CHIEFS AND GOVERNMENT IN POST-COLONIAL ZIMBABWE:

THE CASE OF MAKONI DISTRICT,

1980-2014

By

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THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES, FOR THE CENTRE OF AFRICA STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE.

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between chiefs and government in Zimbabwe during the period 1980-2014. It examines how the interactions between chiefs and government evolved over three and a half decades, with specific reference to the Makoni District of Manicaland Province. The abovementioned relationship was marked by three broad phases, namely 1980-1986, 1987-1999 and 2000-2014. The phases corresponded with variations in the political climate. These changes carry the central theme of the study, namely the way in which the relationship was informed by changing political imperatives. As the case of Makoni District reveals, chiefs were rejected by the independence government in 1980 for their perceived role as anti-nationalists; they were courted when political challenges began to appear in the late 1980s; and they were effectively co-opted when more powerful political threats emerged in 1999 with the rise of strong opposition politics. The defining features of the relationship evolved around the chiefs' power over land and judicial affairs. At first, the chiefs were stripped of their judicial and land powers when their relationship with the government was characterised by hostility. These powers were restored when the government needed the chiefs' political support. Using the case of Makoni chiefs, the aim of the study is to show how the ZANU PF government initially rejected and later co-opted chiefs in its administrative and political system for its hegemonic convenience.

Keywords: Chiefs, ZANU PF, government, post-colonial, Makoni District.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie stel ondersoek in na die verhouding tussen hoofmanne en die regering in Zimbabwe gedurende die tydperk 1980-2014. Die soeklig val op hoe die interaksies tussen hoofmanne en die regering oor drie en ’n half dekades ontwikkel het, met spesifieke verwysing na die Makoni-distrik van die Manicaland-provinsie. Die bogenoemde verhouding het deur drie breë fases beweeg, naamlik 1980-1986, 1987-1999 en 2000-2014. Dié fases het ooreengestem met skommelinge in die politieke klimaat. Hierdie veranderings dra die sentrale tema van die studie, naamlik die wyse waarop die verhouding beïnvloed is deur veranderende politieke oorwegings. Soos die geval van Makoni-distrik aantoon, is die hoofmanne in 1980 deur die onafhanklikheidsregering verwerp as gevolg van hulle vermeende rol as anti-nasionaliste; in die laat 1980's het die regering toenadering gesoek toe politieke uitdagings op die horison verskyn het; en in 1999, toe ernstiger politieke bedreigings hul verskyning in die vorm van die opkoms van sterk opposisiepolitiek gemaak het, is hulle effektief gekoöpteer. Die bepalende kenmerke van die verhouding het om die hoofmanne se mag oor grond- en geregtelike sake gewentel. Aan die begin is die hoofmanne van hul geregtelike en grondverwante magte ontneem toe hulle verhouding met die regering deur vyandigheid gekenmerk is. Hierdie magte is herstel toe die regering die hoofmanne se politieke ondersteuning nodig gekry het. Met verwysing na die geval van die Makoni-hoofmanne is die mikpunt van die studie om aan te toon hoe die ZANU PF-regering hoofmanne aanvanklik verwerp en later in sy administratiewe en politieke stelsel gekoöpteer het in die najaag van sy hegemoniese aspirasies.

Sleutelwoorde: Hoofmanne, ZANU PF, regering, post-koloniale, Makoni-distrik.

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I would like to thank the various interviewees who let me into their homes and allowed me to disrupt their daily activities. Besides those already named in the cited interviews, there are many ordinary villagers whose contribution was invaluable. However, they chose to remain anonymous. They are my heroes.

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family. Her encouragement when the times got rough is duly noted. My heartfelt thanks. Without my family's constant support, encouragement and understanding, it would not have been possible for me to achieve my goal. This 'supporting cast' includes my sister, Tilda, my mother, Anna, and my father, Madoda Nkomo, who never lived to see the fruits of his advice. Your support and inspiration was key. I am grateful to my brother, Melusi, for his efforts at editorial assistance and for bearing the brunt of proofreading.

It would be impossible to name individually all the kind people who have helped in many different ways. I would like to express my collective thanks to all who have not been named above.

Dedication

To my daughter Stephanie and my son Andile, who interrupted and inspired in equal measures,

and to my wife Florence, who patiently endured my long hours on the

computer

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Acronyms

DA	District Administrator
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
ISO	International Socialist Organisation
LHA	Land Husbandry Act
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NRA	Natural Resources Act
RAU	Research and Advocacy Unit.
RDC	Rural District Council
RF	Rhodesian Front
TLA	Traditional Leaders Act
UANC	United African National Congress
VIDCO	Village Development Council
WADCO	Ward Development Council
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement
ZUPO	Zimbabwe United People's Organisation

Chapter One

Introduction

The coming of independence in Zimbabwe in 1980 rearranged in many ways the political, economic, administrative and developmental models of the country. The changes in both government and policy affected the forms of interaction between chiefs and the majority government. The government dictated the changes and they depended on the prevailing political, social and administrative imperatives. Broadly, the relationship was characterised by three phases between 1980 and 2014. The first phase, 1980 to 1986, was a period of state indifference towards chieftaincy. During this phase the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government at first neglected chiefs.[1] It pushed chiefs to the edge of the state building project. In the process, it put in place a series of legislative measures and policy realignments which mainly affected chiefs' powers over land and grassroots judicial affairs. The powers were transferred to party-aligned committees of which chiefs were generally excluded. As the case of Makoni chiefs reveals, they were left with only spiritual and cultural responsibilities. Considering the importance of these powers over land and judicial affairs to chiefs, government action threatened the survival of their institution. Such a precarious position for chiefs in the early 1980s prompted scholars like Terence Ranger in his study of chiefs in Makoni District to suggest that 'Chiefs are in eclipse'[2] and David Lan, in his work on Dande Communal Lands of Mashonaland Central Province to remark that 'the chiefs have gone.'[3]

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[1] The terms ZANU PF and government will be used interchangeably. This is because government officials, who were mainly party members, did not themselves make a distinction between the two institutions. It is therefore difficult for observers to draw a clear line between them. As K. Chitiyo and M. Rupiya, 'Tracking Zimbabwe's political history: The Zimbabwe Defence Force from 1980-2005', in M. Rupiya (ed.), *Evolutions and revolutions: A contemporary history of militaries in Southern Africa*, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2005, pp. 348-50 demonstrates that, for instance, top army officers were represented in top party structures such as the politburo and the central committee.

[2] T. Ranger, 'Tradition and travesty: Chiefs and the administration of Makoni district, Zimbabwe, 1960-80', in J. D. Y. Peel and T. Ranger (eds.), *Past and present in Zimbabwe*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983, p. 39.

[3] Quoted in T. Ranger, *Peasant consciousness and guerrilla war in Zimbabwe: A comparative study*, London: James Currey, 1985, p. 340.

Several factors prompted the government to weaken the institution of chieftaincy. First, ZANU PF tended to see most of chiefs as former agents of the colonial administrations, particularly during the liberation war era. A number of them, epitomised by chiefs Kayisa Ndiweni and Jeremiah Chirau, openly supported Ian Smiths' campaign against nationalists. In Makoni District, chiefs like Zambe Makoni mobilised against nationalists on behalf of the Rhodesian Front (RF) government.[4] For this reason, they were labelled 'sell-outs', an identity that stayed on for years after independence.[5] Second, while it never defined what it meant by 'modernising', ZANU PF viewed itself as a modernising government. It professed loyalty to Marxist social and economic doctrines and interpreted chieftaincy as a feudal institution.[6] Chieftaincy was, therefore, a hindrance to progress and development. Third, while chiefs were a potential competing source of power, the electoral strength of ZANU PF in the 1980 elections gave them the confidence that they could do without them.

In the 1980 elections, ZANU PF won 57 of the 80 common roll seats. This represented 63 per cent of the votes while eight other competing parties shared the remaining 37 per cent.[7] In the two Makoni constituencies of Makoni East and Makoni West, ZANU PF won the parliamentary seats by 96.7 percent and 95.7 per cent, respectively.[8] The success was achieved without the active engagement of chiefs, indicating that the government could afford to ignore chiefs without significant electoral consequences. Its disregard for chiefly

[4] The Rhodesian Front was formed in 1962 by whites opposed to black majority rule. It changed its name to the Republican Front in 1981 and but maintained its 'RF' acronym. In 1984 it was renamed the Conservative Alliance.

[5] J. Alexander, 'Zimbabwe Since 1997: Land and the legacies of war', in A. Mustapha and L. Whitfield (eds.), *Turning Points in African Democracy*, New York: Boydell and Brewer, 2009, p. 187 and T. Scarnecchia, *The urban roots of democracy and political violence in Zimbabwe: Harare and Highfield, 1940-1964*, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008, pp. 94-133, discuss in detail how the term 'sell-out' was adopted by nationalist movements in Zimbabwe, particularly ZANU PF, to describe people whose agenda was perceived as betraying the nationalist struggle through such actions as revealing political strategies or, in the war years, exposing nationalist fighters or collaborators to government forces.

[6] R. Inglehart and W. E. Barker, 'Modernisation, cultural values and the persistence of traditional values', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 2000, pp. 19-51, discusses modernisation in the context of debates pertaining to Karl Marx and Max Weber's interpretation of cultural values and cultural change.

[7] M. Sithole and J. Makumbe, 'Elections in Zimbabwe: The ZANU PF hegemony and its incipient decline', *African Journal of Political Science*, vol. 2, No. 1, 1997, pp. 126.

[8] *The Herald*, 4 March, 1980.

electoral support may be evidenced by the fact that it did not even mention them in its 1980 electoral manifesto.[9]

Important to note is that throughout the period of disempowerment, chiefs always campaigned for the return of their powers. As Jocelyn Alexander notes, they lobbied party committees, elected officials and other sections of government in efforts to regain recognition.[10] They raised their concerns through various channels. These included the media and parliamentary debates. However, they were always careful not to further inflame government's hostility. Full of liberation war military verve, the party demanded discipline and was not tolerant of opposition.[11] Sometimes chiefs drew on James Scott's 'weapons of the weak'[12] and used more subtle ways to raise their concerns. Direct confrontation was likely to be futile and to provoke further adverse reactions against their institution.

The year 1987 marked the beginning of a second phase in chiefs–government relations. Signs of government reconsideration of the relationship were seen in newspaper reports, parliamentary debates and in direct public pronouncements. State-owned newspapers such as *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail* published articles venerating chiefs. Official pronouncements presented positive accounts of chiefs. Parliamentary debates and Bills ostensibly aimed at restoring the power and status of chiefs were introduced. For example, the 1989 Chiefs and Headmen Act enhanced the status and power of chiefs, albeit marginally. Five years later, the Land Tenure Commission was constituted.[13] Its terms of reference included investigating the position of chiefs *vis-a-vis* land issues. In 1995 a parliamentary delegation was dispatched to regional countries to learn how other southern African

[9] ZANU PF, *1980 election manifesto*, Harare, 1980.
[10] J. Alexander, *The unsettled land: State-making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1893-2003*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2006, p. 13.
[11] Many individuals and sections of the Zimbabwean society were victimized by ZANU PF for their perceived disloyalty to the party. Some were arrested, exiled or killed. See Joshua Nkomo, *The story of my life*, Harare: Sapes books, 2001, for his experiences as a perceived government opponent in the 1980s.
[12] J. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, analyses how subaltern people use methods other than direct confrontation to resist dominance by more powerful social groups.
[13] Zimbabwe: *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into appropriate land tenure systems*, Harare: Government Printer, 1994.

governments related to chiefs.[14] The long term reason was political. Continued hostility between government and chiefs potentially pre-disposed the latter to opposition politics. This was especially so as some chiefs were previously suspected of having supported the RF and of having benefitted materially from its rule.

Another significant shift in the relationship between chiefs and government took place in 1999. This third phase saw the rise of formidable opposition politics in September 1999 and the electoral difficulties of 2000. As a result, ZANU PF realigned its relations with chiefs. As will be shown for Makoni District, it co-opted chiefs into the party specifically as a tool for inhibiting the electoral progress of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Chiefs Tandi, Chiduku and Makoni actively organised for the party and frustrated anti-ZANU PF activities.[15]

ZANU PF used both carrot and stick tactics in order to draw chiefs into the new strategy. Although some chiefs were already ZANU PF supporters, the tactics forced those inclined to the opposition to join the party. Coercion was inflicted on chiefs deemed disloyal to ZANU PF. The coercive tactics ranged from the withdrawal of allowances to violent attacks on non-compliant chiefs. Persuasion involved improved government monetary allowances and government-sponsored cars and farms. All Makoni chiefs benefitted from such patron-client politics. So powerful was this political manoeuvre by ZANU PF that it brought chiefs to the point of 'forgetting their ages old grievances against the government.'[16] The government succeeded in deflecting chiefs' calls for the return of their authority. Chiefs were tamed by a process akin to the 'traditionalisation of the state' of the 1960s and 1970s described by Johan Holleman and Anna Weinrich.[17] Consequently, a political buffer against opposition forces was erected in rural areas. During this period chiefs were reduced to what Emile van Nieuwaal

[14] Zimbabwe: *Report on the delegation of the Parliament of Zimbabwe to Botswana, Namibia and Zambia on the role of traditional authorities in Local Government*, Harare: Government Printer, 1995.
[15] To avoid confusion that may arise due to the large number of chiefs under discussion, only their title will be used. For example, rather than using their real names, all successive Chiduku chiefs will be referred to as Chief Chiduku. This is the title carried by all people who assume the chieftainship.
[16] Interview with Pishayi Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.
[17] J. F. Holleman, *Chief, council and commissioner: Some problems of government in Rhodesia*, Assen: Royal VanGorcum, 1968; A. K. H. Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils in Rhodesia: Transition from patriarchal to bureaucratic power*, London: Heinemann, 1971. They describe how the state resurrected the notion of 'tradition' in order to effect enhanced social, administrative and political control over Africans.

calls rural 'vote banks'.[18] Indeed, chiefs such as Chiduku excluded opposition forces and punished suspected MDC subjects in their territories.[19]

Using Makoni District as a case study, the thesis explores the changing relationship between chiefs and government in post-colonial Zimbabwe between 1980 and 2014. It examines the different social, political, economic and administrative forces involved and how they shaped the relationship, forced changes and sustained continuities. This will allow a fine-grained picture of how government and chiefs perceived each other throughout the period under consideration. The study will also look at how, and to what extent, different forms of interactions affected ordinary Makoni District villagers.

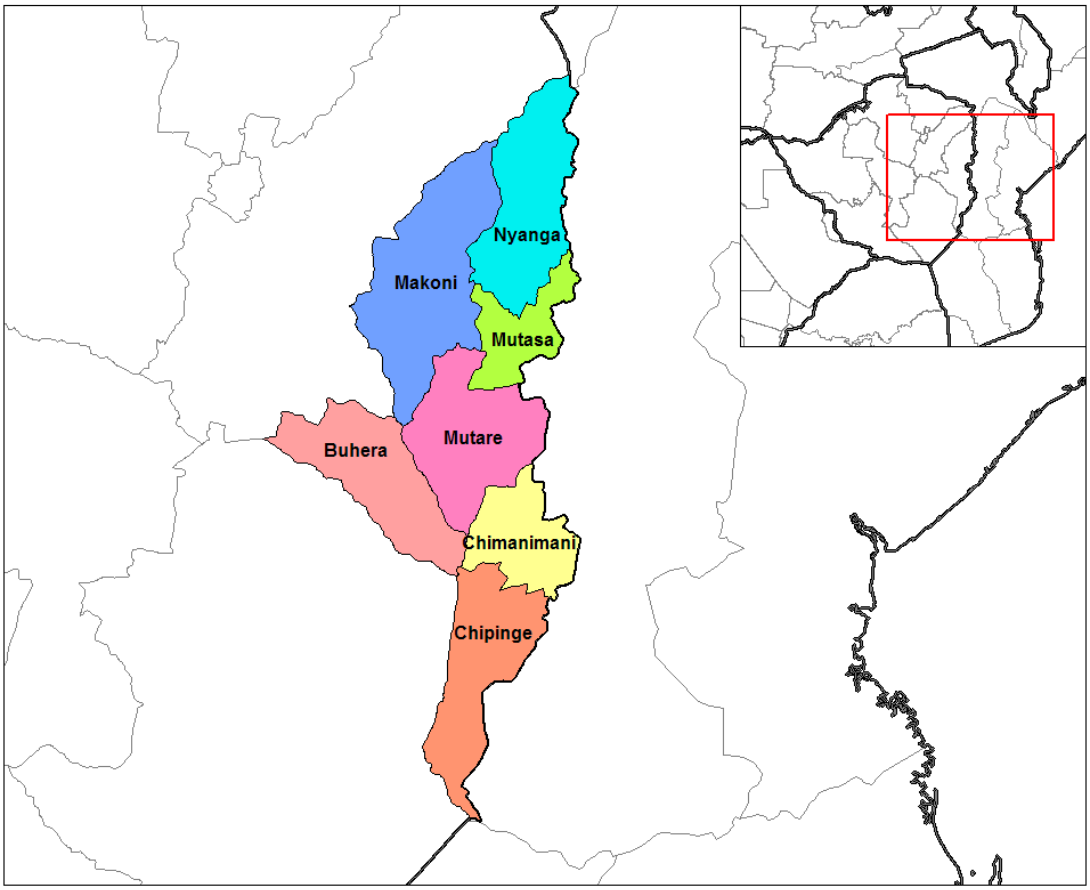
This study uses Makoni District as a window to attain a wider national perspective. Makoni District is located in Manicaland Province, in north-eastern Zimbabwe (see map on next page). The centre of the District, Rusape town, is approximately 170 kilometres southeast of Harare, the capital. The population of the surrounding rural areas is estimated at 175 000 villagers against the urban part's 100 000.[20] Makoni is primarily a farming district. There are currently four chieftaincies in the district. These are Makoni, Chiduku, Chipunza and Tandi. Before independence there were six chieftaincies, including Chikore and Chendambuya. However, Chendambuya was disbanded by the colonial government on the eve of independence while Chikore was administratively moved to Mutoko District after independence.

[18] E. van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs: Are chiefs mere puppets', *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, Vol. 28, No. 37, 1996, p. 45.

[19] The study will use the term 'subject' in its simplest form to refer to people who lived under, or were led by, chiefs. It is used cognisant of the debates surrounding its meaning and is preferred here as it removes complexities that may divert this study.

[20] Zimbabwe Statistics Agency, *Zimbabwe population census,* Harare: Zimbabwe statistics agency, 2012, p. 25.

