faces in every gang”.⁹³⁰ In addition, the prophets, who never asked for money directly from those whom they “healed”, received presents such as chicken, packets of sugar and bars of soap from their visitors and clients, thereby rising to become a class of powerful

⁹²⁷ Reports of the Native Commissioners suggest that health facilities on the farms were very poor to non-existent, with only four Mission Stations in African Reserves; Mutambara, Rusitu, Mt Silinda and Chikore providing notable medical services to Africans.

⁹²⁸ NAZ, L: 31.6.11F, B: 109664, Coffee Settler Scheme, Chipinga Vol. 1 W.C. Lacey Report on Collin Loudon, Orchidhurst Farm, 25 July 1967.

⁹²⁹ NAZ, L: 42.13.4R, B: 126961, Tea Planting in Southern Rhodesia, Considerations for establishing a tea factory, February, 1965.

⁹³⁰ NAZ, S2827/2/2/2/5, Report of the Native Commissioner, Chipinga, 31 December 1952.

people within the African society. The same was true for traditional mid wives, who, for their services, received presents like groceries. On another hand, traditional healers charged their clients for services rendered.⁹³¹ In a way, these became innovative livelihood activities which were presented and appeared in the form of Christianity and charity.

African labourers also engaged in other projects to supplement their meagre wages and improve their livelihoods. Some labourers grew maize and vegetables on garden plots around their houses or in isolated patches deemed unsuitable for coffee production. Women were the ones mostly engaged in these projects as men were at work most of the times. However, there was virtually no land for Africans to keep livestock; hence those Africans, who remained on the farms, lost their herds. There also existed another class of African men who were torn between the Western monetary labour economy and the traditional livelihood and cultural systems. This class, on the one hand, felt they had to earn money to meet financial obligations and thus worked on the farms, plantations or other emerging capitalist enterprises. They were, on the other hand traditionally and culturally expected to have a homestead, from which to raise a family, grow crops and keep livestock.⁹³² Traditionally, large stockholders acquired prestige as cattle were significant forms of storing wealth was used as bride's wealth, for ploughing and as a source of meat, milk and manure.⁹³³ Therefore, although the development of large scale cattle owners was checked under labour tenancy, a significant population headed for the reserves to preserve their livestock. They set up homesteads in the reserves and ended up as dual inhabitants of the homestead and the workplace. This also brought about a new dimension in gender roles, where, because men spent most of the productive times at the work place, women became the family heads in the reserves.

The Rhodesia-Portuguese East Africa border remained consistently fluid throughout the period under study. With the rise of the coffee industry, more Africans continued relocating from the white farming areas to reserves. Therefore, the capacity of the reserves to accommodate more Africans continued to be strained. It is, therefore, not surprising that, on finding the reserves populated, another option, especially for the Africans who took long to vacate the farms, was to settle in the neighbouring Portuguese East Africa. However, the biggest challenge in the Mozambican side was that of cattle diseases, which decimated most of their livestock.⁹³⁴

⁹³¹ Interview, Johanne Mukhombu, Chipinge, 28 December 2014.

⁹³² Interview, Enock Sandonga, Chivhunze, 19 December 2014.

⁹³³ Steele, 'The economic function of African-Owned cattle', 31.

⁹³⁴ Interview, Joyce Tandire, Chipinge, 28 December 2014.

Africans communities did not always develop into a class with common interests. It remained heterogeneous, even though confronted by a more exploitative western capitalist system. For instance, the purchase of Hatfield Farm from the Hanmer Brothers just before 1952⁹³⁵ resulted in the cancellation of tenancy contracts with Africans who had been staying on the farm for years. The former tenants were no longer allowed to keep livestock as the farm was converted into a wattle plantation and some, such former tenant, Tauzeni Samutsa, asked a relative, Watson Mujaho, in the Ngaone part of the Mutema Reserve, to keep his cattle. The latter unilaterally sold all the cattle and converted the money to own use. This culminated in a family wide conflict and witchcraft accusation that haunted the two families long after the parties concerned had died.⁹³⁶ Therefore, though Africans were side lined under the colonial European agro-developmental policies, this marginalisation did not transform them into a homogeneous class confronting a common exploitative system. Instead, there were also intra class exploitations and conflict within this marginalised class.