***Figure 1**: Map showing location of Makoni District in relation to Manicaland Province. Insert shows the province's general position on a national map.*



There are two main reasons for the choice of Makoni District as a case study. First, the current research builds on Ranger's seminal works. These include *Peasant consciousness* and 'Tradition and travesty'.[21] They both used the district for analyses of various connections involving colonialism, nationalism, peasants and traditional leaders in the colonial period.[22] That Ranger took the story to independence makes a case for investigating how the relations developed in the post-colonial period. His works provided a starting point for this study and also helped capture changes and continuities in chiefs–government relations in the post-colonial period.

[21] Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*; Ranger 'Tradition and travesty'.

[22] While the study will stick to the term 'chiefs', it will use 'traditional leaders' whenever it intends to discuss indigenous leadership institutions as a collective, that is, including chiefs, headmen and village heads. It is acknowledged that it is a contestable term. It has only been adopted here for the sake of brevity.

The other reason for choosing Makoni District as a case study is that both in the colonial and post-colonial eras, its chiefs were active in their relations with the state. Either as allies or adversaries, chiefs like Chingaira Makoni, Zambe Makoni, Chipunza and Tandi actively interacted with both colonial administrations and the post-independence government. For instance, Chief Zambe Makoni was the first secretary of the National Council of Chiefs established during UDI and he received praises for working closely with colonial administrations. Such interactions forced the government to relegate chiefs after independence, only to reincorporate them again starting the late 1980s. As such, the district provides various dimensions and dynamics to view chiefs–government relations.

It should be acknowledged that while the study makes special reference to Makoni District, it ultimately seeks to illuminate on the broader national picture. It concedes that the nature of chiefs-government relations in Makoni District were not peculiar to that part of the country alone. What the case study reveals is that developments in the district closely followed the national pattern. As occasional cross-references will show, chiefs across the country's districts and provinces were affected in the same manner as Makoni District's chiefs.

The study begins in 1980. This is because the coming of independence signalled both the end and the beginning of major historical epochs in Zimbabwe. The attendant political and administrative changes greatly affected chiefs–government relations. Lan and Ranger's aforementioned 1982 remarks on chiefs' perceived demise also informed the study's start date. I chose to take the study beyond the post-2000 period as this allows for tracing the evolvement of the relationships in the context of various post-2000 political complexities. Important political characteristics include a series of closely contested elections, political violence, the advent of Government of National Unity and constitutional referendums. These activities and developments defined and explained chiefs–government relations after 2000. There are, therefore, significant intellectual grounds for embarking on a study of this nature.

Sources and methodology

Historical research is mainly backed by archival sources. However, exploring a contemporary subject raises challenges of accessing them. This was the case with this study. Official documents containing communication of, and between, chiefs and the state in Zimbabwe in the period under study are hard to come by. Whatever the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) has is still locked-up under the 25-year rule. What is supposed to be in the 'open period' has yet to be processed.

To make up for this absence of archival material, the researcher consulted Makoni District Administrator's (DA) records. The DAs office has some of the official records relevant to this study. However, the DA and his staff did not allow me full access to the records. They only gave me what they felt was appropriate. It was frustrating to wait for hours on end only to get a few documents pulled out of unlabelled files or boxes. It seems the hesitancy was due to the climate of fear entrenched by the nature of post-2000 politics. Here is an example of the responses I received in my quest to access the DA's files:

> Some of the information here is too sensitive. I cannot allow you into this office or to get hold of those files. Just tell me what you want and I will look for it. Sometimes we are not sure if some of the researchers who come here are real students or they are journalists working for international news agencies. You will get us into trouble.[23]

So I accessed the material they selected using an unclearly explained criterion. Though not as much as the researcher expected, the material accessed still provided insights into many aspects of the subject matter. It allowed for a glimpse into the official and inside view of both chiefs and government with regards to their relations. It discussed such chiefly issues as their role in administration, land control and power struggles.

While accessible official documents were limited, I was fortunate that some of the issues raised therein were discussed in parliament throughout the period under study. As reflected in Parliamentary Debates, legislators extensively debated various chiefly matters. These included the relevance of chiefs in post-independence administrative or governance processes and their role in national politics. They also debated various pieces of legislation

[23] Interview with William Mashava, DA, Makoni District, 11 September, 2014.

that affected traditional leaders.[24] These included the Communal Lands Act (1980) and the Traditional Leaders Act (1998). The debates were illuminating especially as some chiefs, like Tangwena, Mangwende and Makoni, were also legislators. Used together with newspapers, interviews and other written sources, Parliamentary Debates underscored the various dimensions of the relations. The centrality of Parliamentary Debates is mainly in that they informed on chronology, key legislation, dates and important events. While they are a viable historical source, their limitations were acknowledged. Debaters pursued particular social, economic and political agendas, hence raising issues of historical truth and objectivity. For instance, in post-2000 parliamentary sessions legislator chiefs and ZANU PF parliamentarians established an alliance whereby they supported each other regardless of the issue at hand. Also, the debaters on all sides of the House, particularly after 2000, tended to give a predominantly partisan interpretation of chiefs-government relations, a factor that obscured other social and economic issues involved.

For a study of recent history such as this one, a qualitative research design mainly based on interviews is important. Interviews were important in the light of few accessible official documents related to the subject. They were also important in capturing the nuances that did not emerge in parliamentary debates. Several people of different social and political backgrounds were engaged in open-ended interviews so as to understand their perceptions about chiefs in post-independence Zimbabwe. These include chiefs, their subjects and government officials. Such interviews helped reveal important aspects that were not explicit in other sources. For instance, it was mainly through interviews that particular incidences of the involvement of Makoni chiefs in political intimidation were revealed. However, interviews were used cognisant of the weaknesses associated with them.[25] Some interviewees expressed open bias in favour of their political parties, some forgot important dates and events and some allowed the interviewer too short a period of time for a productive session. However, the most significant challenge was the fear by some interviewees, especially chiefs,

[24] The hierarchy of indigenous leadership institutions in the colonial era was structured this way, starting with the top: Paramount Chief, Chief, Headmen and Village Head. The lower institution reported to the one above it. The Paramount Chief system was disbanded at independence.

[25] C. A. Hamilton, 'Ideology and oral traditions: Listening to the voices 'from below', *History in Africa*, Vol. 14, 1987, pp. 67-86, raises the complexities that arise out of the use of oral traditions in the reconstruction of history.

to freely express themselves. This was mainly due to the government-sponsored culture of intimidation and violence that dominated post-2000 politics.[26]

In an attempt to compensate for the paucity of official and archival documents, as well as the weaknesses of interviews, I consulted newspapers such as the *Daily News*, *NewsDay*, *The Financial Gazette*, *The Sunday Mail* and *The Herald*. These newspapers extensively reported on various aspects of chiefs–government relations. Their reports, opinions and 'letters to the editor' captured issues of governance, rural development and political processes. Newspapers critiqued and debated issues raised in other fora, such as parliament, and situated them within relevant economic, political or social contexts. Such an aspect helped shape the interview questions drawn to capture the Makoni case study. The researcher was conscious of the inherent limitations of most newspapers. The main concern was on objectivity. Particularly since 2000, the media was heavily politically polarised. Privately-owned newspapers tended to present a negative view of chiefs. They accused them of actively supporting ZANU PF. On the other hand, the state media, led by *The Herald*, tended to support the growing political interaction between chieftaincy and the government. It was vital for the researcher, therefore, to take J. Hervina and Gayatri Spivak's advice of 'reading against the grain' in order to attain a reasonable degree of objectivity.[27]

I also consulted research reports by civil society organisations such as the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU). Their research includes monitoring the role of chiefs in political processes particularly in the context of violent politics of the 2000s. For example, RAU, an organisation that campaigns for policy change by the government in the context of human rights, documented the role of traditional leaders in political violence in rural Zimbabwe.[28] Such activist publications help to locate chiefs on Zimbabwe's political landscape, and to connect the post-2000 period to their long history with various forms of Zimbabwean governments.

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[26] I. Phimister and B. Raftopoulos, 'Desperate days in Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 34, No. 113, 2007, pp. 573-80 captures the pervasive nature of state-sponsored political violence that characterized post-2000 political processes.

[27] J. Hervina and G. Spivak, quoted in L. White, *Speaking with vampires: Rumour and history in colonial Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, p. 90.

[28] D. Matyszak, *Formal structures of power in rural Zimbabwe*, Harare: Research and Advocacy Unit, 2011.

Literature review

This study builds upon an existing body of literature concerning with various aspects of chieftaincy in Zimbabwean history. Amongst these are works by historians, anthropologists and social scientists. However, these scholars either concentrated on the colonial period or were 'presentist' in their approach.[29] Moreover, material on the post-colonial era is predominantly in the form of articles, especially from non-historians. By contrast, this study adopts a long view in attempting to reconstruct chiefs' post-colonial encounters with the government. The *longue durée* approach enabled the study to trace the continuities and changes in the relations over a period of 34 years.

Important works have been written about chiefs and the colonial state in Zimbabwe. The most important of them are by anthropologist Holleman and sociologist Weinrich.[30] Holleman's *Chief, council and commissioner* and Weinrich's *Chiefs and councils* offer the first comprehensive study in colonial chiefs–government relations in Zimbabwe. At the centre of their argument is the transformation of government-chiefs relations in the colonial period, especially the displacement of chiefs by NCs in the 1890s, how they were divested of their power, and their co-option by the Smith government in the 1960s. The co-option of chiefs in the 1960s was meant to buttress the government from the growing nationalist 'winds of change'. By the time of independence therefore, a pattern had emerged whereby the government dictated the nature of its relations with chiefs. This alternate accommodation followed by rejection of chiefs was maintained by the post-colonial government. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the post-colonial government, just like the successive colonial governments, altered the nature of this relationship whenever it was in its best interests. In light of this Weinrich's questions on the position of chiefs and the government is still relevant today. Writing in the 1970s, she asked: 'Do chiefs really command the support and respect of the rural population? Or they are nothing but government lackeys compromised by their

[29] They include, among others, Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*; J. Makumbe, 'Local authorities and traditional leadership', in J. de Visser *et al* (eds.), *Local government reform in Zimbabwe: A policy dialogue*, Bellville: Community Law Centre, 2010; D. Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs in Zimbabwe: A social history of the Hwesa people, 1870s -1990s*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999; N. D. Mutizwa-Mangiza, 'Decentralisation in Zimbabwe: Problems of planning at the district level', in N. D. Mutizwa-Mangiza and A. H .J. Helmsing (eds.), *Rural development and planning in Zimbabwe*, Sidney: Averbury, 1991.

[30] Holleman, *Chief, council and commissioner*; Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils in Rhodesia*;

cooperation with the European controlled administration?'[31] While the post-colonial government is no longer controlled by Europeans, still such questions are relevant in examining the kind of relationship between the government and chiefs.

Another important set of works on chiefs-government relations in Zimbabwe was presented by Ranger and Lan, respectively. In their respective works, they explored the complex relationship between spirit mediums, chiefs, nationalist organisations and the majority black population in the context of their interactions with the colonial state. Ranger took the story back to the early days of colonialism, while Lan concentrated on the liberation war years. As part of his argument, Ranger highlights the futility of defining all chiefs as anti-nationalists, arguing that they chose to be either resisters or collaborators depending on such factors as individual political inclinations. This kind of analysis serve as a corrective to notions by some scholars of Zimbabwe's chiefly history, such as Thompson Makahamadze *et al*,[32] and some post-1980 government officials, who did not acknowledge the existence of some pro-nationalist chiefs. On the other hand, Lan's work on Dande sought to show the enhanced collaborative relationship between spirit mediums and guerrilla fighters, and the corresponding rise of distrust between chiefs and nationalists. In their related approaches, the value of *Peasant consciousness* and *Guns and rain* is in that they both look beyond 1980. This allowed them to assess the influence of pre-independence developments on post-colonial chiefs-government interactions. Lan's anthropological approach to the Dande case study and Ranger's historical approach to Makoni District concurred that guerrillas replaced chiefs with party functionaries during the war years and that this was the precursor to the post-colonial government's initial neglect of chiefs. However, their analysis of the post-colonial period is not fully developed. This is because both *Peasant consciousness* and *Guns and rain* end in 1983. Therefore, there is a need to go beyond this time period in order to trace the emergent trajectories and to explain what defined them. This is important considering that some of the debates that Ranger and Lan separately contributed to concerning the colonial period – for example, that some chiefs were lackeys of the government – are still prevalent today.

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[31] Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils in Rhodesia*, preface.

[32] T. Makahamadze *et al*, 'The role of traditional leaders in fostering democracy, justice and human rights in Zimbabwe', *The African Anthropologist*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2009.

Of all the literature available on chiefs and government Zimbabwe, it is Alexander's work which took the longest view.[33] *Unsettled land* chronicled long-running contestations over land in Zimbabwe from colonisation to the 2000s. Using Chimanimani and Insiza districts as case studies, Alexander explored how in the colonial period struggles revolved around the Rhodesian government's division of land along racial lines 'leaving the blacks in poor and overcrowded reserves.'[34] She also examined the post-1980 tension between the ZANU PF government and land hungry black Zimbabweans who felt the government was not giving enough attention to their plight. Important for this study, the narrative explained how chiefs were, sequentially, distrusted by the colonial administration, stripped of their powers and co-opted, depending on the political and administrative ambitions of the state. This recurred in the post-colonial era. The ZANU PF government ignored chiefs after independence, and then courted them at the end of the 1980s and effectively incorporated them in the 2000s for their political support. What *Unsettled land* adds to existing literature is its emphasis on the heterogeneity of chiefs during the colonial period, in contrast to government's post-1980 generalised sentiment that homogenised chiefs as liberation war sell-outs. Alexander proved that chiefs were an 'extremely mixed lot' who individually interpreted political and administrative pressures in different ways and according to obtaining situations.[35] As such, she challenged Mamdani's concept of 'decentralised despotism' which presented chiefs as agents of colonial governments. Unlike other works, *Unsettled land* goes beyond a single case study, and makes a comparative study of two districts. This allowed for the establishment of such incisive arguments which provoked valuable ideas that enhances the nuanced Makoni case study.

Like Lan, David Maxwell took an anthropological approach in his study of the history of chiefs and chieftaincy in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. *Christians and chiefs* reconstructed the interaction between the Hwesa people under the Katerere chieftaincy, Christian churches and the government from the 1870s to the 1990s. While Maxwell's dominant theme is Christianity and chieftaincy, he located Hwesa culture within both local

[33] Alexander, *The unsettled land*.
[34] *Ibid*, preface.
[35] *Ibid*, p. 8.

and national political and administrative discourses. Of particular interest to this study is his discussion on post-colonial relations between chiefs and government. He placed chiefs within the liberation war dichotomy of collaborators and resisters. He attributed this labelling to the hostility that developed between guerrillas and chiefs, and then the post-colonial government and chiefs. In his appreciation of the centrality of chiefs in the administration and politics of Zimbabwe, Maxwell hinted on the late 1980s government's reimagining of chiefs when it sought rural legitimacy.[36] Understandably brief but illuminating, Maxwell's account of this aspect shows how Katerere chieftaincy and other traditional leadership institutions were later used by ZANU PF for electoral purposes. It is, therefore, important to give further attention to the subject so as to achieve a deeper understanding of how chiefs and government related.

Social scientists like John Makumbe, Naison Mutizwa-Mangiza and Helmsing have also written on the post-colonial role and status of chiefs in Zimbabwe.[37] With academic backgrounds rooted in political science, administration and rural planning, their different works on local government and decentralisation discuss the role of chiefs in local government. However, the common factor is that they lamented the diminished role of chiefs in communal decision-making processes. Makumbe decries the extreme centralisation of government administration which restricted chiefs to cultural roles, as the state preferred modern forms of governance. Mutizwa-Mangiza and Helmsing suggested that chiefs deserved an active role in rural administrative systems. They concurred that after independence chiefs did not effectively contribute to the administration of their areas. This is how these non-historians speak to the current study. However, partly as a result of their 'presentist' approach, they overemphasise existing administrative developments. Consequently, they neglect historical events and barely connect chiefs-government relations to political processes. This study departs from these works by attempting to capture the changes that occurred over time.

The study is also informed by analyses of chiefs–government relations in other countries. The most notable is Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and subject* and its twin ideas of a 'bifurcated

[36] *Ibid*, p. 178.

[37] See Makumbe, 'Local authorities and traditional leadership'; N. D. Mutizwa-Mangiza, 'Decentralisation in Zimbabwe'; A. H. J Helmsing, 'Transforming rural local government: Zimbabwe's post-independence experience', in Mutizwa-Mangiza and Helmsing (eds.), *Rural development and planning*.

state' and 'decentralised despotism'.[38] By *Citizens and subjects* he meant colonial governments created 'citizens' (mostly urban and white) on one hand and 'subjects' (mainly rural and black) on the other. Mamdani saw chiefs as a crucial component that helped in the construction of this this dual state. Mamdani argued that post-colonial governments inherited this chiefly infrastructure and tapped on its 'despotism'. As such, he posited that chieftaincy has no place in independent Africa. The history of chiefs in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe fits into Mamdani's outline. The 'decentralised despotism' was notable during the nationalist struggles of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In the post-colonial period, it is clearer in the period after 2000, when chiefs tyranised their subjects on behalf of ZANU PF. *Citizen and subject* established a frame in which some arguments raised in the study fit, for example that chiefs are used by contemporary governments to help keep them in power.[39]

However, Mamdani's eloquent thesis is not without limitations. While he argued that democracy and chieftaincy are incompatible, and that chiefs are mere puppets of the state, van Nieuwaal and Carolyn Logan, in their respective works, do not agree. In apparent reaction to *Citizen and Subject*, they respectively asked and answered two questions: 'Are chiefs mere puppets?'[40] and 'Can democracy and the chief co-exist?'[41] For the first question, van Nieuwaal answered that they are not. For the second, Logan responded that democracy and chiefs can be compatible. In challenging Mamdani, they posited that traditional leadership contains many positive tenets. They argued that since chieftaincy has survived historical challenges, it can embrace and survive democracy.[42] While Mamdani's students such as Lungisile Ntsebeza have dismissed chiefs as obstacles to the implementation of democratic structures,[43] van Nieuwaal believed they have a role to play in democratisation processes of post-colonial Africa. Logan uncovered other contradictions in Mamdani's thesis. The most notable being that while Mamdani saw traditional leaders as 'nothing without the state,' she found cases

[38] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, London: James Currey, 1996, pp. 109-137.
[39] Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 25-27.
[40] van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs', pp. 39-40.
[41] C. Logan, 'Traditional leaders in modern Africa: Can democracy and the chief co-exist?', *Afrobarometer*, Working Paper No. 93, 2008.
[42] van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs', p. 41.
[43] L. Ntsebeza, 'Democratization and traditional authorities in the new South Africa', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, 1999, pp. 83-87.

where chieftaincies survived without state legitimacy.[44] This resilience of chiefs resonates well with the situation of Zimbabwe soon after independence. Chieftaincy was neglected, humiliated and lost most of its powers. Yet it survived.