Though the reserves and the commercial farming were meant to accommodate African and white races, and also had separate land tenure systems, there were overlaps between the two. The shortages of casual labour, especially for picking coffee from April to September compelled the coffee growers to seek labour from the reserves. As a result, women were transported from the nearby Ngaone and Mutema reserves to pick coffee on the plantations.⁹³⁷ The fact that coffee maturity did not coincide with cropping season meant that some rural dwellers were free to provide labour at a time when they were not busy in their fields. School children were also hired, especially during the August school holidays. Nevertheless, unlike coffee, tea matures in summer, when peasant farmers were also busy on their own fields. It is therefore not surprising that for this sector, the ‘earn and learn’ scheme became strategic.⁹³⁸

Patterns of rural differentiation, as discussed in chapter three, continued during the 1960s. This implies that reserves did not impoverish the Africans equally. Most of the “Reserve entrepreneurs” moved into the Chipinga and Melsekwa reserves well before the 1960s and hence had the chance to select the most productive land available. It has already been demonstrated in Chapter Three how some reserves were better than others, and how some more

⁹³⁵ Sinclair, *The Story of Melsekwa*, 140.

⁹³⁶ Interview, Joyce Tandire, Chipinga, 28 December 2014.

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ This was a scheme where children were employed to pick tea, usually in the mornings, and received education in the afternoons. See M.F.C. Bourdillon, ‘Child Labour and Education’.

enterprising Africans exploited opportunities more than others.⁹³⁹ By the 1960s, for instance, the Ngorima Reserve had, among few others, one Lazarus Musaengana, who, purchased fruits, such as avocado peas, bananas and pineapples, from local peasants for resale. At the peak of his business, he had a lorry that he used to transport fruits to the Fort Victoria, Shabani and Mashaba Districts.⁹⁴⁰ On the way back he transported goods from Chipinga, for stocking his three shops, or manure from the Sabi Valley areas to fertilising his fields. Musaengana was also a popular member of the *Jekenisheni* Apostolic church, from which he got a large community of customers.⁹⁴¹ Despite his achievements, he and the church remained critical of the colonial system and song, prophecy and dreams that were shared during church gatherings continued to be subtly critical of African colonial marginalisation. Plainly, therefore, the struggle against economic inequality transcended the landscape, covering not just the farms and plantations, but also the reserves.

African Active Protest

While it has been argued that labour tenancy was beneficial to the least productive and capitalised farmers of south eastern Zimbabwe, it can also be argued that it cushioned Africans from the worst effects of land expropriation by the white settler community. The Ndaou people of this area were, overall, peaceful, despite the loss of land, tax demands and being forced to work on the farms. For instance, the Ndaou did not take part in the Shona- Ndebele uprising of 1896-1897 which engulfed most parts of Mashonaland and Matabeleland⁹⁴² and as admitted by colonial administrative officials, they were also generally peaceful up to the late 1950s. As has been discussed in Chapter two, one colonial official referred to them as “the most law abiding in the colony”.⁹⁴³ The December 1957 NC’s annual report expressed a similar perception:

There is most orderly spirit prevailing in this district, particularly among the Wa-Ndaou element who comprise the bulk of the population. The reason for this might particularly be geographical. Umatli is over 120 miles away from the most southerly reserve and much of the district borders Portuguese territory where punishment is alleged to be so drastic that crime ‘does not pay’. Europeans still leave their houses unlocked or

⁹³⁹ See Chapter Three, pp. 111-116.

⁹⁴⁰ Interview, Lazarus Musaengana, Rusitu, 20 December 2014.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

⁹⁴² Longden, *Red Buffalo*, 190.

⁹⁴³ NAZ, S246/796, Melsetter Farmers Association, Withdrawal of Certain Civil Servants from Melsetter, letter from Station Officer, BSAP to Secretary, Law Department, 12 November 1930.

unattended and native returning from South Africa does not appear to have become imbued with 'tsotsi' spirit.⁹⁴⁴

Yet from the end of the 1950s, the landscape was changing, and the writing was on the wall. As discussed in Chapter three, fundamental post-Second World War land use transformations, continuously squeezed the African population from the productive highlands forcing them into full time wage employment or relocating them into the reserves. This continued with the entry of the coffee industry during the 1960s, leading to heightened African political activism.

According to T.O. Ranger, there was a wave of sabotage in Chipinga and Melsetter areas, from June 1964, as the Smith regime was widely believed to be preparing for UDI. For instance, a late June 1964 wave of sabotages hit this area, as "Roadblocks were erected, the police camp was attacked, and dynamite was laid at bridges..."⁹⁴⁵ Evidence for the protest is, indeed, quite glaring as noted in an October 1964 newspaper which described the following case:

Sentence of death was passed here this morning on Herbert Sambo of Demiri Townshipp, Mt Silinda. He was found guilty of using petrol to set fire to the junior boys hostel at Chipinga School on June 3...Mr Justice Jarvis also found him guilty of setting fire on Smithfield Store and attempting to set fire to a garage on a farm on November 10 1962.⁹⁴⁶

Asked if he had anything to say before the death sentence, Sambo asked for an appeal, insisting that he knew nothing about the case.⁹⁴⁷ The school in question was an all-white boarding school, where farming parents from the district sent their children.

There are other cases of African resistances in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. Ranger describes perhaps one of the most gruesome politically motivated murders perpetrated on a white man before the onset of the armed struggle in Melsetter District thus:

On the early evening of 4 July 1964, a 45-year –old foreman at the Silverstream Wattle Factory in Melsetter, Pieter Johannes Andries Oberholzer, was driving home with his wife and daughter along the Umtali/Melsetter road. He came to a low roadblock made of stones; he tried to ram it; the car turned over; Oberholzer was stabbed to death; his assailants dispersed when another vehicle approached. Police found two notes at the site of the attack. One read "Confrontation Smith. Crocodile gang will soon kill all whites.

⁹⁴⁴ NAZ, S2827/2/2/5/2, Annual Report of the Native Commissioner, Melsetter for year ending 31 December 1957.

⁹⁴⁵ T.O. Ranger, 'Violence Variouslly Remembered: The Killing of Pieter Oberholzer in July 1964', *History in Africa*, 24, 1997), 273.

⁹⁴⁶ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 8 October 1964.

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Beware!” The other read: “Crocodile group in action. We shall kill all whites if they don’t want to give back our country. Confrontation!”⁹⁴⁸

Ranger discussed further the significance of this murder and evaluates the different ways in which it has been interpreted and misinterpreted. However, Ranger does not dwell on the motive behind the murder. It can be argued that the murder was a culmination of African loss of the land which they had for long continued to use under the labour tenancy, in that way cushioning them from the worst impact of the racially based colonial land allocation. The Africans in the Melssetter and Chipinga Districts felt more vulnerable with the advent of the secondary land acquisition of the late 1950s and 1960s that catered for the timber, coffee and tea plantations, and the demise of labour tenancy.

The irrigation schemes also became centres of political activity and resistance. According to Alex Bolding, this was partly because of discipline characteristic of these centres, added to which “the enforcement of such discipline was the exclusive domain of outsiders to African society”. Africans were also incensed by the threats that mal-performing plot holders would be evicted.⁹⁴⁹ Therefore, African politicians denounced the government and in their campaign promised African plot holders free irrigation, unlimited acreages, and the right to grow crops of their own choice once the colonial government had been overthrown.

The growth of African nationalism in the Nyanyadzi area is also recorded in fiction. One of the leading Zimbabwean nationalist leaders, Ndabaningi Sithole, wrote a novel that represents events associated with the origins of nationalism in Nyanyadzi area through the experiences of a plot holder and builder called Obed Mutezo. Obed, a practising Methodist Christian in Nyanyadzi, rose to become a chairman of the *vabvuwi* movement (Men’s Guild) and from 1950 to 1963, was heavily involved in recruiting young men to join the church. According to Sithole, “from this movement, he (Obed) learnt practical organisation of public programmes, chairing meetings, handling men, sensing conflicting motives among people’, an experience which came in handy during his time as a committee member of successive nationalist parties in Nyanyadzi. Sithole described him as follows:

Obed’s Mutezo’s politics do not spring from the study of any textbooks. They spring from down-to-earth situations... Talk to him about Communism that he does not know.

⁹⁴⁸ Ranger, ‘Violence Variouslly Remembered:’ 273.

⁹⁴⁹ Bolding, “In hot Water”, 166.

Tell him about American capitalism, he is not concerned. His concern is land, cattle, wages, schools, better housing, better water supply and more medical facilities.⁹⁵⁰

Therefore, in Sithole's view, Obed's motivation to join the African nationalist cause reflects a practical desire to regain land and other resources lost as a result of colonialism.

The conditions in Nyayadzi which led to the rise in African nationalism are aptly reflected by Alex Bolding in his outline of the Nyanyadzi and surrounding areas' political landscape as noted below:

The LDO's residence (top house) and government storeroom were burnt in 1962. Government staff and entrepreneurial burley tobacco growers were intimidated and harassed, and in June 1964 the first six trained guerrilla fighters, naming themselves the Crocodile gang, were deployed in the in the area. Chikwize Bridge cut the next day. Attempts were made to blow up all major bridges in the district, telephone lines were cut, and finally on 4 June 1964 in neighbouring Biriwiri, Ndangana and his crocodile gang killed Johannes Oberholzer, the first white settle to fall victim to African freedom fighters since the Shona and Ndebele rebellions of 1896-97.⁹⁵¹

The unfolding African resistance received high level support from the local Africans who held various grievances against the colonial administration. ZANU won a lot of support during its campaign rallies, which were carried out in the reserves as they could not penetrate the farming area where farmers had greater control of the workers. Many people attended these rallies and donated money to finance the travel and sustenance costs of the activists and bought membership cards as well. However, state security always attended these meetings; as a result some of the local activists, including those selling party cards, were arrested and beaten.⁹⁵² One informant was adamant that the more they were persecuted, the more they got popular.