Structure of dissertation

Broadly, the thesis is chronologically structured. The three substantive chapters are arranged chronologically: 1980-1986, 1987-1999, and 2000-2014. However, the individual chapters predominantly follow a thematic scheme. While it is acknowledged that a thematic approach to writing history may lead to repetition of some aspects of issues which fall within the same chronology,[45] it allows the researcher to trace one event at a time. It also allows for ample attention to complex individual issues. Furthermore, it facilitates the handling of issues that occur simultaneously. Another important factor considered was that in some instances, there were information gaps. A strictly chronological outline would have presented an incomplete story. These factors influenced the approach to this study.

Chapter One: Introduction

The chapter introduces the subject under study. It presents the methodology used and defines the research problem. The chapter also highlights the questions that this study asked and declares its objectives. A review of relevant literature is made so as to locate this study within the broader scholarly works.

Chapter Two: Change and continuity: Chiefs-government relations in the early years of independence, 1980-86

The chapter traces the interaction of the post-colonial state with Makoni chiefs in the early years of independence. It inquires how the coming of independence restructured the power base of chieftaincies. It then explains how such changes were a result of the advent of a new political and social order. It analyses the nature of relations between government and chiefs in the light of both historical and contemporary factors. In this vein, it tries to find out how

[44] C. Logan, 'The roots of resilience: Exploring popular support for African traditional authorities', *Afrobarometer*, Working paper No. 128, 2011, p.2.
[45] B. Mcdowell, *Historical research: A guide for writers of dissertations*, New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 50.

the government perceived chiefs in light of their liberation war roles and in the context of a new social, economic, administrative and political vision. While making reference to the changes and continuities that arose due to independence, the chapter ultimately argues that the overarching factor in determining government's contempt of chiefs was their perceived liberation war role as sell-outs.

Chapter Three: Winds of small change: Accommodation and rejection of chiefs, 1987-1999.
The chapter is motivated by the shift in chiefs–government relations starting in 1987. It discusses specific policy changes and a series of laws affecting chiefs that were enacted up to 1998. These changes seemingly normalised relations between chiefs and government. It investigates what inspired them and how they affected Makoni chiefs. The main aim of the chapter is to evaluate the degree to which the government empowered chiefs in the new era. The chapter suggests that despite introducing changes that ameliorated its relations with chiefs, the government's empowerment of chiefs was more apparent than real.

Chapter Four: Rediscovering chiefs: ZANU PF government and chiefs since 2000
The chapter considers another round of changes in chiefs-government relations that began in late 1999. It focuses on how the ZANU PF government appropriated and mobilised Makoni chiefs in its struggles against strong opposition politics. It examines the tactics used to effect this strategy. It also looks at the effects of the new relationship on Makoni villagers. The main thesis of the chapter is that the formation of the MDC in 1999, and its impressive electoral performance in 2000, forced ZANU PF to unambiguously incorporate chiefs as a political ally.

Chapter Five: Conclusion
This concluding chapter gives an overview of the findings of the study in relation of the set objectives. It also highlights the major arguments derived from the examination of chiefs-government relations in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Chapter Two

Change and continuity: Chiefs-government relations in the early years of independence, 1980-86

Introduction

At independence the new government promised to transform Zimbabwe into a non-racial and democratic society. Social, economic, political and administrative structures had to be altered, or new ones established in order to reflect the aspirations of the majority who for many years had called for independence, de-racialisation and democratisation of the country. Such transformation was one of the important ways that would help bestow to the government the much-needed legitimacy. Chieftaincy is one major institution that featured prominently in the transformation discourse. A fulcrum on which colonial governments' policies in the African reserves related, chieftaincy had to be repositioned in the context of the new political order. New policies and laws were introduced to redefine the institution. They included the District Councils Act (1980), the Communal Land Act (1981), the Customary Law and Primary Courts Act (1981) and the Prime Minister's Directive (1984).[1] These laws shifted chiefs from being an active political and administrative factor to being outsiders in the hierarchy of politics and governance. They reflected the new government's policy orientation.

In the context of rural administration and governance, reforms were swifter and more visible in the local government sector.[2] The import of the legal and policy reforms was that they significantly affected the authority of chiefs. Chiefs lost their most significant powers, that is, rural land allocation and judicial affairs. They were reduced to little more than 'cultural relics', as *The Financial Gazette* was to describe the situation years later.[3] While the stripping of chiefs of their powers can be explained in administrative terms, it can also be contextualised

[1] The directive outlined the organisational structures for popular participation in development planning which provided the basis for a hierarchy of representative bodies at the village, ward, district and provincial Levels and further downgraded the powers of chiefs.

[2] The Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing oversees urban and rural administration through Local Boards, Urban Councils and Rural District Councils. This is also the parent ministry for traditional leaders, including chiefs. Also see Mutizwa-Mangiza, 'Decentralisation and local government', p. 58, for a detailed structure of local government in Zimbabwe.

[3] *The Financial Gazette*, 2 July, 2010.

in historical and political terms. This was part of the new government's systematic weakening of institutions perceived as pre-independence anti-nationalists.

The government raised various arguments to justify the political and administrative exclusion of chiefs. It harped the rhetoric of 'state-building on new terms'.[4] This was situated in the developmentalist narrative typically popular in newly independent African states.[5] Chiefs did not appreciate this weakening of their powers, as revealed by *Parliamentary Debates* and interviews. However, the obtaining situation forced them to accept the new terms which defined their new lowly status. Most of Makoni chiefs were victimised for their perceived role as opponents of the nationalist struggle. As such, there was a limit as to how much they would protest the government's neglect of them. The government impressed upon them that its continued recognition of their institution was an act of magnanimity. Chiefs had to be content as worse could have been done. In other countries led by socialist-inclined governments such as those of Mozambique, Guinea, Rwanda and Tanzania, chieftaincy was not only disempowered. It either lost all governmental recognition or was abolished.[6] The reasons they proffered paralleled the situation in Zimbabwe. Chieftaincy was seen as a reactionary institution that worked for colonial administrations and was an anachronism that negatively affected societal progress. For close to a decade, ZANU PF's attitude towards chiefs was markedly unenthusiastic.

Looking at the broader interactions between chiefs and the ZANU PF government up to 1986, the chapter locates Makoni District chiefs in the political processes that defined the early years of independence. It will investigate the extent to which chiefs' colonial history informed their relations with the post-colonial government. It also analyses how the government viewed chiefs in the context of the new administrative philosophy. Two questions frame this

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[4] *The Herald*, 11 January, 1981.

[5] As scholarship shows, this was the rhetoric of many governments at independence. These include those of Mozambique, Guinea and Tanzania and Rwanda. See, footnote 6 for examples of such works.

[6] On Mozambique, see E. Gonçalves, 'Finding the chief: Traditional authority and decentralisation in Mozambique', *Africa Insight*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2005, p. 1; On Tanzania, see G. Hayden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and uncaptured peasantry*, London: Heinemann, 1980, p. 84; For a comment on Guinea and Rwanda, see J. I. Elaigwu, 'Nation-building and changing political structures', in A. Mazrui and C. Wondji (eds.), *General History of Africa Since 1935*, Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1993, p. 450.

chapter. First, how valuable were chiefs to ZANU PF's political calculations at independence? Second, how did they fit in the administration of rural affairs in a government geared towards modernising the society? The chapter does not aim at bringing a chronological account of the complex changes in the structure, policy and practice of government that affected chiefs. It thematically dwells on the issues that allow for the examination of the processes of conflict and change that affected the immediate post-colonial Zimbabwean society. While benefitting from looking at developments at a local level, the chapter looks at how the relations played out at a national level. It examines the emerging political and administrative structure and how it related to the colonial era, and how, in turn, it affected chiefs. The cut-off date for this chapter is 1986. This is because in 1987 the government began to reconsider its relations with chiefs. The causes and significance of the adjustment are a subject of the next chapter.

Chiefs and the colonial state: Historical background

According to Blessing Tendi, ZANU PF considered history in its political and governance approaches. The way it treated certain individuals and sections of the society depended on its interpretation of their historical roles, especially as regards nationalist or liberation war history.[7] ZANU PF's attention to history is partly revealed by the fact that its pronouncements were usually punctuated by references to anti-colonial struggles. Names of various anti-colonial agitators such as Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, Chief Mutota Makoni and Chief Tangwena were often mentioned to support its version of history. The historical account normally differentiated between those who resisted colonialism and those who collaborated with white regimes. Those who worked, or were suspected of having worked, against liberation efforts, were excluded from state-making processes, or survived as untrusted participants. These include, among other groups, political parties like RF, ZAPU and Ndabaningi Sithole's ZANU. Chiefs were also categorised as pre-independence adversaries.[8] For chiefs, as such, the impact of the government's reaction at independence was immediate. At independence, to quote Ranger, 'it was widely held by Zimbabwean politicians that chiefs

[7] B. Tendi, 'How intellectuals made history in Zimbabwe', *Africa Research Institute*, 2010, pp. 7-8.

[8] While some chiefs unambiguously worked against nationalist struggle, there are others who clearly supported it. However, there was a strong tendency by the government to generalise and group most chiefs under the rubric of sell-outs.

were completely discredited'[9] and, consequently, they were placed at the margins of administrative, political and social processes.

Chiefs were victims of ZANU PF's history-based politics of labelling which was crucial in determining 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. According to Joanna Moncrieffe and Rosalind Eyben, labelling processes involve relationships of power in which

> more powerful actors—within state bureaucracies, among political leaders, in non-governmental and community-based organisations—use frames and labels to influence how particular issues and categories of people are regarded and treated.[10]

Their definition aptly captures how the labelling and framing processes defined the power relations that played out between chiefs and government commencing 1980. In this vein there is need for an overview of the status of chiefs under colonial administrations.

Makoni District's chiefs were central to the structure of the colonial state. Prior to the escalation of nationalism and calls for independence, they had already been co-opted as implementers of various government initiatives and adjuncts to the Native Department. In the early years of colonialism some of Makoni District's chiefs were loyalists who helped in the administration of the district. They implemented land, agricultural and environmental programmes and monitored stock control issues. They also helped in tax collection, among other tasks of the state.[11] Chiefs mobilised labour for road and railway projects most notably under the *chibaro* (forced labour) labour regime.[12] In 1899 the NC wrote about work on the railway lines:

> There was a very large demand for native labour....[Chief] Makoni sent in over four hundred, of these about 300 went to the Beira railway to work. He promised to send in two hundred or three hundred more.[13]

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[9] T. Ranger, 'Democracy and traditional political structures in Zimbabwe, 1890-199', in T. Ranger and N. Bhebe (eds.), *The historical dimensions of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe: Pre-colonial and colonial legacies*, Vol. 1, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2000, p. 31.
[10] J. Moncrieffe and R. Eyben, *The power of labelling: How people are categorised and why it matters*, London: Earthscan, 2007, p. 2.
[11] Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 37.
[12] See C. van Onselen, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-33*, London: Pluto, 1976, for a comprehensive discussion on labour regimes in the early colonial years.
[13] NAZ, N 9/4/3, E. Morris, Native Commissioner, Makoni, monthly reports for May and June, 1899.

Most of the initiatives chiefs were made to implement on behalf of the government were unpopular with their subjects.[14] The Natural Resources Board tasked chiefs with ensuring that their subjects complied with the various land and environmental demands of the 1941 Natural Resources Act (NRA) and the 1951 Land Husbandry Act (LHA).[15] The acts, for instance, restricted Africans' exploitation of environmental resources such as firewood and proscribed their use and ownership of land and stock.

The various environmental, land and agricultural concepts were so hated by most Africans that nationalist leader, George Nyandoro, called the LHA 'the best recruiter Congress ever had,'[16] as it provided the rallying point for nationalist mobilisation for his party, the African National Congress. As Victor Machingaidze noted, initiatives such as the LHA 'were meant to support a wider system of exploitation in which a section of the peasantry, tripped of its land and stock, would make available a supply of cheap labour.'[17] Jeremiah Mhungu remembered how chiefs operated with regards to implementing government landownership and land use policies in Gandanzara village, under chief Makoni:

> My father was fined for stream bank cultivation, a neighbour was fined a significant quantum of maize grain for refusing to take his cattle to the dip-tank, some were fined for cultivating on unallocated lands. The chief would say he was under pressure from the Commissioner. But we felt more frustrated with the chief because he is the one we directly interacted with.[18]

Particularly during the nationalist struggle, chiefs received exaggerated recognition from the state in order to play their administrative role effectively. In Makoni District, wrote the acting Provincial Commissioner in 1971:

> All the land rests with the chief. He is the 'muridziwenyika', the owner of the land. The tribesmen may use the land for dwellings, for cultivation, and for depasturing stock, but only with the permission of [Chief] Makoni…For good and sufficient reasons (in the tribal context) he may and does withdraw not only permission to cultivate or depasture, but even permission to reside in the Makoni tribal area. He is entitled to destroy

[14] See Appendix for a list of typical responsibilities given to chiefs by the colonial governments.
[15] *Natural Resources Act*, 1941; *Land Husbandry Act*, 1951.
[16] I. Phimister, 'Rethinking the reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act reviewed', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1993, p. 228.
[17] V. Machingaidze, 'Agrarian change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African response', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1991', p. 558.
[18] Interview with Jeremiah Mhungu, 22 September, 2014.

> crops grown without his authority or in the incorrect area, or seize cattle depastured without his consent.[19]

The state exploited this ability by chiefs to control access to resources. In fact, in 1957 Chief Zambe Makoni was hailed by the administration for his 'marked appreciation of the need for and importance of soil conservation.'[20] Such chiefs were thus seen by both their villagers and nationalists as presiding over land shortages, overcrowding, restricted access to natural resources, among other aspects. The government, thus, fomented hostility between chiefs and the people they led. This partly explains ZANU PF's negative reaction to chiefs at independence.

The rise of organised African nationalism in the late 1950s and its development and maturity in the 1960s and 1970s forced a change in the relationship between chiefs and the colonial governments. The intensification of the 'winds of change' that affected many African countries had turned on Rhodesia. So, the relations assumed a political dimension. The government needed a new approach to contain the agitated rural peasants, and to dissuade them from heeding nationalists' calls. It seems the colonial regime envisaged that ideological and physical battles with the forces of nationalism would be most intense in the rural areas. As highlighted above, in Makoni District, Africans resented most of the agrarian policies of the state. As Ranger points out, there were

> a number of tensions between peasants and the whites – ranging from the bitterness of the peasant evicted from white farms and unable to get adequate land in the reserves, through to the anger of small peasant producers at the low prices offered by traders, and on the sense of betrayal felt by the reserve entrepreneurs as white officials turned against them and sought to drive them out of the reserves altogether.[21]

The new approach to tackling the administrative-cum-political problems of the reserves placed some responsibility on chiefs, who were already renowned enforcers of land policies. Prior to 1890, they were the most important authorities on land allocation, land use,

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[19] Quoted in Ranger, 'Tradition and travesty', p. 22.
[20] Ranger 'Tradition and travesty', p. 25.
[21] T. Ranger, 'Religions and rural protests in Makoni District, 1900-80', in J. Bak and G. Benecke (eds.), *Religion and rural revolt: Papers presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary Workshop on Peasant Studies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 322.

environmental protection, and social control.[22] This won them the respect of their people. As such, the colonial government sought to exploit their long-established attributes and tasked them with securing their areas against nationalist ideology and activities. The war time government was convinced that, as Holleman puts it, 'the great majority of indigenous Zimbabweans were still tribesmen at heart, and therefore naturally inclined to follow the example and guidance of their traditional tribal leaders.'[23] After neglecting them and abusing them as an administrative resource, the government realised that chiefs could also be used as a political resource in the 'quicksand of rapid political change.'[24]

The signs of effective and systematic co-option of chiefs for political reasons were visible in 1962 with the establishment of the National Council of Chiefs. This occurred simultaneously with the banning of nationalist parties. Chief Zambe Makoni was the first secretary of the council.[25] He showed anti-nationalist dispositions and supported the banning of nationalist parties. Since then, and throughout the remainder of the colonial period, four of the five Makoni chiefs were part of chiefs who went on a streak of endorsing major political manoeuvres by the Ian Smith regime.[26] In 1957 Chief Zambe Makoni was recommended for the Queen's Medal partly because of his 'great loyalty to the Crown and willingness to co-operate with the Administration.'[27] In 1960, as the nationalist challenge threatened Makoni District, Zambe's allowances were increased for 'extreme loyalty'.[28] His deeds were presented as the ideal roles of a chief. In 1962 he was commended by a government official: 'If any chief is outstanding for his loyalty and support to government he is chief Makoni. For 50 years he was a Native Messenger…he expressed devotion to successive sovereigns….He has vigorously stood out against any nationalistic activity in his tribal area.'[29]

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[22] D. N. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe: 900-1850*, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980 discusses in detail the relationship between the Shona people and their land in precolonial Zimbabwe and demonstrates how chiefs were at the centre of land control.
[23] Holleman, *Chief, council and commissioner*, p. 350.
[24] *Ibid*, p. 352.
[25] I. Dande, 'Changing oral memory, identity and chiefly politics in Makoni District, 1850-2004', BA, University of Zimbabwe, 2005, pp. 40-41.
[26] *African Times*, 7 November, 1973.
[27] Ranger, 'Tradition and travesty', p. 26.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid*, pp. 21-22.

This turn in policy was welcomed by some Makoni chiefs. They felt they were regaining aspects of their original powers lost through the colonial conversion of NCs into supreme local authorities. A grateful Chief Tandi remarked that, 'We thank the government for remembering us. We are happy that they have realised that we are the real custodians of the land.'[30] In executing their new mandate, chiefs were backed by a series of legal instruments. Their newly enhanced power was ensured by the African Affairs Act (1966), which amended the section that described chiefs as constables in their areas of jurisdiction, the Tribal Trust Land Act (1967) which returned to chiefs the power to allocate land to their subjects and the African Law and Tribal Courts Act (1969) which returned to them jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases.[31] In 1976 the Emergency Powers Regulations were established. They made chiefs district authorities, apportioning them powers to punish and arrest villagers without warrant.[32] Whilst such developments were meant to save the government, they incidentally raised the status and powers of chiefs.

Winning the chiefs' loyalty was not to come easy for a state that had neglected them and systematically stripped them of their powers since the advent of colonialism. To buy their loyalty, the state developed elaborate patronage networks. Chiefs enjoyed consistent reviews of their allowances (often pegged at the level of an African truck driver wage in urban areas), regional and international tours, and having state-paid bodyguards.[33] Chiefs were presented to the world as the true representatives of the people. Chief Tandi's former aid remembered that around 1973, all Makoni District's chiefs received a scotch-cart, a plough and maize seed, in addition to their increased allowances.[34]

However, the co-option of chiefs was not only pursued through patronage systems. Not all chiefs were tempted by government perks. Some resisted the administration's advances.

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[30] *Umtali Post*, 4 August, 1970.
[31] Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils in Rhodesia*, p. 22.
[32] *The Rhodesia Herald*, 31 March, 1976.
[33] J. Frederikse, *None but ourselves: Masses versus the media in the making of Zimbabwe*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982, pp. 76-82. For Tangwena, the most comprehensives studies are offered by H. Moyana, *The political economy of land in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 2000 and D. Moore*, Suffering for territory: Race, place and power in Zimbabwe*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. For Mangwende, see Southern Rhodesia: *Report of the Mangwende Reserve Commission of Inquiry*, Salisbury: Government Printer, 1961, and Holleman*, Chief, council and commissioner.*
[34] Interview with anonymous former aid to Chief Tandi, 22 August, 2014.

However, where persuasion failed, coercion was used. The consequences included withdrawal of benefits, dismissal from a chieftainship and, during the war years, death. For instance, the African Affairs Act suggested that the government was free to use its discretion in the appointment and dethronement of chiefs.[35] Chiefs Rekai Tangwena of Nyanga District and Chief Mangwende of Murehwa District are the two most prominent examples of chiefs who resisted the role demanded of them by the administrations and were 'deposed or fined or imprisoned.'[36] In a book dedicated to Chief Tangwena, Henry Moyana described how in the 1960s the chief resisted eviction from his ancestral lands in Nyanga:

> Chief Rekayi Tangwena's resistance to eviction, together with the pangs and sorrows inflicted by the Rhodesian regime...in a way symbolises the costly price some Africans were willing to pay for their freedom and for their right to land. At the height of the conflict, Chief Tangwena and his people fled from their ancestral homes into the neighbouring hills....Even this experience did not compel Chief Tangwena and his people to renounce their stand.[37]

Despite being confronted by the paraphernalia of the state, Chief Tangwena still resisted eviction from the Gaeresi lands.[38] The 1961 *Mangwende Commission Report* and Holleman's book vividly describes the circumstances that led to the replacement of Chief Mangwende by a more pliant successor, Enoch Munhuwepayi in 1960. These consequences pushed some chiefs into acquiescing to the state's political and administrative demands. In 1975 Chief Tandi was elected to represent Makoni district as a member of the newly-established Manicaland Regional Authority. As Ranger noted, this brought him closer to the administration.[39] However, former aid to Chief Tandi does not believe it was out of his free will. He said of the chief: 'The chief was regarded as a sell-out, but he was not. If he had not complied with whatever they asked of him he would have been deposed. Truly speaking, he did not support the administration.'[40] Thus, a combination of coercion and persuasion was used to bring chiefs into the anti-nationalist alliance.

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[35] African Affairs Act (1969).
[36] International Defence and Aid Fund, *Zimbabwe: The facts about Rhodesia,* London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1977, p. 29.
[37] Moyana, *The political economy of land*, p. 155.
[38] Moore, *Suffering for territory*, p. 189.
[39] Ranger, 'Tradition and travesty', p. 22.
[40] Interview with anonymous former aid to Chief Tandi, 22 August, 2014.

As the war intensified, chiefs were pushed further to the epicentre of political activity. They struggled with competing loyalties. They had to juggle between being leaders of their people, government subservients and supporters of the guerrilla war. However, Makoni chiefs, although they appreciated the concerns of their African people, were forced to publicly display loyalty to the government as against their people. There were many disadvantages of not choosing the government. The state had more power to reward and punish. According to one villager familiar with colonial chiefly issues, starting from the 1960s, the situation was

> reminiscent of what happens when one is courting a girl. Both nationalists and the administration tried to lure chiefs to their side. Both sides reacted violently to a negative response. Chiefs chose the side which assured them of safety. It is the government that had the capacity to guarantee it.[41]

It is under these circumstances that nationalists accused the government of 'stealing the chiefs from the people.'[42] With chieftaincy effectively drawn into the orbit of the state, it is not surprising that hostilities arose between chiefs on one side and guerrillas on the other. It is this pre-independence tension that explains the antagonism of the immediate post-independence years.

The advent of independence

Unsurprisingly, ZANU PF was as hostile to chiefs at independence as was the colonial administration at colonisation.[43] For ZANU PF, the subsequent replacement of chiefs by bureaucratic structures controlled by trusted party cadres emanated from the collaborative role some chiefs like Tandi and Chendambuya played in the liberation war. In fact, ZANU PF's disempowerment process had started before independence. During the war, the historically and culturally cultivated procedures of installing and dethroning chiefs were replaced by guerrilla-led processes. In chiefs' stead were erected quasi-administrative and quasi-judicial party committee which, as Lan observes, 'were by far the most profound transformation' produced by the war.[44] These structures were dominant in semi-liberated zones.[45] The

[41] Interview with an anonymous villager (i), 2 February, 2015.
[42] Holleman, *Chief, council and commissioner*, p. 17.
[43] See Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7: A study in African resistance*, London: Heinemann, 1967. p. 55 and p. 272 for illustrations of how the colonial government distrusted chiefs and replaced them with NCs.
[44] Lan, *Guns and rain,* p. 292.
[45] According to N. Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU guerrilla warfare and the Evangelical Church in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, p. 59, 'ZANU PF defined as liberated areas in which its forces operated and moved freely, where enemy, military and administrative structures had been completely destroyed and replaced by the structures of the party and its armed wing'.

committees organised the everyday living of villagers and acted as criminal and civil courts, roles hitherto a preserve of chiefs and commissioners. Few chiefs in such zones contested guerrilla demands lest they be killed or forced to flee to urban areas, as the current Chief Chipunza remembered.[46] During the war, the then chiefs Chipunza and Chikore were killed in 1977 and 1978, respectively. Furthermore, several headmen were also killed by guerillas.[47] These wartime party committees set the tone for the future official replacement of chiefs by grassroots councils.

The decision by some chiefs to form a party that was decidedly anti-nationalist aggravated tension between them and ZANU PF. In 1976 the Zimbabwe People's Organisation (ZUPO) was formed with chiefs Chirau and Ndiweni as president and vice president, respectively. It was generally interpreted as 'an organisation of tribal chiefs and headmen set up with the help of the regime.'[48] It advocated a peaceful and negotiated transition to majority rule, as opposed to war.[49] With a strong chiefly membership, it was designed to curtail the impact of nationalist parties in rural areas. Besides different approaches to the independence question, ZUPO and ZANU PF also differed about the future policy on chiefs. During the electoral campaigns preceding the 1980 elections, ZANU PF did not show interest in chiefs. However, ZUPO believed that chiefs had 'love for their people' and, as such, deserved an increase in 'the[ir] powers...to enable them to be more effective as both administrators and civil leaders.'[50] ZUPO also promised to establish and develop an elaborate training scheme for chiefs to help them with their many and varied responsibilities.'[51] In Makoni District, it was hinted by some interviewees that Chief Chipunza was a founding member of ZUPO and that Chief Chikore was the most active chiefly member of ZUPO in Makoni District before his death in 1978.[52] However, evidence available is rather anecdotal and could not be effectively corroborated.

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[46] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[47] Ranger, 'Tradition and travesty', p. 36.
[48] International Defence and Aid Fund, *Zimbabwe: The facts about Rhodesia*, p. 28.
[49] ZUPO, *ZUPO election manifesto*, Harare, 1979, p. 2.
[50] *Ibid*, p. 4.
[51] *Ibid*.
[52] Interview with an anonymous villager (iii), 20 February, 2015. All interviewed Makoni chiefs claimed that their predecessors supported ZANU PF during the nationalist war. None of them wanted their chieftaincy to be associated with 'sell-out' history.

The Ndabaningi Sithole-led Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was also at odds with ZANU PF as regards chiefs. It believed in the indispensability of chieftaincy. It promised to improve the institution and to ensure its protection by the national constitution.[53] ZANU PF viewed ZANU as another of the Smith regime-supported parties. The situation was the same with Abel Mzorewa's United African National Congress (UANC). It was also publicly seen as close to Smith. Muzorewa promised 'to improve the allowances of the chiefs [and] to provide free adequate housing...commensurate with their status.'[54] To ZANU PF, it was no coincidence that these parties supported chiefs and, in turn, were supported by the regime.

The war time conduct of chiefs like Chipunza and Chendambuya exposed chiefs to condemnation by the new government in 1980. Newspapers and parliament became sites of intense debates about the role of chiefs in the liberation war. Prescriptions were proffered on how the new government could relate with them. They mostly expressed hostility to chiefs. As earlier mentioned, chiefs were variously described as sell-outs who, according to Senator Tsitsi Munyati, 'should be given a period to reform and regain the confidence of the people before they can be the true leaders of their people.'[55] A few months into independence *The Herald* reminded the people of the role chiefs like Chirau played in the independence struggle. It wrote:

> Their role as puppets of the government naturally brought their role into disrespect. In fact some of them, like chief Chirau, lost the respect of the people they claim to lead. Chief Chirau's performance during the Pearce debacle and his subsequent crusade against liberation forces did him and many other chiefs little good.[56]

It is such kind of history that determined the form of early independence years' relations between chiefs and government.

After gaining government, one of ZANU PF's priority areas was the reorganisation of local government. This significantly affected Makoni chiefs. It confirmed the process of stripping chiefs of their important powers, the most notable of which were over judicial and land

[53] ZANU, *ZANU policy statement*, Harare, ZANU Information and Publicity Department, 1978, p. 7.
[54] UANC, *UANC manifesto: The winners,* Harare, 1980, p. 8.
[55] *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 February 1981, col. 1290, Tsitsi Munyati.
[56] *The Herald*, 5 May, 1981.

matters. The Customary Law and Primary Courts Bill (1981) excluded chiefs from judiciary affairs. It replaced them with presiding officers. The party insisted that this was in the interest of the people. For example, on judicial powers, it argued that:

> Chiefs, because of their attitude and actions during the struggle, have lost the confidence of their people. Now then, if we are going to allow such chiefs to execute the duty of law, how are we going to maintain this confidence? If we are going to maintain the confidence of the people, the law courts should be seen to be such that the people are confident; they know that their cases are going to be tried by people they respect.[57]

Such sentiments gained traction as they were endorsed by senior government officials. In 1982 Minister of Local Government and Housing, Eddison Zvobgo, added to the attacks on chiefs when he said chiefs no longer commanded villagers' respect.[58] He argued, 'Some of our chiefs allowed themselves to be used in this way [and] collaborated with the enemy. As a result such chiefs became very unpopular and lost the respect of their people.'[59] The stance was ostensibly meant to bolster government's legitimacy among the rural populace.

Government had to be seen to be reconstituting perceived colonially oppressive structures. It appeared to have learned from Micheal Bratton's judgement which was to the effect that:

> One fact that is clear from recent Rhodesian history…is that chiefs have lost claim to represent peasants because of their collective decision to join forces with settlers against Zimbabwean nationalism. Chiefs cannot be rehabilitated. No major administrative role awaits them in Zimbabwe. Their legal powers should be taken over by a secular state ministry concerned with legal affairs. Chiefs' boundaries should no longer be taken as defining the constituency for local government councils….[60]

This attitude seemed to have taken effect on Makoni DA. In 1985 he addressed Tsanzaguru villagers under Chief Chiduku and said of the new administrative dispensation: 'The most important voice now is that of the people. Through these councils [ward development

[57] *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 February 1981, col. 1290, Munyati.
[58] Zvobgo was the Minister of Local Government and Housing from April 1980 to April 1982 while Enos Chikowore was his deputy. He was replaced by Chikowore in 1982 in the renamed Ministry of Local Government and Town Planning. In the 1985 cabinet reshuffle Chikowore retained his portfolio up to 1990 in the renamed Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development. Joseph Msika took over the running of the Ministry in 1990. In 1995 John Nkomo was appointed the new Minister.
[59] *Ibid*, 10 February, 1982, col. 1610, Zvobgo.
[60] M. Bratton, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: Beyond community development*, Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1978, p. 50.

committees and village development committees] you should organise for your development. You no longer seek approval from chiefs or anybody, but from yourselves.'[61]

ZANU PF had come to power through promises of creating a 'people's government'. It promised the masses a greater voice in the affairs of the state, an idea expressed through its description of 1980 as 'the year of people's power'.[62] The change of its relations with chiefs was ostensibly a response to 'the wishes of the people'.[63] The anti-chiefs rhetoric was also intended to create animosity between chiefs and their subjects. The Minister of Local Government said:

> They were puppets. It is not the government that is refusing these chiefs. It is the people themselves in the TTLs who are refusing to accept these chiefs. I do not think that the government will be able to help in the circumstances where chiefs caused ill-feeling between themselves and the people.[64]

As the coming sections will reveal, Makoni chiefs were excluded from primary courts and land allocating committees as the government acted as protector of the people against the chiefs.

It is in this context that repentance and reformation were set as pre-conditions for the chiefs' 'reintegration' into their societies. A former guerrilla fighter who operated in Makoni District recalled that in 1980 'we decided that only after having proved that their loyalties had shifted from the former colonisers to the new government, specifically to ZANU PF, was their position to be reconsidered.'[65] The official party position was to delay the restoration of the old status of chiefs, 'even if it means asking some of those chiefs to stand back for the time being until confidence is regained.'[66] However, this ideological reorientation was a process that, as former Makoni DA explained, needed a 'lot of time and effort as chiefs could not be transformed overnight.'[67] The chiefs' precarious position was worsened by the presence of wartime foes in the new bureaucracy. A war veteran and ZANU PF member narrated his family's ordeal when Chief Chendambuya and the colonial state security learnt that he had

[61] Minutes of WADCO meeting, 18 February, 1985, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[62] ZANU PF, *ZANU PF 1980 election manifesto*, p. 1.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 February, 1982, col. 1611, Zvobgo.
[65] Interview with anonymous war veteran, 3 September, 2014.
[66] *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 February, 1981, col. 1290, Munyati.
[67] Interview with anonymous former Makoni deputy DA, 27 August, 2014.

joined the guerrilla war in 1977: 'When the chief learnt that I had escaped from school to join the war, my parents were summoned to his court. They were accused of getting the chief into trouble with the DC. They were fined and threatened with eviction.'[68] Such incidents fed into ZANU PF's collective opinion against chiefs.

Chiefs and the new judicial policy

As already alluded to, a major loss suffered by chiefs at independence came on the judicial front. Judicial control in the villages was a key pillar of their powers and status. However, it clashed with the new government's philosophy. This antagonism was in line with Max Weber's observation that bureaucratic and patriarchal structures are hostile to each other.[69] Within the first months of assuming power, the government revealed its plans to remove 'some matters from the jurisdiction of chiefs.'[70] Indeed, within two years it had stripped chiefs of all judicial functions they had regained in the 1960s. Chiefs no longer participated in grassroots judicial processes in rural areas.

The Customary Law and Primary Courts Act (1981) repealed the 1969 African Law and Tribal Courts Act designed by the RF government to give chiefs effective political control over villagers. The new act brought the concept of village courts, *dare repamusha*/*inkundhlayangekhaya* (village courts) and *dare guru*/*inkundhlenkulu* (community courts). These primary courts replaced the old chiefs' and headmen's tribunals and gained jurisdiction over civil law. Pierre du Toit believed that 'by the end of 1982 almost 1500 village courts and more than 50 community courts had been established throughout the country.'[71] Presiding officers replaced chiefs as adjudicators at community courts. They were appointed by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. The officers were ostensibly chosen for their understanding of basic principles of Roman-Dutch law and for the respect they commanded within their localities. However, loyalty to ZANU PF was an important prerequisite. While the Ministry of Justice trained and appointed all community courts officers, those of the village courts were voted in by community members. According to du

[68] Interview with anonymous war veteran and ZANU PF member, 2 March, 2015.
[69] Cited in Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils in Rhodesia*, p. 58.
[70] *The Herald*, 5 September, 1980.
[71] P. du Toit, *State building and democracy in Southern Africa: Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa*, Washington: Institute of Peace Press, 1995, p. 125.

Toit, only rarely were chiefs returned to these positions by election. They were generally seen by electors as 'collaborators with the former Rhodesian regime.'[72] Suspected opposition elements, like Chief Chikore and Chipunza were neither nominated nor elected. They were said to have supported the RF in the nationalist struggle. One of the chiefs said of Chief Chendambuya: 'I do not know how he survived the guerrillas. The whole of Makoni District knew he was a sell-out. He was in good books. Commissioners liked him for his loyalty.'[73] With such a background, he was not considered for judiciary roles or positions in development councils.

Three main explanations were proffered by the government to justify the collapse of chiefs' judicial powers. Firstly, it was a response to the practical and bureaucratic needs of a changing society. The government had obligated itself to update the judicial system and conform it to 'international standards'.[74] Secondly, it was meant to make judicial processes simpler, more inclusive and more accessible to the grassroots.[75] Thirdly, according to the government, it was to give legitimacy back to grassroots village courts which had been affected by chiefs' pre-independence anti-nationalist stance.[76] The government insisted that rural people had lost confidence in chiefs and, thus, had to be rescued from the 'tyranny of the war years'.[77]

However, as already emphasised, the ultimate reason for excluding chiefs was political. At one level, chiefs were labelled political enemies by nationalists during the war. At another, giving them a central position in the administrative affairs of their communities would have worked against the principles of democracy and the concept of 'power to the people'. Andrew Ladley commented on the government's reluctance to include chiefs in its administrative apparatus, including the judiciary. He wrote:

> By a series of Acts passed in the 1980s, the independence government had successfully weakened the chiefs as traditional rural authorities. But the legislation had in fact allowed and consolidated changes on the ground which had already taken place, as party and state structures of authority had displaced the chiefs….It was often stated by politicians and apparently

[72] *Ibid.*
[73] Interview with anonymous Makoni District chief, 23 September, 2014.
[74] Interview with anonymous former Makoni deputy DA, 27 August, 2014.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Ibid.*

> believed on the ground in the euphoria of those early years after independence that the chiefs would fade into the African sunset.[78]

The independence government introduced itself as a modernising one.[79] The advent of the primary courts system attested to that drive. In recruiting officers priority was given to 'better educated' people. This referred to holders of general schooling certificate, such as Standard Seven, Junior Certificate and Ordinary Level. These prerequisites disadvantaged chiefs as most of them did not have any academic qualifications.[80] According to Deputy Minister of Local Government, Enos Chikowore, the new political and administrative dimension dictated that '[chiefs] accept the changes and the new ideas which their people have already accepted, otherwise they will become relics. This is the only way they can fit in the new society.'[81] Nationwide, only a few managed to win roles as presiding officers or assessors. Informative to note is that none of the five Makoni chiefs were elected to participate as leaders of these primary courts.