There exist a number of stories describing the sabotage activities that were perpetrated by political activists from the early 1960s on the Melsetter highlands. The protection of timber forests from fires was a major operational issue that the forestry companies had always prioritised. For instance, by October 1956, the forestry plantations put in place fully operational fire towers on Tilbury, Tarka, Glencoe, Chisengu and Lionhill Forest Reserve; Thornton, Gwendingwe and Cecilton⁹⁵³ and every fire that was seen in the district was reported to

⁹⁵⁰ N. Sithole, *Obed Mutezo, A Mudzimu Christian Nationalist* (London, Oxford University Press, 1970), 117-8.

⁹⁵¹ Bolding, "In hot Water", 166.

⁹⁵² Interview, Batsirai Dhliwayo, Rusitu, 21 December 2014.

⁹⁵³ NAZ, F151/ICA/MEL, Melsetter ICA File 2, ICA Newsletter, October 1956.

responsible Forest Officers. Ward Masters and Fire Tower Officers were always on high alert and their phone numbers kept public for easier communication. Nevertheless, the battle to control fires became tough because of arson. Oral evidence is insightful in as far as how arson became African protest tool. One story relates to how Ndabaning Sithole used to sabotage the forestry industry.

Sithole used to pick up some young boys from Mount Silinda area, whom he dropped at various spots along the Chipinga-Melsetter road. They slipped into the forest plantations, with mounds of dry cow dung, which they set on fire. Because dry cow dung burn out very slowly, this gave Sithole enough time to pick up the boys and drive them back to Mount Silinda. When it finally burnt out, fire from the cow dung encroached on dry flammable leaves set aside so that a flame would quickly develop, and subsequently burn the plantations. Most people would always wonder as to the cause of such fires.⁹⁵⁴

Godwin has noted how fire became “our biggest enemy” and “everything possible was done to try and stop it”.⁹⁵⁵ He mentions how signs were put “everywhere entreating people not to start fires, and threatening them with huge fines if they did”. Rewards were offered to those who informed the authorities about arsonists. The plantations were divided into blocks by wide firebreaks, which were kept free of all vegetation in an effort to slow the spread of fires. Nevertheless, African activists developed strategies to deliberately burn the forest plantations as part of the sabotage activities that were perpetrated by disgruntled African Political activists:

...the *moto mukuru*, the ‘big fire’, the one the boys still talk about today, started in late October. It didn’t start the usual way, from a cigarette end, or the amber of a cooking fire, or the sunlight magnified through an old bottle, or even from lightning. It was started deliberately by the tsotsi, like the one who killed oom Piet Oberholzer. We didn’t know that at the time, though. At the time we thought it was an accident.⁹⁵⁶

It is not surprising that activists would often be arrested in accordance with the infamous Law and Order Maintenance Act’s provisions. In September 1964, Canaan Sithole, wife of Ndabaningi Sithole, had to be restricted to the family’s Freedom Farm in Mount Silinda area. At the same time, the husband was restricted to near Gweru.⁹⁵⁷ Therefore, the Chipinga-Melsetter landscape had totally changed. The physical landscape changed, and was now

⁹⁵⁴ Interview, Nisbert Masirande, Rusitu, 19 December 2014.

⁹⁵⁵ Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 118.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 120.

⁹⁵⁷ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 10 October 1964.

characterised by plantations, compounds factories and new roads. Similarly, the political landscape was changing as it became a hive of political activity.

Conclusion

South Eastern Zimbabwe, one of the earliest regions to become closely settled by white community, sustained labour tenancy for the longest period in southern Rhodesia. The region was isolated from major markets, hence though possessing some of the best soils, remained largely underdeveloped. However, regional political developments that occurred there are essential to understanding land use transformations in this region. With the independence of most east and central African countries came widespread insecurity within the settler communities of these countries. At the same time, the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland led to the independence of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland but not Southern Rhodesia, with Ian Smith proceeding to declare UDI in November 1965. Therefore, settlers from east Africa, especially Kenya, who were widely experienced in coffee production, relocated to eastern Zimbabwe, bringing with them expertise in coffee agriculture, which subsequently filtered among some of the earlier classes of landowners in this region. It was this development which led to the growth of an intensive commercial farming class that needed full time labour, culminating in the demise of labour tenancy in the region. The economies of this region also became increasingly intertwined with South Africa, which consumed the bulk of the coffee grown here. Hence this is a story of regional political transformation impacting on the local Chipinga area.