Expectedly, chiefs were not happy with this new direction. However, the government insisted that chiefs accepted their devalued position. A former resettlement officer in Makoni District in the 1980s explained the chiefs' weakened status in the context of the clash between councillors and chiefs over the administration of the district's Mayo resettlement scheme.[82] He said: 'The reasoning was that even kings and queens of England also at one time had feudal lords who were also judges as well as land administrators in their own areas. The lords lost some of their functions and now they do not do those things anymore.'[83] In February 1981, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Simon Mubako, added his voice to the debate and opined that chiefs had to accept the new order. He said:

> A concept or principle which becomes fossilised and inflexible will break if one tries to apply it to new situations, and the customary law of Zimbabwe which for 90 years has been applied in the old traditional way, has been

[78] A. Ladley, ' Just spirits?: In search of tradition in the customary law courts in Zimbabwe', Paper presented at the *International Symposium on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism*, University of Ottawa, 1990, p. 2.
[79] While the government did not define its version of 'modernising', it is safe to assume that it meant Western standards of civilisation characterised by a bureaucratic government run by educated people, and geared towards transforming economic and social structures.
[80] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[81] *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 February, 1982, col. 1614, Chikowore.
[82] This episode is fully discussed in Chapter Three.
[83] Interview, anonymous former resettlement officer, 21 February, 2015.

> falling into disrepute and disuse because it has not yet developed or changed with changing society.[84]

However, critics of the new government had a different view. They insisted that chiefs be brought into community courts. Senator Samuel Whaley of RF posited that chiefs were capable to change and adapt to new administrative environments. As he put it, 'Instead of dismissing chiefs as ultra-conservative, inflexible and incapable of change, bring them into the system, and let themselves see the need to adjust the system of customary law to modern and changing circumstances.'[85] However, the government ignored such calls and dismissed their progenitors as bent on resuscitating colonial structures.

As hinted earlier, bureaucratic and logistical considerations were also reiterated in justifying the new court system. The unitary system sought to unify the legal hierarchy from the most basic grassroots court up to the Supreme Court. It allowed cases to be appealed from the village court, through the intermediate courts, to the highest court. It was believed such a rearrangement would make the justice system efficient. Also, there were too few chiefs in the country to preside over hundreds of village and community courts established throughout the country. In 1984, Solomon Choto, the undersecretary in the Ministry of Justice, explained the logistical complexities that threatened grassroots judicial administration. He reasoned thus:

> Some of the people feel that chiefs should be restored as presiding officers for local courts. What they fail to realize is that at present we have 1527 village courts and before independence we had only 273 designated chiefs. That is too small a number and unless they are now going to create a chief in every community area we will come to the same old problem of people having to travel long distances for justice. And once you multiply chiefs then they lose their touch and position of respect with the people.[86]

For instance, in 1983 Makoni District had a total of 18 village courts yet it only had four chiefs.[87] These 18 village courts were expected to serve close to 200 000 people and to handle hundreds of cases each year. The chieftaincies' status as a judicial arena was unsustainable. Thus, government-chosen and trained presiding officers came ahead of chiefs.

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[84] *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 February 1981, col. 1279, Simon Mubako.
[85] *Ibid,* col. 1285, Samuel Whaley.
[86] *The Herald*, 17 December, 1984.
[87] Makoni District Administrator's Annual Report, 1984, p. 11, (uncatalogued, Makoni DA file).

In deciding on the judicial fate of chiefs, colonial history was also considered. Makoni District's chiefly courts were known for heavy punishments on suspected pro-nationalist villagers, as the above-mentioned 1975 case of Chief Chendambuya exemplifies. They imposed fines on them, chased them away from their areas, or recommended imprisonment. According to the government, such chiefs would not be expected to offer justice to a people they suppressed for many years. As suggested by Senator Munyati, chieftaincy had to be excluded from grassroots judicial processes because 'the law courts should be seen to be such that the people are confident; they know that their cases are going to be tried by people they respect.'[88] This echoed earlier sentiments by the International Defence and Aid Fund, which stated that because of their perceived wartime conduct, 'chiefs lost most of their former standing in the eyes of the African people.'[89] Therefore, many chiefly characters in Makoni District were excluded from judicial affairs.

Indeed, ZANU PF had not fully contained various forms of opposition to its rule. Many forces that had contested it during the war years were still active after independence. ZANU PF believed that despite its efforts at reconciliation and inclusivity, various quarters still schemed against its rule. For example, while the RF strongly battled ZANU PF in parliament, white army personnel sympathetic to it engaged in mutinous activities in the Zimbabwe Defence Forces.[90] Whites still dominated aspects of the civil service and were seen as a colonial hangover bent on frustrating efforts at transformation.[91] Not content with its position on the peripheries of government, ZAPU also unsettled the government. With suspicion and apprehension dominating the political atmosphere, chieftaincy was exposed to government condemnation. Its blemish was that they could reignite their pre-1980 alliance with white politics. ZANU PF expressed its stance this way:

> Our chiefs have to realise that, as a result of the political developments which have taken place in Zimbabwe since independence, it is no longer possible for them to exercise all their former powers and functions for some of them are not in the interests of our people and government.[92]

[88] *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 February, 1981, col. 1290, Munyati.
[89] International Defence and Aid Fund, *Zimbabwe: The facts about Rhodesia*, p. 29.
[90] There were reported cases of ex-RF soldiers who committed mutiny. For instance, in 1981 a white military pilot escaped with a fighter jet to South Africa, *The Herald*, 7 February, 1981.
[91] J. Herbst, *State politics in Zimbabwe*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p. 31.
[92] *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 February, 1982, col. 1611, Zvobgo.

In this regard, chiefs were relieved of their duties. Their new roles were less prestigious and ambiguously defined. As former aid to Chief Tandi remembered, their role in Makoni included nothing more than publicising government policies, reporting criminals and forwarding their subjects' grievances to councils.[93]

What made chiefs' position more untenable was the contested legality of some of them. ZANU PF was aware that successive colonial administrations in Southern Rhodesia manipulated chieftaincies by creating or collapsing them depending on where political and administrative advantage lay. In 1975 the District Commissioner (DC), Makoni, wrote of the Chikore area, which originally did not have a chieftaincy, warning that

> It is most important that an appointment be made as soon as possible as ... [it] is fairly close to the Operation Area and the tribe must be seen to have a chief. In Weya and Tanda TTLs, chiefs must be installed as soon as possible to avoid any further likelihood of the many African nationalists who live in the area being able to undermine the tribal authority.[94]

When a new Chief Chendambuya of Weya was installed in the late 1970s, it opened the way for the abolition of the chieftainship and the incorporation of his lands and people under Chief Makoni in 1975.[95] As compared with his predecessor, the new chief opposed many government initiatives, especially those regarding land.[96] In 1982, in this respect, Aeneas Chigwedere questioned the status of some chieftaincies:

> I would like to know if the Minister of Local Government is aware that about 40 per cent of the chiefs in Zimbabwe are not supposed to be on those thrones? Is he aware that there are many people who are not chiefs today because either they were demoted, or their chieftaincies were banned?[97]

While the figure of forty per cent can be questionable, it reveals the crisis of legitimacy suffered by some chiefs in the eyes of both their subjects and the government.

It was an entrenched colonial policy to favour a chiefly candidate who co-operated with the system. Consolidated at the height of nationalist politics, the system had begun years earlier.

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[93] This was the general description of chiefs' roles as presented in newspapers and parliamentary debates and as ascertained from interviews.
[94] Ranger, 'Tradition and travesty', p. 23.
[95] Interview with anonymous former messenger to Chief Makoni, 29 July, 2014.
[96] Dande, 'Changing oral memory', p. 45.
[97] *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 February, 1982, col. 1013, Aeneas Chigwedere.

An NC reported in 1946 that 'Our aim is to eliminate many of the old diehards and replace them with fewer and better chiefs.'[98] Zaru Tandi was demoted in 1973 as one of the Makoni chiefs for supporting ZAPU and for being suspected of giving supplies to guerrillas.[99] Perhaps, the most prominent case is that witnessed years earlier in Mrehwa District when Chief Mangwende was dethroned for his obstinate attitude towards government. He often frustrated restrictive land policies and spoke in favour of nationalist politics.[100] Such chiefs were replaced by more acquiescent characters. Such situations also arose in Makoni District. One chief cites the case of Trynos Chikuza: 'He used to report other chiefs and villagers for supporting the liberation war. For his loyalty, he was made Chief Tandi in the late 1970s.'[101] Such developments were remembered by many ZANU PF and government officials at independence.

The nature of the relationship between chiefs and government can also be understood in electoral terms. Chiefs' use value to government was further eroded by their perceived 'negligible' contribution to the electoral victory of ZANU PF in 1980. The party was electorally powerful at independence. As highlighted in the previous chapter, ZANU PF won all Makoni District parliamentary seats by a wide margin. A former deputy DA for Makoni District, who was also a ZANU PF commissar in the 1980 election, believes chiefs in the district made a small contribution to the result. He said: 'Chiefs were not part of our campaign machinery. Many were behind Mzorewa or Sithole. In Matabeleland they supported Nkomo's ZAPU. They were not important in our electoral calculations. We were still strong without them.'[102] While nationally ZAPU was the most significant electoral threat to ZANU PF, it failed to penetrate Makoni District, as earlier-quoted results of the 1980 general election reveal. Thus, there was no strong push factor for ZANU PF to electorally invest in chiefs. ZANU PF relied on such party structures as village committees and youth militia for voter mobilisation.

[98] Quoted in C. Mararike, *Role of madzishe in nation building*, Harare: Best Practices Books, 2003, p. 16.
[99] Interview with former aid to Chief Makoni, 29 July, 2014.
[100] Southern Rhodesia: *Report of the Mangwende Reserve Commission of Inquiry* highlights the outcome of the investigation into Chief Mangwende's administrative and political conduct and accounts for his dethronement.
[101] Interview with an anonymous Makoni District chief, 23 September, 2014.
[102] Interview with anonymous former Makoni deputy DA, 27 August, 2014.

The predicament of chiefs can also be viewed in the context of government's notion of development and preservation of Zimbabwe's nascent democracy. As earlier alluded to, ZANU PF's refrain was that it was a 'people's government' guided by the 'wishes of the people.' It established democratic institutions administered by elected people to lead rural development processes. As chieftaincy was hereditary, it was inimical to democracy. This speaks to Mamdani's observation that chiefs contract democratic space.[103] The government presented the democratic dispensation this way:

> There is now a new social and political order in Zimbabwe whose main philosophy is to make the wishes of the people paramount in all spheres of life. Our people fought to give power to the people. We now have a people-oriented government. That is why we have said we will not impose chiefs on the people if they do not like a chief.[104]

Senator Munyati summarised the government's view of the connection between democracy and grassroots judicial affairs nexus. She said: 'We are now in an era where democracy is the order of the day, and what the people want is what goes, and it would only be imposing him on the people if he was made to be the *Mukuru* [judge] of a village court.'[105] As elsewhere in Zimbabwe, Makoni chiefs were displaced by democratisation processes. According to the former DA, giving such powers to chiefs would have excluded 'the people' from running their affairs.[106]

Despite the publicised merits of Primary Courts Bill, there were reservations about it, especially from chiefs. Three aspects of the bill made it difficult for chiefs to be presiding officers in the new customary courts. Firstly, chiefs would participate in these courts only if their subjects accepted them through voting. Secondly, the Minister of Justice nominated presiding officers. He had the power to approve or reject those chosen by the community. Thirdly, the minimum academic qualification was Grade Seven. The fears were that the stipulations were open to abuse, and were designed to staff the posts with ZANU PF sympathisers.[107] The government's argued that the courts had to keep records and presiding officers not only had to possess a basic understanding of customary law, but also had to be

[103] Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 17-19.
[104] *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 February, 1982, col. 1611, Chikowore.
[105] *Ibid,* 4 February, 1981, col. 1290, Munyati.
[106] Interview with anonymous former Makoni deputy DA, 27 August, 2014.
[107] *Parliamentary Debates,* 4 February, 1981, col. 1287, Whaley.

knowledgeable about the fundamentals of Roman-Dutch law. Of this the Deputy Minister of Justice said: 'In order to develop a system of law it must be administered or be subject to review by persons trained in the law itself and trained in the general principles of jurisprudence.'[108] In 1981, during the debate on the bill, the Deputy Minister of Justice, George Chinengundu, emphasised that 'only some chiefs' would qualify for these courts because 'not all chiefs are likely to measure up to the demands that will be put on some of the judicial officers.'[109] Academic prerequisites affected Makoni chiefs such Tandi who had not attained any formal educational qualification.

The government further humiliated chiefs by imploring them to be grateful that their institution was allowed to survive and that they retained some of their roles. As the case of Makoni shows, after disempowerment chiefs continued with their spiritual, cultural and basic policing roles. These included conducting ceremonies, informing on criminals, alerting authorities of livestock disease outbreaks and publicising government orders. As such, Chinengundu said chiefs already had 'too much to do...[tasks] more important than trying petty cases.'[110] He added that:

> The government has no intention of imposing chiefs on people where it is very clear that they are unacceptable. If the Minister of Local Government is satisfied that he can be chief in other respects, of course he can be a chief in other respects. The judicial function is not the only one, of course is not the most important function of chiefs.[111]

Such statements affirmed the exclusion of chiefs from important government business.

The government demoralisingly argued that chiefs were not the only people versed in customary issues. During the 1981 debate on the Primary Courts Bill, chiefs warned of cultural consequences of their demotion. Chinengundu dismissed chiefs thus:

> [Chiefs think they are] the only people who know African customary law. Chiefs can never have the monopoly over this knowledge. There are other people who may even know it better than the chiefs, who have studied it through books or through advice of the people of their own tribe...This would not be a progressive piece of legislation if it were to pinpoint that

[108] Ibid, col. 1280, George Chinengundu.
[109] *Ibid,* col. 1310.
[110] *Ibid*, col. 1307.
[111] *Ibid*.

> chiefs must, as a right, be members or presiding officers of the primary courts to the exclusion of other people.[112]

Earlier, Minister Zvobgo had also attacked chiefs for their 'undue claim of exclusivity' over culture, tradition and customary law. He said:

> Chiefs are not a peculiar type of breed who have a monopoly of the customary law....This is a point which must be driven home whether other people like it or not, and the paternalists must stop in the manner that they used to think some years ago. To suggest that only chiefs and elderly people know the law is ridiculous. Anybody can learn the law. I cannot see anyone suggesting that Africans brought up within customary law cannot learn the law if they so wish.[113]

Chiefs were thus defined as no more important than any other people and thus were reduced to near commoners. Without judicial or political privilege, chiefs were liable to criminal or civil trial by village courts. This was despite the fact that, as Senator Mark Patridge put it, it was 'unAfrican for a chief to be tried by his own people...[and that] it is not customary for the chiefs to be treated as equals.'[114] Disapproval by some opposition parties and chiefs did not move the government which insisted on the 'equality before the law' principle. The Minister of Justice said 'if the need arise that a chief appears at these courts, the courts do have competence'.[115] Chiefs faced the humiliation of a possibility of trial by their own subjects. They also suffered the indignity of having to contest in elections if they wanted to get into councils. While there is no record of any Makoni chief who was tried by the primary courts, there is evidence of them contesting in the council elections and losing. Chief Tandi faced the humiliation of losing a WADCO chairmanship post in a 1985 local election. He got 51 votes against Elphas Chikuriro's 186.[116]

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[112] *Ibid*, col. 1292.
[113] *Ibid*, 12 April, 1981, col. 1437, Zvobgo.
[114] *Ibid*, 4 February 1981, col. 1430, Mark Partridge.
[115] *Ibid,* Zvobgo.
[116] *Makoni District Administrator's Report*, 1985, p. 6, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).

Chiefs and the land policy

The previously discussed pre-independence political and administrative alliances between chiefs and the colonial governments significantly account for ZANU PF's exclusion of chiefs in land control and administration. In 1980 Minister Zvobgo introduced the government's land administration strategy for rural areas. He said that 'the way tribal trust lands were to be administered was to be changed considerably. There were no illusions to it. The people, through their councils, will decide what is to be done.'[117] Chiefs were barred from allocating land, whether for ploughing or for settlement. They could not also dispossess villagers of their land. The government subjected traditional leaders to more rigorous legislation than 'they had ever experienced in the past.'[118] The Tribal Trust Land Act (1967) was repealed and replaced by the Communal Land Act (1981). Under the new act, land responsibilities were transferred to Rural District Councils (RDCs). The District Councils Act (1980), whose main import was to consolidate the 220 African Councils into 55 District Councils, had already minimised the role of chiefs in rural administration.[119] Chiefs were ex-officio members of the Makoni RDC. They could not vote or make binding decisions, a factor that affected their contribution to land matters. Their extremely reduced responsibilities were limited to such aspects as ensuring that allocated land did not contain graves or was not sacred.[120] In Makoni District the process of excluding chiefs from land matters had begun well before 1980. It was already advanced in chiefs Chikore and Chipunza's areas as the chiefs had been killed and commissioners had fled guerrilla attacks leaving an administrative vacuum. Party and village structures communicated policies to peasants, allocated land to newcomers and oversaw the implementation of village administrative and welfare plans.