In addition, the production of coffee in Chipinga, just as that of timber in Melsetter, resulted in the introduction of new land use practices associated with intensive farming operations, which increasingly displaced Africans from the land. Although land had been appropriated from the Africans since 1893, some of the Africans had remained cushioned from the full impact of the loss of land because they had remained occupying alienated land as labour tenants. However, as noted in this chapter, the introduction of coffee production and the associated subdivisions of most farms contributed to the collapse of labour tenancy and displacement of African labour tenants from the land earmarked for the new agricultural venture. The Africans were nevertheless not passive victims of white capitalist enterprise, as some manoeuvred and adapted themselves for a livelihood within the capitalist system and engaged in profound protests when they were stretched to the limits.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has examined the history of natural resources acquisition, ownership and use in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. The focus of this study has been on how the diverse communities of this district acquired, owned and used natural resources, such as landwater, game and indigenous timber during the colonial period. Central to this study was contestation over ownership of these resources, not just between races, but also among them.

Alexander, Moyana, Hughes and Rennie have in their different ways and through their different approaches, done a sterling job in examining different aspects of the history of parts of the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. Alexander, for instance, approached this history from a comparative perspective, examining themes of land, chieftaincy and African nationalism in the Chimanimani and Insiza Districts. While she made important findings concerning contestations over natural resources between the State and Africans, in the case of Melsetter she confined herself to a limited number of reserves. By taking this approach, she did not tease out overall historical developments and the localised nuances that developed within the district as a whole for instance between the white owned commercial farms, timber plantations and the reserves. This study departs from only examining micro themes and sub districts within the region. Contested pasts are most usefully comprehended by appreciating the complex interactions of all inhabitants of the region. In this manner, this dissertation adds a new historiographical dimension to the study of the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts. Overall, the dissertation has demonstrated that despite the different micro-climates, the ecological differences between the highlands and the lowlands, the administrative boundaries between Melsetter and Chipinga, and the demarcations between the white farming areas, the African reserves and APAs, there were, on one hand, reciprocal relations and on the other, animosities between the inhabitants of Melsetter and Chipinga Districts.

While Moyana's work was important in its time, it did not adequately appreciate the diverse nature of the region's inhabitants. By contrast, this study remains cognisant of heterogeneity: missionaries, white commercial farmers and, from the 1950 onwards, large scale plantation enterprises. These inhabitants have further been disaggregated by status, religion, age and gender, all of which influenced access to and use of natural resources. The reserves, white commercial farms, forestry plantations and the APAs, all constituted a geographical and economic unit, which the inhabitants traversed in response to changing climatic, socio-

economic and political transformations. It is this integrated study of a heterogeneous region which is the most distinctive contribution of this study.

A further contribution to the Zimbabwean historiography is the region's significance in colonial political economy. This is premised on the paradox that a region of high agricultural potential, closely settled by a white agrarian community, for more than 50 years after colonisation remained one of the poorest farming districts of Southern Rhodesia. The answer to the seeming paradox partly lies with Rhodes' immediate motive for the occupation of this region, which was political rather than economic. Considering Portuguese intentions in this area, Rhodes urgently needed to effectively occupy the region as swiftly as possible and permanently so. Therefore, Rhodes' decision to settle white Afrikaners and the subsequent lack of development from these settlers has to be understood within this context.

Rhodes' choice of white Afrikaners complicated the whole process of colonisation. Imperial motives overrode racial factors and prejudice, for Rhodes engaged Afrikaners to counter the imperial motives of the Portuguese. However, as demonstrated in chapter one, there was white occupation without any significant economic investment in the region from 1893 to the onset of the Great Depression. Because the BSAC's initial focus was on finding a "Second Rand" the economic development of south eastern Zimbabwe, whose major economic potential lay in agriculture, was neglected. Infrastructural investment was insignificant, partly explaining why, despite its potential, the region remained one of the poorest, yet closely settled white farming region.

This study also contributes to the historiography of Rhodesia's Afrikaner community and its relations with Africans. It differs from that of Hodder-Williams in terms of its racial coverage. Justifying his peripheral focus on Africans, Williams says:

For the truth of the matter is that whites in Rhodesia have lived their lives remarkably isolated from the lives of their black compatriots, so that a study like this one, consciously concentrating on white society, needs to consider the black world only where it impinges on the white world.⁹⁵⁸

By contrast, this study gives full attention to the Africans. It traces in detail colonial efforts to marginalise them as tenants, labourers, and reserve dwellers, a process that they contested initially covertly but, as time progressed, overtly.

⁹⁵⁸ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 2.

That Africans suffered from colonial injustices is a historical fact that no one can challenge. However, scholarship on the history of the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts has not given adequate attention to African agency. As detailed in Chapter Two, and elsewhere, Africans were rarely passive victims of colonial deprivations. Although prime agricultural areas of the Melsetter and Chipinga highlands were declared “European Land”, up to the end of the Second World War, there was a limit to which the white community utilised this land. Chapter Two demonstrated that thousands of Africans continued to occupy such land as tenants on both alienated and un-alienated land. In 1934, for instance, more than half of the African population in Chipinga District and Melsetter sub-district occupied these highlands as tenants, with the rest occupying African Reserves and the APAs. The persistence of labour tenancy in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts was a clear demonstration of the limits of colonial control.

There were other measures that deprived African the right to access natural resources in the districts. These include legislation restricting African hunting, African access to irrigation water and those restricting access to indigenous resources, as exemplified by classic case of the Chirinda Forest. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, when Africans were hard hit by the Great Depression of 1929-1939 and became victims of other legislative measures that undermined their economic standing, many people manipulated all available avenues, legal and illegal, to fight for their economic and social welfare. Their responses to colonial hegemony took different forms informed by the political climate of the day. There was an upsurge in the number of Africans who turned to religion as they sought spiritual answers to the economic hardships they confronted. Therefore, African Apostolic Churches rose and continued spreading even after the Great Depression had ended. As is clear from Chapter Two, the Native Board Meetings were also a platform through which the Africans elite legally challenged colonialism and racial inequality in the district. Other people resorted to illegal activities when legal channels failed to bring results. During the Great Depression, for instance, some Africans defaulted on their tax obligations, migrated and settled in Portuguese East Africa, acquired and used guns for unlawful hunting excursions and also clandestinely migrated to the South African mines where they were better remunerated. These activities clearly show agency and resilience on the part of the Africans; at the same time demonstrating the limits of colonial control.

Many Africans were squeezed out of their ancestral land on the highlands after the Second World War. Some moved into the reserves, while others took up employment on the emerging plantation enterprises, sought employment elsewhere in the country or migrated to the South

African mines. The reserves were generally less productive and offered limited opportunities, but they were not homogeneously so. As discussed in Chapter Three, some enterprising Africans emerged and ran transport services and trading stores, while others embarked on the purchase of fruits, especially from the Rusitu Valley, selling them to areas where they were in demand. Other Africans, who were equipped with skills from the mission schools in the districts, went into building, carpentry, shoe making, and masonry professions where they made a name for themselves. Others earned a living by embarking on commercial agriculture on ABM administered APAs and the irrigation schemes pioneered by Alvord from the early 1930s. As argued throughout this thesis, it is misleading to think of Africans as a homogeneous community. Some identified and exploited economic opportunities available within this exploitative colonial system and became economically and socially better off than others. This resonates with Phimister's observations about rural stratification. In a revisit of the impact of the NLHA, Phimister dissected communities which were affected by this Act, and writes, "The basic point is simply that a large number of better off peasants came through the Land Husbandry Act, if not exactly unscathed, then more or less intact".⁹⁵⁹

The dissertation also engaged with scholars who have worked on borderlands and Africans agency along the Rhodesia-Portuguese East Africa border, such as Duri and Hughes.⁹⁶⁰ Throughout the period of study, there was a nexus between colonialism, African livelihoods and the Rhodesia-Portuguese East Africa border. While Hughes examined this with reference to the RENAMO war of the 1980s, this study has traced illegal cross border movements to colonial period, and shown that they stem from the demarcation of the border, which was done without considering African interests. Therefore, throughout the period under study, the border was fluid, and Africans from either side disregarded it whenever their livelihoods were under threat. As is illustrated in Chapter One, border demarcation was so contested by the BSAC and Portuguese East African authorities that it was only finally marked as a compromise in 1897. Its final demarcation broadly followed a watershed along the Eastern Highlands, which ignored the traditional delimitations that were already in place and sliced through established traditional chiefdoms. Thereafter, Africans ignored its existence whenever this suited them. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, thousands migrated from the Zimbabwean side and settled in Portuguese East Africa, thereby avoiding the payment of tax demanded when most Africans were incapacitated by the impact of the Great Depression.

⁹⁵⁹ Phimister, 'Rethinking the Reserves', 137.

⁹⁶⁰ Duri, 'Antecedents and Adaptation in the Borderlands', Hughes, 'Refugees and squatters'.