The new political philosophy saw the rise of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs). Being closest to the people, they were the basic unit of administration in the rural areas and were important in mobilising the grassroots for development initiatives. VIDCOs and WADCOs were a result ZANU PF's plan of substituting

[117] *The Herald*, 6 September, 1980.
[118] Lan, *Guns and rain*, p. 228.
[119] V. Thebe, 'New realities' and tenure reforms: Land-use in worker-peasant communities of South-western Zimbabwe, 1940s (1940s-2006)', in D. Moore, N. Kriger and B. Raftopoulos (eds.), *'Progress' in Zimbabwe?: The past and present of a concept and a country*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 113.
[120] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 22 July, 2014.

individuals and institutions that previously worked against ZANU PF. Although part of ZANU PF' vindictive politics, they also brought closer to fruition the party's promises of grassroots democracy. The party declared at the start that 'the rule by order' of the colonial era 'has now been replaced by a consultative socialist system.'[121] While it could not be readily established how many VIDCOs and WADCOs were installed in Makoni District, there were 219 villages and 40 wards in the District in 1985.[122] It can be assumed that each village and ward had its own development committee. The leadership comprised of elected representatives of the community. They took most of the responsibilities long known to belong to chiefs. Besides distributing government food aid and agricultural inputs, they were also responsible for the wellbeing of the environment, considering rural land applications and making recommendations to District Councils.[123]

Just like it did on stripping chiefs of their judicial roles, the government also found explanations to justify the removal of chiefs land powers. The most significant was bureaucratic. The government posited that for efficiency and order to be attained in land matters, the processes would be led by technocrats. In 1984 Justice Minister Zvobgo issued the following explanation:

> Thousands of people are seeking land, and the hectares involved are millions. To leave such a task to chiefs would be carelessness on the part of the government. The question of land allocation involves much more than just pointing a finger on a piece of land and say 'you, you settle there.'[124]

The case for technocrats seems to have also been in line with Makoni District's development and modernisation drive which centred on the construction of infrastructure like dams, bridges, schools, clinics and the electrification of key service centres.[125] The general notion was that chiefs did not have the technical knowhow of handling long-term development projections. To support the point, former Makoni RDC chairman said: 'Land allocation and

[121] *The Herald,* 23 June, 1984.
[122] Manicaland Provincial Development Committee, *Manicaland Province: Five Year Development Plan*, 1986, p. 28.
[123] Interview with anonymous former Mukuwapasi VIDCO secretary, 27 July, 2014.
[124] *Parliamentary Debates*, 19 August, 1984, col. 1011, Zvobgo; Note that Zvobgo was shifted to head the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in April 1982.
[125] Makoni District Strategic Plan Review, July 1985, p. 7, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).

development processes were now different from what happened prior to the advent of bureaucratic administration. They needed skilled personnel, especially from universities and colleges. We realised that chiefs cannot do it alone. Otherwise chaos would arise.'[126] Partly for this reason, councils dominated the district's land processes while chiefs were mainly left out.

The stripping of chiefs' land powers should also be viewed in the context of the aforementioned overarching political goals. This was part of a process to rid the new government of anti-nationalist remnants. Land was an emotive issue during the colonial era. It provoked racial animosity between blacks and whites.[127] That chiefs were sometimes co-opted into colonial land administration structures provoked antagonism between chiefs and the land hungry Africans. This had adverse implications on their relations with the post-colonial government. Former Makoni deputy District Administrator explained the reasoning:

> The thinking was that someone who refused us land for many years cannot be trusted to give it to us now...how can someone who had worked for the regime for so long be expected to change his ways overnight. We did not trust chiefs.[128]

However, the rise of councils at the time was also a mobilisation tool for ZANU PF's political ends. As Judith De Wolf noted, VIDCOs and WADCOs did not independent of the party. During developmental meetings, 'Regularly local government issues are mixed with ZANU PF issues…the councillor acts as the representative of the government 'selling' policy to the people rather than representing the people at the grassroots in the RDC.'[129] According to a former Makoni RDC member, all councillors, from VIDCOs to WADCOs to the RDC, were ZANU PF members.[130]

Makoni chiefs insisted that they were 'robbed' of their powers. They were aggrieved by the loss of land responsibilities, which they claimed by right of their position as the 'autochthonous owners'.[131] They blended their appeals with spiritual threats. Chief

[126] Interview with former Makoni RDC chairman, 23 February, 2015.
[127] See Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe* and Palmer, *Land and racial domination* for classical analyses of race and land in colonial Zimbabwe.
[128] Interview with anonymous former Makoni deputy DA, 27 August, 2014.
[129] Quoted in Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 178.
[130] Interview with former Makoni RDC member, 26 February, 2015.
[131] Lan, *Guns and rain*, p. 14.

Chipunza's concerns were heightened after the Presidential Directive on Decentralisation of 1984 which officialised the establishment of WADCOs and VIDCOs. He said: 'Do you think that our ancestors are happy about this, that now we have taken over the land, you still refuse us the right? The Resettlement Officer now has power over the chief who is the sole owner of that area.'[132]

As a result of the rise of councils, chiefs could not effectively participate in land administration processes. They accused councillors of incompetence and undermining chiefly authority. In 1985 Chief Chiduku also complained to the DA, saying that:

> What we witnessed between 1980 and today is that some of the functions which were previously carried out by traditional leaders had been handed over to VIDCOs who did not do very well in this aspect...We would appreciate it if we are appointed to run some of these village development committees. Some of the people in these WADCOs and VIDCOs leave a lot to be desired.[133]

Lan clarified this immediate post-independence situation thus:

> Of the chairman of the councils it is said '*ndimambozvino*', he is now chief. This does not mean that he is like a chief, or that he is acting as or for the chief. The word *mambo* applies to anyone who acts with the authority of the ancestors. The old chiefs no longer have this authority. As branch chairmen do, they are the *mambo* of today.[134]

The DA acknowledged the existence of such intense animosity. In March 1985 he wrote the Minister of Local Government reporting that 'There is adverse conflict between councillors and chiefs. There seems to be little or no co-operation at all in the administration of council affairs.'[135]

Conclusion

The chapter focused on the factors that contributed to the disempowerment of chiefs in the immediate post-colonial years. It has argued that the relationship between chiefs and government was mainly influenced by government's perception of the liberation war role of chiefs. The discussion detailed how the generalisation of chiefs as supporters of colonial

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[132] Minutes of a meeting between Makoni chiefs and RDC chairman, 9 February, 1985, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[133] *Ibid.*
[134] Quoted in Lan, *Guns and rain*, p. 211.
[135] DA, letter to Minister of Local Government, 4 March, 1985, (uncatalogued DA Makoni file).

administrations, particularly the Ian Smith regime, provoked government's scorn for patriarchal and 'collaborationist' institutions. For that reason, chiefs' authority, which revolved around land allocation and grassroots judicial control was taken away. The disempowerment of chiefs was part of the vindictive policy of ZANU PF.

The chapter has also shown that while politics was central in determining government's stance towards chiefs, other factors were also involved. On assuming power, the ZANU PF government declared its modernising agenda. The relegation of chiefs was because they were seen as anachronisms who disrupted the way to modernisation. At another level, repositioning of chieftaincy was projected as being in line with the party's avowed policy of erecting democratic institutions that would allow ordinary villagers a voice in the running of their affairs. This was a challenge to the restrictive policies of the colonial era that were defined along racial lines.

The narrative has also revealed that chieftaincy is an institution that is reordered according to the wishes of the government of the day. The situation of chiefs at independence was a continuation of the processes that had begun with colonisation in 1890. Chiefs were rejected or co-opted according to the administrative and political situation at hand. Towards the end of the first decade, chieftaincy entered another phase in history. Its relationship with the government was rearranged again. The animosity of the period 1980 to 1986 began to ameliorate. Accounting for the changes is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Winds of small change: Accommodation and rejection of chiefs, 1987-1999

Introduction

The year 1987 marked another shift in the relationship between chiefs and government. The government initiated a new direction in order to reverse the hostility that had characterised the first seven years of independence. It sought to ingratiate itself with chiefs. To accomplish this, it had to be seen to be enhancing the powers of chiefs. As such, debates, bills and laws were introduced and passed ostensibly in order to restore chiefs' powers. The debates revolved around the question of the societal relevance of chiefs. The new laws included the Chiefs and Headmen Amendment Act (1989) and the Customary Law and Local Courts Act (1990). This paralleled the change of tone by government and ZANU PF officials as regards the importance of chiefs. There developed a new and patronising narrative designed to endear chiefs to the government. Government-owned newspapers such as *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail* recast chiefs in new perspective, reflecting government's new stance. Chiefs were described as 'guardians of our culture', 'pillars of social cohesion and stability', 'partners in development' and 'custodians of the land'.[1] These features defined the government's new recognition of chiefs.

The government's abandonment of the politics of confrontation with chiefs and the simultaneous adoption of 'the politics of co-option' was a break with the past.[2] As such, it is a major line of academic interest. It is important to ask questions about the new overtures by the government. Why did the government initiate this new phase? How sincere was it in its co-option of chiefs? Where the chiefs really empowered? These questions carry the important argument this chapter intends to make. The chapter argues that the new set of relations was informed by ZANU PF's need to win chiefs on its side in order to protect itself

[1] This rhetoric by government and party officials was invariably captured in newspapers and parliamentary debates.

[2] J. Muzondidya, 'From buoyancy to crisis, 1980-1997', in B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2009, p. 194.

from political challenges that increasingly became more pronounced as the 1980s came to an end.

Using Makoni District as a window for a wider national view, the chapter examines the extent at which steadily increasing political pressure from opposition political organisations provoked government's interest in chiefs. At different times, political parties such as ZAPU, ZUM and later the MDC posed significant challenges to ZANU PF's hegemonic status. The chapter also acknowledges the link between the weakening economy and the re-emergence of chiefs. As economic problems intensified, political disgruntlement increased. In turn, this compelled the government to respond in many ways, including mending its relations with chiefs. The chapter also examines the extent at which administrative challenges in rural areas increased government's desire for the enlistment of traditional leadership institutions. Ultimately, the chapter seeks to investigate how Makoni chiefs were affected by the emerging social and political environment, and how they responded to it.

Rhetoric on the new importance of chiefs

In seeking accommodation with chiefs, ZANU PF changed its language. As the preceding chapter highlighted, ZANU PF officials, before and after 1980, normally described chiefs as 'sell-outs' and 'anachronisms'. This antagonistic rhetoric was dropped for a more conciliatory discourse. As Maya David notes, politicians use certain language and rhetoric as strategy for political persuasion and manipulation of certain constituencies in order to achieve specific political results.[3] This is a lesson ZANU PF learnt well. As various economic and political difficulties converged in the late 1980s to threaten ZANU PF's rule, the party addressed chiefs and chiefly issues in more conciliatory terms.[4] Confrontational language against chiefs was discouraged. In August 1987 Senator Patrick Chinamasa was rebuked by the generality of ZANU PF parliamentarians after he suggested that 'Chiefs had no role to play in modern administration and politics.'[5] The new narrative deliberately changed chiefs' history and

[3] M. K. David, 'Language, power and manipulation: The use of rhetoric in maintaining political influence', *Frontiers of Language and Teaching*, Vol. 5, 2014, p. 164.
[4] Muzondidya, 'From buoyancy to crisis', pp. 187-88.
[5] *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August, 1987, col. 22-26, Patrick Chinamasa.

exaggerated their power and status. Suddenly, chiefs were viewed as an important factor in history, politics, administration and social stability of the rural areas.

In 1988, ZANU PF MP Richard Shambambeva-Nyandoro presented an example of the party's new version of history which was meant to suit the party's new needs. He exaggerated chiefs' liberation war credentials, claiming that:

> Had it not been for chiefs, this country would not have been independent in 1980. Chiefs played a crucial role, together with spirit mediums, politicians and fighters. Chiefs were particularly important in linking the fighters to the mediums, who in turn linked them to the ancestors.[6]

This new narrative was crucial for both party and government's efforts at courting chiefs.

Even the history of known 'sell-out' chiefs was redefined to fit the new political agenda. Some of Makoni District's chiefs benefitted from this new approach. As noted earlier, the history of Makoni chiefs, most of whom seemed to side with the RF during the war, began to be conveniently ignored. However, clearest examples of manipulation of history emerge from outside of Makoni District. Uzumba-Marambapfungwe Districts' Chief Chirau's political life as an agent of the Ian Smith regime was de-emphasised. Mainly used as a propaganda tool and conveniently elevated to represent the voice of all chiefs, Chief Chirau worked closely with the RF government, castigating nationalists and urging the people to reject them.[7] However, Mugabe's eulogy in 1985 signalled government's intensions to transform its relations with chiefs. He said Chief Chirau was a political 'born-again' who was 'quick to learn from his mistakes and realize the true national character of the struggle.'[8] Chief Sigola of Umzingwane District of Matabeleland South was another supporter of the Smith government whose history ZANU PF sought to conveniently change. At his death in 1985 he was described by the ZANU PF Speaker of Parliament, Nolan Makombe, as a person who 'refused to be compromised by being co-opted into anti-people alliances with the Rhodesian government. He stood firm on the side of the masses, sometimes at great personal peril, to those who had taken up arms to liberate their army and people.'[9] Yet a critical knowledge of colonial history

[6] *Ibid*, 11 March, 1988, col. 109, Richard Shambambeva-Nyandoro.
[7] Frederikse, *None but ourselves*, pp. 76-79.
[8] *The Herald*, 28 January, 1985.
[9] *Ibid*, 12 February, 1991.

reveals that Chief Sigola was elected to the Chiefs' Council 'in recognition of his hard work', was a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire,[10] and was among the Smith delegation to Winston Churchill's funeral.[11] Such privileges were normally allowed loyalist chiefs.

Most government officials apologised for their mistreatment of chiefs, particularly as regards the withdrawal of chiefs' land, administrative and judicial powers. They called for the restoration of aspects of such powers. In 1990, Minister of Local Government, Joseph Msika, urged chiefs to accept the government's apology because:

> People in government are ordinary people, like anyone else they learn things. If they discover that a mistake has been made, the mistake is corrected…We learnt by experience that we could not exclude the chiefs completely from the administration of this country.[12]

While this applied to chiefs in general, it also related to Makoni chiefs, most of whom had been neglected by the government. However, government's apologies were not sincere, as revealed by subsequent events described in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

The government reformulated a rural political agenda based on what Ineke van Kessel and Barbara Oomen saw as the convenient 'revival of tradition'.[13] The rejuvenated notions of culture and overstated nostalgic expressions about the pre-colonial past reversed the negativity attached to chiefs at independence. While the revitalisation of the so-called tradition was designed to serve the politicians, it also benefitted chiefs. In Makoni District, the discredited chieftaincies such as that of Tandi and Chikore had lost social and administrative influence because of their perceived anti-liberation war inclinations. Therefore, these advances by the government were an opportunity for them to regain favourable governmental recognition. Maxwell notes, it was apparent in the 1990s that 'tradition' meant different things for the various parties involved. He wrote:

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[10] D. McNeil, 'The rivers of Zimbabwe will run red with blood: Enoch Powell and the Post-Imperial nostalgia of the Monday Club', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2011, p. 740.
[11] Holleman, *Chief, council and commissioner*, and Weinrich, *Chiefs and councils*, give considerable attention to how, particularly the Smith government, used patronage politics to invite chiefs like Chirau and Sigola to its side.
[12] *Parliamentary Debates*, 12 December, 1990, col. 1015, Joseph Msika.
[13] I. van Kessel and B. Oomen, 'One chief, one vote: The Revival of traditional authorities in post-apartheid South Africa', *African Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 385, 1997, p. 561.

> For the government…it was a rhetorical device for gaining legitimacy in the face of failed development strategies and an increasing inability to mobilize the rural constituency.…[On the other hand] Traditional leaders used 'tradition' as a set of strategies which enabled them to enhance their own social, economic and political influence.[14]

The previously sidelined chiefs saw a connection between government's new cultural recognition and the regaining of their old powers. As such, they hoped to win a major role in wider national political and social processes. In Makoni District, as in most villages in Zimbabwe, the villagers' life related closely with cultural affairs. It was generally believed by chiefs that the weaker the cultural traditions in the villages, the weaker the power and status of chiefs. It is this context that in 1989 Chief Makoni urged 'This Honourable House to fight hard for the restoration of the chiefs' role, to preserve and revive our lost glory and bring back our sacred culture and tradition.'[15]

The government's purported attachment to cultural and spiritual issues continued throughout the 1990s. In 1995, Deputy Minister of Local Government, Tony Gara, appealed to Makoni chiefs and headmen 'to use all traditional means at their disposal to pray for rains, given the gripping drought facing Chief Chingaira's *nyika* (territory).'[16] The cultural and spiritual ceremonies, previously shunned by the government, became national showpieces attracting senior officialdom. In 1996, Minister John Nkomo led a 'high-powered' delegation to a *kuchenura* (traditional cleansing ceremony) at Mutungagore under Chief Chiduku. It was mainly to seek guidance and assistance from *midzimu yenyika* (ancestral spirits). He said: 'In essence, the chief is the father-figure in the chiefdom. He can speak directly with the ancestors and could intercede with them to ensure the coming of the rain.'[17] It seems these forays into the spiritual and cultural domain brought the results that the government sought. Chief Makoni was appreciative of the government's revival of cultural issues. He explained the reason:

> It is true that the leaders went to the chiefs and indicated that they wanted to start the war. The chiefs took them to the spirit mediums. They were told when the war is over they must go back to them. Since the war came to an end, has anybody gone to the chiefs and spiritual mediums and

[14] Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 174.
[15] *Parliamentary Debates*, 19 February, 1989, col. 371, Chief Makoni.
[16] *The Herald*, 17 October, 1995.
[17] *Ibid,* 9 June, 1996.

> thanked them for the help that the spirits rendered. This is a sign that the government is awakening to the importance of culture.[18]

As will be discussed in the next chapter, ZANU PF turned to culture in order to legitimate its stay in power and to repel political opposition. As Elizabeth Colson observed, culture is a form of social and political control used by various societal actors to impose their will on their subjects.[19] In 1996 ZANU PF's election manifesto partly admitted to this: 'Always in times of stress people return to their roots, to their culture, to look for the right path.'[20]

Judicial accommodation and rejection

Government's advances into chieftaincy were also felt on the judicial front. Since 1980, chiefs had expressed the desire to retain their judicial status and chiefs' courts. To Makoni chiefs this had cultural significance and pre-colonial historical connections. It is sometimes argued that chiefs' loss of judicial powers contributed to the intense hostility that developed between chiefs and the early colonial government. Chief Mutota Makoni's refusal to give up judicial and other powers to the white administration partly explains Phimister's description of him as an 'anti-colonial warrior' 'who was never reconciled to colonial rule.'[21] As the previous chapter has demonstrated, chiefs' judicial powers were further eroded at independence. This heightened the tension between chiefs and government. However, in the long run, such strained relations were not politically viable for ZANU PF. The relations had to be mended if ZANU PF was to win the support of chiefs. One way used by the party was to respond to chiefs' claims for judicial powers.

Like all chiefs in Zimbabwe, Makoni chiefs constantly reminded the government that grassroots judiciary systems were their domain. In 1987 Chief Makoni said in this regard:

> Before the coming of the white man, the chief was the guardian over his area. He was the chief distributor of land. He was the chief judicial officer. The chief was the centre of every activity in his district. He passed sentences in the courts. Now one wonders who could have done this sort of Job apart from the chief. It is obvious that it is the chief who could do

[18] *Parliamentary Debates*, 12 May, 1998, col. 1659, Chief Makoni.
[19] E. Colson, *Tradition and contract: The problem of order*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1974, p. 83-84.
[20] ZANU PF, *ZANU PF presidential election manifesto: ZANU PF and the 1996 presidential election,* Harare*,* 1996, p. 16.
[21] I. Phimister, 'Makoni, Mutota (c.1835–1896)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, (online edition), (no page numbers).