The demise of labour tenancy from the early 1950s onwards resulted in a rise in cattle thefts along the border with Portuguese East Africa. Cattle rustlers, including former tenants, targeted white farmers' cattle, which they drove across into Portuguese East Africa, where some tenants who had been flushed out of the farms had relocated to. The fluidity of this border was also utilised by Africans from Portuguese East Africa in the 1950s as they escaped from the *Shibalo* labour, which involved engaging in forced labour to construct roads for no pay. Hence, thousands migrated to better paying jobs in the timber plantations that were established along the Rhodesian side of the border after the Second World War. These events impacted on the NRB's efforts to conserve natural resources as it was difficult to arrest and deal with offenders from Portuguese East Africa, where hunting parties and veld fires sometimes originated.

Therefore, by extending its gaze across the border, this study makes two significant contributions to the history of south eastern Zimbabwe. The establishment of the Rhodesia Mozambique border split African societies as Europeans sought to create nation states and to entrench their dominance. However, the impact of land alienation, forced labour and taxation, forced Africans from either side to seek opportunities across the border, despite measures to limit their movement. The border was a failure as colonial hardships transformed some Africans into transnational citizens as they struggled to make a living.

Chapter Four examined the activities of the NRB in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts. It exposes the nature of colonial prejudice against the Africans with regards to environmental management. The general viewpoint among the colonial officials was that Africans were environmentally unfriendly, hence the need for the state to intervene. It was clear, however, that white commercial farmers also needed advice and empowerment on environmental conservation matters. Elsewhere outside the Chipinga and Melsetter white farming areas, there were cases of environmental degradation which resulted from unscientific agrarian activities, such as over cultivation and mono cropping. The degradation in the maize producing districts of Mashonaland was, for instance, attributed, first, to monoculture and the way several acreages of land were stripped to give room for the maize production to meet war time needs. Secondly, the Mashonaland tobacco farmers contributed to land degradation by continuously growing tobacco on the same land in response to the post-Second World War tobacco boom, which led to soil exhaustion and nematode infestation. Hundreds of acres of indigenous timber were also cleared to get fuel wood for tobacco curing.⁹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the blame for the degradation

⁹⁶¹Phimister, *Economic and social history*, 226-229.

witnessed in the Chipinga and Melsetter Districts was put on the practice of labour tenancy and actions of the African families who lived on the white designated farms.

The state intervention measures adopted for the two races make an interesting comparison. The state assumed that environmental degradation in Africans reserves was a result of overpopulation and overstocking and consequently introduced punitive measures such as destocking, reorganisation of African farming areas and contour ridging. By contrast to the strategies used within African communities, a different approach was taken with regards to white commercial farming areas where, as demonstrated through the ICA movement, the state encouraged white farmer interest in conservation undertakings by introducing a number of incentives. This basically corresponds with McGregor observations, who summed up the two contrasting approaches as: “For settlers, conservation entailed financial and other incentives: for Africans, it entailed coercion and punitive restrictions on resource use”.⁹⁶²

Analysis of the communities of the Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands in chapter four reveals that the conflict among conservationists, white farmers, missionaries and African tenants over land, water, timber and wildlife was complex and multi layered. Colonial officials regarded white and black communities as unprogressive and reluctant to adopt conservation policies and practices. However, it did not contextualise this criticism within the prevailing local economic realities which were unique to this region. One of the major local factors that the conservationists ignored was that region’s relatively undeveloped agrarian infrastructure meant that labour tenancy remained the only viable agrarian activity for white and black alike. Therefore, by insisting that labour tenancy must be abolished without offering an alternative agrarian activity, the state nourished conflict not just between itself and the white farmers, but also with the African tenants.

While it was demonstrated that the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts were largely economically isolated from the rest of the colony, for almost half a century, it was still part of the global system. At the end of the nineteenth century, it fell under colonial occupation and like the rest of the colony; it experienced the impacts of the two World Wars, and, in the interim, the Great Depression. So, buoyed by war time demand for food, the beef sector became a more lucrative business than previously. Secondly, a promising dairy sector had, by 1939, evolved from cottage cheese processing to centralised cheese manufacture, under which two cooperative cheese processing entities, the Excelsior and Eastern Border Cheese factories, had been formed.

⁹⁶²McGregor, ‘Conservation, Control and Ecological Change’, 257.

Thirdly, more promising plantation agriculture, New Year's Gift and Ratelshoek Tea Estates, oriented towards the growing and processing tea for the export market, had also taken off by the end of the Great Depression.