> this and that it was his responsibility and duty….We should also recognise that the chief was the overseer-the ruler of his area.[22]

His sentiments were buttressed by Chief Tandi years later when he explained the pre-colonial status of chiefs in judicial affairs. He said 'chiefs tried criminal and civil cases and their judgments were fair. People still like our courts. It is only that the government saw it fit to take the powers away from us...They may take the courts in towns, but those in rural areas should be ours.'[23] Without control of grassroots courts, they felt like nothing more than 'figureheads'.[24]

As time went by, it became increasingly difficult for ZANU PF to continue to ignore chiefs in the context of rising administrative, social and political challenges. In the 1985 election year President Robert Mugabe promised to accommodate chiefs by returning to them the primary courts.[25] In pursuance of that goal, he 'mapped out a new legal role for chiefs' when he announced in 1987 that: 'The government is working on the specific chapters into which chiefs and headmen would be assimilated into the judicial system.'[26] Such manoeuvres by the government led to the introduction of the Customary Law and Local Courts Bill in 1988. The bill sought to make chiefs preside over community courts while headmen presided over primary courts in cultural and civil matters. The government presented this political intervention as a 'response to practical realities' and a 'very necessary step of bringing our chiefs and headmen back into their rightful place.'[27] It insisted that, as the former Makoni District's deputy DA explained, the idea was to encourage people to 'settle their differences in a system which they understand [since] the vast majority of people conduct their business in African customary law, be it marriage, property, children, and so on.'[28]

Despite such overtures, what emerges from the study is the absence of change in this period of supposed 'transformation'. Makoni chiefs complained from the very early days of the

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[22] *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September, 1987, col. 558, Chief Makoni.
[23] Interview with Chief Tandi, 29 July, 2014.
[24] Ladley, 'Just spirits?', p. 15.
[25] J. Alexander, 'Things fall apart, the centre can hold: Processes of post-war political change in Zimbabwe's rural areas', in L. S. Lauridsen (ed.), *Bringing institutions back in: The role of institutions in civil society, state and economy*, Roskilde: Roskilde University Press, 1993, p. 37.
[26] *The Herald*, 3 March, 1987.
[27] *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 June, 1989, col. 4, President Mugabe.
[28] Interview with former deputy DA, Makoni District, 26 July, 2014.

introduction of the Customary Law and Local Courts Act (1990). They argued that the powers given were superficial and insufficient. They harked back to the pre-colonial past when they dominated judicial affairs. They also viewed favourably the UDI era, when they were given considerable judicial responsibilities. They complained about limits imposed on the nature of cases they could handle, the restrictions on the monetary value of such cases, and the fact that magistrates could interfere with their cases.

Chiefs' ability to judicially express themselves was severely restricted by the nature of cases they handled. The government stipulated that they had no jurisdiction over cases such as incest, *lobola* (bride price), child maintenance and custody of minor children among others. These were for magistrates' courts. Chiefs raised both practical and cultural objections against the restrictions. Chief Tandi derided magistrates, querying how, in the case of incest, 'young boys in Rusape, full of only book knowledge, could have the power to cleanse the culprits.'[29] He said *midzimu* would not cleanse the people involved as they would not approve of magisterial processes. Nor could chiefs handle criminal cases. Cases such as theft and assault were restricted to the magistrates' courts. In 1990 Chief Chipunza protested and relayed the message via the DA to the government complaining that 'magistrates have now become more powerful, not chiefs' as the Local Courts Bill 'does not allow chiefs to preside over those cases which most blacks regard as falling under traditional law.'[30] The new system allowed cases to be easily appealed to the magistrates' courts. Even if a case was within the jurisdiction of chiefs, by law, people were not compelled to initiate cases with them. This rendered several cases redundant as litigants appealed to higher courts, sometimes even before the case had been heard by the chief.[31] Chief Chipunza recalled an incident in 1991 when a villager refused to be tried by his court, accusing the chief of targeting his livestock 'to satisfy his insatiable appetite for meat.'[32] The villager appealed to the Rusape magistrates' courts even before the case was heard by the chiefs' court.

[29] Interview with Chief Tandi, 25 February, 2015.
[30] Minutes of the Manicaland Provincial Development Committee, 30 April, 1990, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[31] Interview with Chief Tandi, 25 February, 2015.
[32] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014. At chiefs' courts, fines are usually paid in the form of livestock. While some of it goes to the complainant, some of it is retained by the chief. However, a goat also has to be provided by the guilty party for consumption by the gathering.

Also, the monetary jurisdiction was restrictive. Chiefs could not preside over cases involving a monetary value of more than $1000.[33] This judicially crippled chiefs, especially as their fines were in terms of cows and goats. For example, in 1992 the average cost of a cow in Makoni District was $800.[34] Chiefs could not therefore impose fines of more than one cow. Otherwise, they had to refer cases to the magistrates' courts. Also the government took long to review such monetary limits. Even the next review in 1995 set the jurisdiction to only $3000. It was almost instantly rendered useless by inflationary pressures. Such factors affected the functioning of local courts. According to Chief Chipunza, their courts were left 'with no job to do while magistrates' courts in Rusape were flooded.'[35]

Continued exclusion from land affairs

An important aspect of chiefs' relations with the post-colonial government was the question of powers over land. As already noted, immediately after taking over government in 1980, ZANU PF divested chiefs of all power over communal lands. Chiefs claimed authority 'by right of their position as autochtonous owners of the land.'[36] Ranger discusses how Chief Chingaira Makoni enjoyed effective control over his land before colonialism and how he fought the white invaders to defend it.[37] Chingaira is said to have impressed upon his white captors who the real owners of the land were. He said: 'It is very well to call me a rebel but this country belonged to me and my forefathers long before you came here.'[38] However, as ZANU PF began to reconsider chiefs, the chiefs' voice was rejuvenated. In 1988 Chief Tandi protested his exclusion from land matters in his area. He told the Manicaland Development Committee's Provincial Strategic Review Workshop that 'You cannot be a chief without land. The powers to administer justice and allocate land, these two go hand in hand. Without land powers we are reduced to ordinary people.'[39] The symbolism of chiefs–land connection was seen at their

[33] In February 2009 Zimbabwe abandoned its dollar currency and adopted the United States of America dollar as the official currency. So, all the dollars that come before 2009 are Zimbabwe dollars while those that come after are US dollars.
[34] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[35] *Ibid*.
[36] J. Alexander, 'Modernisation, tradition and control. Local and national struggles over authority and land: A case of Chimanimani District, Zimbabwe', Balliol college, Oxford, ms, p. 2.
[37] T. Ranger, 'Chingaira Makoni's head: Myth, history and the colonial experience', *Eighteenth Annual Hans Wolff Memorial Lecture*, 29 March, 1988, p. 18.
[38] *The Sunday Mail*, 16 November, 2014.
[39] Minutes of the Manicaland Development Committee, Provincial Strategic Review Meeting, March 1988, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).

installation. During the installation of the new Chief Makoni in 2014, he was made to hold soil in his hands as a sign of the bond (See picture below).

***Figure 2**: New Chief Makoni, Cogen Gwasira, being handed a mound of soil to signify his power over Makoni lands, September, 2014. (Picture by researcher).*

The announcer declared that this was a sign that the chief was now in control of the land which he held in trust of his people. Beyond that, little else showed that the chief was the real custodian of the Makoni lands.

Still, chiefs were not successful in their pleas for power over land. It was firm government policy that land planning, allocation and administration stayed with party councillors and planning technocrats. The Makoni RDC, in which chiefs had lesser influence, continued to control land processes. In the context of new political priorities, the government needed to act tactfully so as to avoid alienating chiefs. That it was a difficult task is shown by inconsistencies, ambiguities and contradictions in policy, practise and pronouncements. As Alexander notes, there emerged a paradox between the enhanced status accorded chiefs and the rejection of chieftaincy-based claims to land, and between populist pronouncements of

politicians and the demands of technical bureaucracies.[40] The government oscillated between promising chiefs powers over land and excluding them from land issues. In 1988, Senator A. Wenyika expressed concern over the continued exclusion of chiefs from land issues. She said:

> If they are not giving land powers to the chiefs, it is going to make it very difficult for any chief to function. At installation processes, the chief is made to handle the soil. What does that mean to a chief? You hold the soil but you cannot administer it... You will have to stop calling an area [for instance] Mutasa's area because it means that is where chief Mutasa administers. They should let the chiefs take part in the distribution of land….[41]

However, the government had seemingly plausible explanations for the continued exclusion of chiefs from land issues. According to Makoni RDC chairman, technical reasoning dictated that land planning and extension services would be led by trained and knowledgeable people.[42] The rationale was that there was meticulous long-term planning involved. Looking at most of Makoni villages in the period under study, they were in need of major infrastructural development. It involved the installation of water pipes and electricity cables, and the construction of roads, schools, clinics, dams and police stations. The technocratic demands were beyond most Makoni District chiefs. This severely affected their position in land issues. In 1994, Makoni RDC chairman, John Pagada, advised chiefs to be content with staying out of land issues and encouraged them to offer advice to councillors and technocrats, as suggested by such legislation as the Communal Lands Act.[43] However, as ex-officio members of the Makoni RDC, chiefs could not vote, thus they had little influence over council matters.

Added to their quest to control communal land, Makoni Chiefs also yearned for enhanced roles in the administration of adjacent resettlement areas. In furtherance of its liberation war promises of redressing historical land imbalances, the government initiated land resettlement schemes. It acquired land in order to give it to landless Africans. In Makoni District, the Mayo and Romsley resettlement schemes were a result of such a process.[44] As this was done in the

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[40] Alexander, *The unsettled land*, p. 115.
[41] *Parliamentary Debates*, 5 December, 1989, col. 10, A. Wenyika.
[42] Minutes of the Manicaland Provincial Development Committee, 30 April, 1990, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[43] *The Herald*, 1 August, 1994.
[44] J. B. Karumbidza, 'Fragile and unsustained miracle: Analysing the development potential of Zimbabwe's

era of administrative decentralisation, chiefs believed they would be more involved in admistration. According to Mutizwa-Mangiza, the decentralisation concept involved the distribution or dispersal of central government administrative responsibilities to local administrative structures.[45] But decentralised land responsibilities in Makoni, as elsewhere, were headed by government appointees and elected councillors. The government resisted efforts by Chief Makoni in the early 1980s to assume the administration of Mayo and Romsley resettlement schemes. It stuck to its early 1980s plan to redistribute land on a 'planned and organized basis.'[46] The Minister of Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development insisted in 1981 that 'the objective of land redistribution is not merely to give land to the landless masses but to create an agricultural community on land which will no longer be just subsistence but commercial in orientation.'[47] As the former Makoni District DA explained the government position, resettlement areas were not extensions of communal areas. Therefore, 'it was not in the interest of sound administration to cede such processes to chiefs. The government already had the best machinery to do that.'[48] Such machinery included the RDCs Bill (1990) which reiterated the importance of technocratic planning and the role of councillors and technocrats. Chiefs were effectively excluded from land resettlement.

This position provoked sharp reactions from the generality of chiefs. The most revealing is that of Chief Charumbira in 1990. He said:

> We are surprised to know that this resettlement is carried out without the help of chiefs. The chief no longer has any rights over the people whom he used to guide. Do you think that our ancestors are happy about this, that now we have taken over the land, you still refuse us the right? The Resettlement Officer now has power over the chief who is the sole owner of that area….How can an Officer tell me that 'this area is no longer yours'?[49]

Resettlement Schemes, 1980 – 2000', PhD, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2009, p. 248 and Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*, pp. 305-309, separately discuss early government efforts at resettlement in the Mayo and Weya parts of Makoni District.

[45] N. D. Mutizwa-Mangiza, 'Local government and planning in Zimbabwe: With special reference to the provincial/regional level', in Mutizwa-Mangiza and Helmsing (eds.), *Rural development and planning in Zimbabwe,* p. 389.

[46] Interview with anonymous former deputy DA, Makoni District, 27 August, 2014.

[47] Quoted in J. Alexander, 'State, peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 21, No. 61, 1994, pp. 333-334.

[48] Interview with former deputy DA, Makoni District, 27 August, 2014.

[49] *Parliamentary Debates*, 10 July, 1990, col. 791-2, Chief Charumbira.

Indeed, this thinking resonated with that of Makoni District's chiefs. Chief Tandi disliked the dominance of government-appointed resettlement officers. He saw a connection between resettlement and cultural, historical and liberation war issues. In this connection the 1991 minutes of the District Development Coordinating Committee meeting reported thus:

> [Chief Tandi] appealed to the government to make them [chiefs] retain the powers of resettlement schemes. The Resettlement Officer should not have the sole right to allocate land. He should ask the chiefs what to do…rather than the other way round. He urged Agritex officers to respect the ancestors by involving chiefs instead of just planning things without them. The government should educate the officers and councillors about who the chiefs are and what the land means to them.[50]

Chiefs' argument still revolved around their autochthonous claims to land which was usurped from them by the advent a bureaucratic state.

The government rejected chiefs' wish to lead resettlement and administration processes on various grounds. One of them was the mixed background of people who sought to be resettled. Resettlement areas sometimes consisted of people from different geographical areas and ethnicity. Some were former urban dwellers. Some beneficiaries of Mayo Ranch resettlement scheme, for instance, were drawn from areas beyond Makoni District. These include Mutoko, Buhera and Harare.[51] Generally, people who came from mining and farming had not previously lived under chiefly rule. So, chief's full claim over such people was misplaced. But Chief Chiduku insists that 'wherever people are resettled, there should be a chief. If you are a chief who cannot be involved in land distribution and administration, then your authority is undermined.'[52]

Makoni chiefs' indignation, just as that of other chiefs elsewhere, was encapsulated in three general arguments. First, resettlement lands were usually within the vicinity of communal areas. Historically, such lands were one and were only divided during the colonial period. Technically, as such, they belonged to an adjacent chieftaincy. Second, without chiefs, resettlement areas would suffer social dislocation and delinquency reminiscent of urban

[50] Minutes of the District Development Coordinating Committee meeting on the drought situation in the district, 14 November, 1991, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[51] Karumbidza, 'Fragile and unsustained miracle', p. 248.
[52] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 22 July, 2014.

areas. Third, the division created enmity between the settlements and neighbouring communal areas. Mayo resettlement area and surrounding communal areas experienced disagreements, with people from one side accusing those from the other of one bad deed or the other.[53] According to Chief Makoni:

> We are unhappy that we have been excluded from resettlement schemes. We feel that they fall within the spiritual domain of the chiefs. We appeal to the government to reconsider its policy on this issue….How are these people going to survive in resettlement areas when they do not come under the authority of the chiefs? If these resettlement areas are going to be like urban centres…this will create problems.[54]

The government still insisted that its council-led administrative system would lead in resettlement areas. The effects of such exclusion of chiefs in land issues were more than just losing historical powers. There were also selfish interest involved. According to Karumbidza, it meant Makoni chiefs lost patronage benefits that came with allocating land to villagers. They hoped to profit from land allocation fees, which they previously exerted on prospective land seekers and paid either in cash or in livestock.[55] They had enjoyed this arrangement until they lost it at independence.

Despite government explanations, chiefs did not accept their still weakened position. They protested in both word and deed. They stopped co-operating in development projects in their areas. Makoni DA reported in1989 that, in protest against their loss of land powers, chiefs took a 'deliberately apathetic position to development initiatives' and seemed to have 'a strong attitude against councillors and politicians involved in land planning and allocation.'[56] The DA's concern was that the feud between councillors and chiefs affected development processes in the district. Chiefs' response was clearer in the environmental protection matters. As he further noted, some chiefs 'had stopped reprimanding villagers or causing their arrest for cutting down trees and other environmental transgressions.'[57] Another important accusation the DA added was that chiefs had also stopped encouraging villagers to come to development planning and feedback meetings.

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[53] Karumbidza, 'Fragile and unsustained miracle', p. 141.
[54] *Parliamentary Debates*, 16 August, 1989, col. 233, Chief Makoni.
[55] Karumbidza, 'Fragile and unsustained miracle', p. 205.
[56] District Development Committee minutes on the district's food security status, 11 March, 1989, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[57] *Ibid.*

Some of the frustrated chiefs also tried to reclaim their powers by acting outside of official channels. They forced themselves on resettlement areas by resettling people and performing administrative duties. Some even unilaterally appointed headmen in such areas. In Makoni District, the government responded by threatening Chief Makoni with prosecution for illegally appointing headmen in Mayo. The people he resettled were seen by the government as squatters. The government also threatened to destroy defiant villagers' homes constructed on, for example, Headlands commercial farms. According to Chief Chipunza's early 1990s experience, there were two reasons for chiefs' 'illegal' acts:

> First, we do not need anyone to tell us that this is the land we should rule. We know it very well because it has been ours for ages. Second, it is the people in these resettlement areas who requested that we lead them. They always came to us with their problems related to stock theft, domestic violence, food shortages, among others, and we helped them. Why did not they go to the police or the councillors for help? They realised that chiefs are the real owners of the land they lived on and they governed better than anyone else.[58]

By the mid-1990s, the hostility between chiefs and councillors was still active. Chiefs insisted on regaining the land and in some instances continued to defy council and government directives.

As regards Chief Makoni, from around 1994 he unilaterally extended his chieftaincy to Mayo resettlement area, and appointed headmen to help in its administration. Sometimes he resettled landless people. In reaction to these illegal acts, Makoni RDC Council Chief Executive Officer Edward Pise warned such resettled people that they 'should not be fooled by so-called chiefs or headmen who were persuading them to move with them to resettlement schemes and at the end make them suffer humiliation after being evicted. There is no one called a chief or headmen we recognize there.'[59] DA Makoni, Cosmos Chiringa also warned chiefs, saying that they 'must desist from appointing headmen in resettlement schemes as there is no provision for traditional leaders in such areas. Chiefs should not also allocate land in both rural and resettlement areas without consulting the District Council.'[60] As such, despite the

[58] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[59] *The Herald*, 17 October, 1996.
[60] *Ibid.*

promises made at the end of the 1980s, the restoration of chiefs' land powers was more apparent than real.