As the infrastructure was improved after the Second World War, so investment and a further integration of the region into the global market system accelerated. Chapter Three showed that the Melsetter District responded to Britain's post Second World War restructuring of its trade patterns. British companies were unable to buy as much tobacco as they wanted from USA markets owing to Britain's acute dollar shortage after the war. Britain resorted to trading with empire sources and within the sterling area, in the process creating closer trading ties between Britain and Rhodesia. This resulted in large scale investments in the tobacco producing regions of Mashonaland, and farmers from the Melsetter and Chipinga responded by disposing their land and relocating to the tobacco producing regions of the country. In their place came five large plantation companies which acquired 49 per cent of land on the Melsetter ICA between 1945 and 1957 and more land in the neighbouring Chipinga District. As a result, land which since colonial occupation had been underutilised was transformed into timber plantations, timber processing factories and infrastructure such as workers' compounds and road networks set up, thereby transforming the whole landscape of these highlands.

As chronicled in Chapter Five, regional political developments are essential in understanding land use transformations which occurred in the Chipinga Highlands during the 1960s. The independence of east and central African countries caused considerable insecurity within the settler communities of these countries. At the same time, while the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland led to the attainment of the independence by Zambia and Malawi, it led to Southern Rhodesia's declaration of UDI in November 1965. Some of the settlers from east Africa, especially Kenya, who were widely experienced in coffee agriculture, relocated to Rhodesia bringing with them expertise in coffee agriculture. They also capitalised on the market networks which they had developed earlier on whilst still in the coffee business in east Africa, the biggest market of which was South Africa. The coffee production business subsequently spread to some of the earlier landowners in south eastern Zimbabwe, particularly in the Chipinga District and Vumba area of the Mutare District.

Both the growth of the timber sector particularly on the Melsetter Highlands, and coffee agriculture particularly in the Chipinga Highlands entailed intensive utilisation of land. This subsequently led to the demise of labour tenancy because land which had been set aside for

tenants since colonial occupation was now used for timber and coffee production. Also, this type of investment demanded full time labour, thereby accelerating the demise of labour tenancy. The majority of Africans who could not be absorbed as labourers in the emerging plantations were subsequently pushed into the reserves. However, as space in the local reserves became scarce, some Africans tapped on the long established relations with their Ndaun counterparts across the border and relocated to the Portuguese East Africa. At the same time, the economies of this region also became increasingly linked with the rest of the country, region and the global system, by producing timber, tea, coffee, and dairy products for these markets.

The land use transformation that occurred in the Melsetter and Chipinga Districts occurred primarily because investment in this region was triggered by post Second World War challenges that particularly affected Britain and in the process entrenched economic ties with her colonies. The political independence of east African states was also significant. Therefore, change in the Chipinga and Melsetter Highlands is a story of the international and regional dynamics impacting on the local.

African wage employment, up to the end of the Second World War, was mostly sought outside the Melsetter District and involved the migration of young men to the employment centres like the South African mining sector. While the development of the timber sector during the 1950s did not alter the position of women in any significant way, Chapter Five showed that, with the growth of the coffee during the 1960s, women became more important in wage employment, taking up most of that casual work, including weeding, plucking and drying coffee. Women's roles have to be understood within the broader debates on gender, labour reproduction and capital accumulation.⁹⁶³ They subsidised the cost of labour to plantation owners by working as casual labourers in the coffee estates. Furthermore, an absence of husbands compelled some women to perform traditionally male work. However, male migrations to centres of employment resulted in a number of strained marriage relations, with some leading to divorces, after which women assumed greater responsibilities of raising children. In all these cases, their contribution was fundamental to the needs of capital but probably most difficult to quantify.

This study sought to demonstrate the significance of missionary education for the development African nationalism. This follows up on Rennie's study on Christianity and the rise of nationalism in Southern Rhodesia. Though Rennie's study ends in 1935, the issues he raised

⁹⁶³B.B. Brown, 'The Impact of Male Labour Migration on Women in Botswana', *African Affairs*, 82, 328, July 1983, 369.

about Missionary education, enlightenment, Christianity and racial inequity were taken up in chapters Three and Five. Nationalist activism was particularly associated with those Africans who acquired education from the Mission schools; among them were Obed Mutezo, William Ndangana, Edson and Ndabaningi Sithole. Notably, the first white settler to fall victim to freedom fighters since the Shona and Ndebele uprisings of 1896-97 came from the Melsetter District, when Johannes Oberholzer was killed on 4 June 1964. For some sections of colonial white society, this came as a shock because this killing was committed by the same community which colonial authorities though contained “the most law abiding natives in the colony”. Africans’ reactions to white domination became increasingly violent from the late 1950s onwards. Colonial land confiscations which occurred with the arrival of white settlers in 1893 onwards did not initially change African agrarian activities, for most continued to utilise the land as tenants. It was the massive land transfers of the 1950s and 1960s which led to the demise of labour tenancy, transforming some Africans into full time labour and the displacement of more people into the reserves that caused many Africans to experience the real impact of colonial land confiscation. It is within this context that we can explain the rise of political activism and violence that began to characterise this landscape during the 1960s.

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