As Alexander observed, this deepened animosity between chiefs and councillors was partly a legacy of the unresolved struggles of the war.[61] In Makoni District, war-time competing claims for land administration spilled into the independence period. Resettlement officers dealt with cases that typically were the realm of chiefs. The chiefs were critical of such 'chiefless' administration and blamed councillors for all administrative problems. They argued that such problems were because of councillors' general incompetence and disrespect for chiefs. They felt the RDC Bill (1990) had allowed councillors and technocrats too much power. Mrehwa District's Chief Mangwende was also affected by the prevailing situation. In his protestations he argued that:

> You never put anybody anywhere else unless you consult those who were going to be his neighbours. You may also consult those from where he is coming from. Chiefs give issues of land detailed attention unlike these land officers who messes up everything and sometimes end up settling people wrongly without consultation…ignoring some of these niceties is an unfortunate thing which requires redress by the Minister…otherwise the Bill requires to be torn into pieces.[62]

For chiefs it was the same problem in Makoni District as it was throughout Manicaland.

The 1992 minutes of the Provincial Development Committee highlight chiefs' disgruntlement with 'incompetent' councillors who 'mostly ignored them'. Part of the paraphrased minutes read:

> Some chiefs queried their status in the community vis-à-vis village development committee chairmen and councillors. They complained that when VIDCO chairmen convened meetings…they were not informed. They were also worried about councillors who looked down upon them because chiefs have not had any power since independence.[63]

They accused councillors of being geographically remote from the people they were supposed to serve. They blamed them for fraud, wasting of resources and of having no connection with, and little sensitivity to, grassroots demands. Chiefs pointed to environmental protection as

[61] Alexander, 'Things fall apart', p. 37.
[62] *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 January, 1990, col. 113, Chief Mangwende.
[63] Manicaland Provincial Development Committee, Minutes, 30 April, 1992, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).

an example of where they could do better than councillors. Chief Tandi opined that the reason chiefs deserved to be given more powers over environmental control is that they lived with the people. This was unlike

> The district council [which] lives some 30 miles away. They can never see what happens here in the night. They can only see after the damage is done. I know it is government's policy that such powers be given to councils, but do you not think that it is in the interest of the country to give some of the powers to the local leadership in those areas rather than to conferring powers to men who live in remote areas.[64]

Their environmental concerns justifiable especially in the context massive environmental degradation established and accelerated in Mayo as soon as resettlement commenced.[65]

Councillors also actively opposed chiefly involvement in land matters.[66] They made various counterarguments against chiefs. Amongst them was that chiefs lacked commitment to development issues and were not equipped to technocratically make viable decisions. Councillor J. Chikura's diagnosis of the situation in Makoni District is indicative of the nature of the relations between chiefs and councillors. He said of chiefs:

> Relations between chiefs and councillors are very strained. The two have no direct link with each other. Chiefs seldom appreciate the role of the administration of the government in power…they do not want to work with their District Administrators, councillors or other people engaged in the development of their areas.[67]

The government could not afford to ignore these tensions. However, in dealing with the problems it further revealed the contradictions in its policy as regards chiefs' powers. It spoke highly of chiefs and emphasised their perceived importance in rural governance, while at the same time keeping them disempowered. As regards councillors, it publicly chastised them while it continued giving them land and other administrative powers.

This situation recurred throughout the 1990s. At the 1995 RDCs' meeting in Kariba, Minister of Local Government, John Nkomo, referred to the concerns related to those raised by Makoni

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[64] Interview with Chief Tandi, 25 February, 2015.
[65] *Moto*, 6 July, 1982, p. 6.
[66] N. Kriger 1985, 'Struggles for independence: rural conflicts in Zimbabwe's war for liberation', PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985, p. 448, notes that a significant number of councils in Melsetter District rejected the participation of chiefs into councils.
[67] Minutes of Makoni District Council Meeting, 11 February, 1992, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).

chiefs. He justified the chiefs' role in society while condemning the councillors for excluding chiefs in council business. He said: 'For RDCs to be worried about the inclusion of chiefs into civic matters suggests that there is a lot they want to keep to themselves.'[68] There was detachment between such public pronouncements and how the government really wanted council business conducted. The status of chiefs remained the same. Councillors remained in control of land matters. As late as 1998 chiefs' objections against councillors were still continuing. In a message that resonated with most of Makoni chiefs, MP Sikajaya Muntanga argued that:

> Instead of honouring the chiefs, we have created VIDCOs. VIDCOs have power which cannot be challenged by the chiefs. What is wrong with chiefs? They were there before the whites came in. What are we doing about it? There is now a councillor….When the chiefs give advice they do not accept. They say the land and everything else should be solved by councillors.[69]

The government's response was all too familiar. Characteristically, it publicly attacked councillors and continued to promise reforms to chiefs. Typical of government responses was the following:

> The days are long gone when VIDCOs and WADCOs first chose the best fruits for themselves out of food relief, fertilizer supplies and settlement land for themselves and their kith and kin. The [chief-led] village assembly must now overtake these tendencies. We are…moving away from the system where mere political committees of an elective nature can lay exclusive claim to being representatives of the people apart from the direct participation of the people themselves in the governance process. The hitherto stifled voice of the people...will gain full expression.[70]

The government did not want to relinquish chiefs as it wanted to utilise them as a political resource. Despite their immediate post-independence slump in popularity, chiefs were generally respected in the rural areas. They were accepted as the natural leaders of their villages with long term attachment to their communities.[71] This contrasted with the transient nature of councillors' term of office which depended on elections and was not guaranteed. The fact of election meant that they did not get the approval of those who did not vote for

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[68] *The Sunday Mail*, 5 May, 1995.
[69] *Parliamentary Debates*, 11 March, 1998, col. 4029, Sikajaya Muntanga.
[70] *Ibid*, 13 October, 1998, col. 924, Minister of Local Government.
[71] M. Bourdillon, *The Shona peoples*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987, p. 111.

them. For instance, in 1995 J. Nyambabvu of ward 27 under Chief Rukweza won the councillorship by 54 per cent.[72] This meant 46 per cent who did not vote for him would not only be reluctant to co-operate with his work, but also represented a disgruntled section of the community. Without the approval of some people, this reduced the effectiveness of councillors as political mobilisers for the party. This was unlike the chiefs who were a unifying factor of the community and commanded respect of most villagers regardless of their electoral affiliation. With chiefs at the front it was envisaged that it would be easy for the government to control villagers.

In their protestations, chiefs often reminded the government about their indispensability. They warned of the political consequences of alienating them. In 1987 Chief Mangwende cautioned that 'sooner or later, you [the government] will hunt for us in our little huts when the country will not suit what you want because we have a role to play.'[73] Such warnings and threats continued throughout the 1990s. In 1998 Chief Makoni made a more direct threat in his protests against their continued omission, particularly in land processes. He said: 'But even if you remove us and you go to the elections, you will not win without us. We will have been removed, yes we agree to be removed but you will not win.'[74] These statements coincided with increased challenges to ZANU PF's rule by various political forces. The party appreciated the urgency of 'doing something' bout the chiefs. In 1998, MP Norman Zikhali advised the House that:

> Surely if we don't do something [about the chiefs] now, our people will not understand us. If our people do not understand us the next thing is chaos, chaos which will…threaten the rulers who are Ministers and perhaps members of Parliament to a certain extent….We cannot afford that.[75]

Especially in the context of strong opposition politics, the government could not afford to ignore such notions and it became imperative for it to consider them.

Part of the government's response was the repeal of the Chiefs and Headmen Act and the formulation of the Traditional Leaders Bill (1998). ZANU PF described the resultant TLA (1998)

[72] Makoni District Election records, May, 1995, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).
[73] *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September, 1987, col. 564, Chief Mangwende.
[74] *Ibid*, 30 July, 1998, col. 68, Chief Makoni.
[75] *Ibid*, Norman Zikhali, col. 74.

as an offer of 'respect, status and responsibility to our traditional leaders who were humiliated and marginalised before...independence.'[76] Another strategy to appease the chiefs was to amend aspects of the RDC Act in 1998. Part VII of the amended act placed residents of resettlement land under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders.[77] This was aimed at reducing social and political instability. In line with this aim, Mayo resettlement area was placed under Chief Makoni. As Gara put it in 1998, 'the jurisdiction of the chief next to that resettlement area of authority will be extended to administer the resettlement area…so that those people are answerable to the chief adjacent to the resettlement.'[78] Chiefs were also tasked with identifying those in need of land. However, the compiled list was still passed on to the RDC for final consideration. Chiefs were also empowered to issue out birth certificates and settlement permits to those who would have been approved for settlement by the RDC. However to claim that the TLA intended 'to give back to chiefs the power to allocate land [and that]...chiefs became very important in administering rural areas' is an exaggeration.[79] It is surprising that Chief Naboth Makoni is said to have welcomed the TLA, regarding it as 'long overdue, especially as it restored the dignity of chiefs.'[80] In 2000 land allocation powers were placed in the hands of Makoni District Land Committee which was headed by the DA. Chiefs were sometimes consulted only if the lands involved were considered sacred or contained graves.[81]

The re-engagement of chiefs by the government was partly a survival strategy meant to control and manage political tensions provoked by landless Zimbabweans. While the government had resettled thousands of families by the mid-1990s, many Zimbabweans were still landless. They blamed the government for either ignoring them or taking too long to give them land. Government became more unsettled when chiefs championed the cause of land-hungry people. The most prominent case was that of Chief Svosve's 1998 land invasions. He led hundreds of people to reclaim commercial farms on adjacent areas they claimed were lost

[76] ZANU PF, *The people's manifesto: The Third Chimurenga: Land for economic empowerment*, Harare, 2001, p. 48.
[77] *RDC Act*, 1998.
[78] *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 October, 1998, col. 1314, Gara.
[79] Dande, 'Changing oral memory', pp. 49-50.
[80] Cited in Karumbidza, 'Fragile and unsustained miracle', p. 206.
[81] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.

to colonialism.[82] While chiefs sought to give land to their people, they made populist pronouncements designed to further their own ambitions. They took advantage of discontented constituencies to regain the long lost economic, patriarchal, political and administrative advantages. Makoni District chiefs, particularly Chief Makoni, actively encouraged people to claim land for resettlement on adjacent commercial farms such as Mayo and Romsley. Of course, the rhetoric of chiefs and other traditional leaders was fundamentally self-interested. According to Maxwell, these local strategies threatened both councils and government.[83] It was ZANU PF's fear that land hungry people would coalesce around chiefs and make them uncontrollably powerful. The thought of a possibility of a chiefs-opposition alliance around the land question forced the government to act. The Makoni RDC's reaction was to encourage government to arrest 'lawless' chiefs. However, for a government that did not want to alienate both chiefs and the landless thousands, it had to pre-empt any opposition plans for an alliance with chiefs. The government seemingly began to support the calls for land reform.

The need to co-opt chiefs was made more urgent by the realisation that civil society coalitions had begun to discuss on many aspects of social reform. Civil society in Zimbabwe tends to seize on public discontent and transform it into a political endeavour, usually that which demands the removal of the government. Organizations such as the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) supported discourses urging people to reclaim the land. In 2002, ISO Zimbabwe chapter leader, Munyaradzi Gwisai, said:

> If you look at what has happened in the world, what is clear is that when land is taken from people, it is not a tea party. Thousands of our people were killed and massacred by the colonialists in order for them to get the land. Tens and thousands of people were murdered, were robbed and were raped in the 1890s.[84]

Electoral and political insecurities mounted by the day. ZANU PF was keen that this politically and historically sensitive subject stayed within the party. In response, government promised to expedite land resettlement processes that allowed for the participation of chiefs. As Eric

[82] *The Sunday Mail*, 21 June, 1998; *The Herald*, 29 June, 1998.
[83] Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 174.
[84] T. Chari, 'Media framing of Land Reform in Zimbabwe', in S. Moyo and W. Chambati (eds.), *Agrarian reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond white-settler capitalism*, Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2013, p. 308.

Cabaye wrote in the case of Cameroon, those in control of land and land processes also controlled politics and the political thought of those tied to it.[85] Leaving the issue of land entirely in chiefs' hands would make them a strong competitor of the government. Historically, villagers are bound to chiefs mainly by ties to land. The respect they give chiefs is usually defined in terms of the fear of losing access to land sources.[86] Thus, from 1987 to 1999, the government strove to find a balance on chiefs' involvement in land issues. Totally leaving chiefs out could have exposed them to opposition politics. Yet it was also politically risky to give them exclusive powers over land. It is in this context that government pre-emptied Makoni chiefs' attempts at mobilising villagers around the land issue.

The impact of national political developments

At different moments since taking over the reins of power from the colonial government, ZANU PF's rule was challenged by various political and social institutions. For instance, from 1980 to the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987, ZAPU caused the government anxiety. It continued to be an electoral threat as evidenced by both the 1980 and 1985 elections. Both elections showed that the party's electoral stronghold was in Matabeleland provinces, added to other support scattered in many parts of the country.[87] It is, therefore, not surprising that the first statements setting the stage for the future restructuring of chiefs-government relations were made by President Mugabe during the 1985 election campaign.[88] These were the early signs of the future establishment of an alliance that would counteract such political parties in the rural areas.

There were many other constituencies that operated outside ZANU PF politics. Many of them felt excluded from the post-independence state-building project. Added to chiefs were war veterans, liberation war political detainees, liberation war collaborators, land-hungry

[85] E. Cabaye, *Land use in Eastern Cameroon*, Yaounde: Institute of Natural Resource Policy, 1999, p. 11.
[86] In Makoni District, many respondents said they believed chiefs are central to land allocation and that they control access to related resources.
[87] Sithole and Makumbe, 'Elections in Zimbabwe', pp. 126-7.
[88] J. Alexander, 'State, peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy,* Vol. 21, No. 61, 1994, p. 197.

peasants.[89] There was a desire for recognition and power in the case of chiefs, demands for liberation war gratuities, pensions and compensations in the case of liberation war actors and the delivery of land promises for land hungry peasants. There were chances that these disgruntled constituencies would join opposition parties, or even form their own opposition. Of these groups, chiefs were politically some of the most important. They were respected in the villages and still possessed their age-old mobilising influence. Winning the support of all the chiefs became more urgent for ZANU PF if one considers that historically, virtually, all Matabeleland chiefs supported ZAPU.[90] Some outside of Matabeleland regions also harboured anti-ZANU PF tendencies, and some did not publicly display their loyalties. They could move to any other party. For ZANU PF, winning over chiefs became an important goal.

The signing of the Unity Accord between ZANU PF and ZAPU in 1987 was an important political development. It removed in the path of ZANU PF one of its major challenges.[91] After the ZAPU problem was solved, there arose other political parties challenging Mugabe's rule. The most prominent was Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), led by Former ZANU PF Minister Edgar Tekere.[92] Formed in 1989, it presented ZAPU PF with an electoral threat in the 1990 elections. It was mainly motivated by the contracting democratic space. ZUM mobilised students, labour and human rights organizations to campaign against ZANU PF's 'one-party state' idea.[93] So intense was the campaign that the government was forced to discontinue it. This development served to remind ZANU PF of the opposition's potential. To starve opposition parties of organised support, government courted such discontented social groups. These included chiefs. The government's response was not misplaced. Some opposition parties did indeed interact with chiefs. In some instances, the concerns and aspirations of chiefs and opposition parties converged. For example, in 1989 Tekere bemoaned that the question of chiefs' powers 'has been an area of disappointment for our traditional leaders.'[94] ZUM

[89] N. Kriger, 'ZANU PF strategies in general elections, 1980–2000: Discourse and coercion', *African Affairs,* Vol. 104, No. 414, 2005, pp. 1–34, for instance, gives attention to the evolvement of war veterans from being adversaries of the government to being its reliable electoral partner.
[90] E. Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: Transformations in Kalanga and Ndebele societies*, *1860-1990*, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2012, p. 201.
[91] S. Sibanda, 'The quest for unity, peace and stability in Zimbabwe', in D. Kaulemu (ed.), *The struggles after the struggle: Zimbabwean philosophical study, 1*, Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008, p. 56.
[92] For ZUM politics see Kriger, 'ZANU PF strategies in general elections, 1980–2000', pp. 13-20.
[93] *Ibid*, p., 14.
[94] *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 July, 1989, col. 119, Edgar Tekere.

believed that chiefs deserved more involvement in land processes. Its 1989 manifesto asserted that 'chiefs can and must contribute...to the running of our country.'[95] It promised 'to restore and secure the role and dignity of the chiefs in the running of our country and as custodians of our culture and traditions.'[96]

Tekere's 1992 tour of Mhondoro and some Manicaland districts was specifically meant to create or strengthen rapport between ZUM and chiefs. That Manicaland was Tekere's home province and ZUM's powerbase was enough to further unsettle ZANU PF.[97] However, judging by the 1990 general election results, ZUM was not successful in penetrating Makoni District as it scored only 18 per cent of the national vote.[98] ZANU PF's fear of a possible chiefs-opposition alliance was supported by the fact that other chiefs were linked to opposition parties. Earlier, in 1985, Chief Mugabe of Masvingo District was linked to the UANC.[99] In 1991 Mutoko Districts' Chief Mutoko was linked to the Zimbabwe Democratic Party.[100] Chief Maduna Mafu of Insiza District was forced to publicly declare his allegiance to ZANU PF after being accused of being a member of the Forum Party. He pleaded: 'I have never been a member of Forum Party and I do not know who these people are…I do not know what these people wanted to achieve by including my name on their proposed executive.'[101] Such developments unsettled ZANU PF. Increasingly unpopular in the urban areas, the party ill-afforded to lose the rural areas.

The change in relations can also be analysed in the context of economic challenges that emerged soon after independence and deepened as time went by. As the economy contracted, the party's support base shrunk. The economy was characterised by increased job cuts, inflationary pressures and company closures, among other indicators.[102] It is in response to the declining economy that from the late 1980s, some adults began to talk nostalgically about '*Makore a*Smith – the years of Smith – when money had value and a

[95] ZUM, *The Manifesto: Towards a democratic Zimbabwe,* Gweru, 1989, p. 7.
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] S. Chan, *Robert Mugabe: A life of power and violence*, New York, Michigan University Press, 2003, p. 44.
[98] *Ibid*.
[99] *The Herald*, 2 June, 1985.
[100] *Ibid*, 28 June, 1991.
[101] *Ibid,* 17 April, 1993.
[102] C. Sylvester, *Zimbabwe: The terrain of contradictory development*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991 gives a more nuanced analysis of Zimbabwe's political economy in the first decade of independence.

secondary-school education would almost certainly lead to employment.'[103] Government's adoption of the Bretton Woods-prescribed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991 significantly reveals the depth of the economic crisis.[104] The concept was predicated on more government saving and less spending. It entailed cutbacks in public expenditure and the withdrawal of social subsidies. The most visible impact of ESAP to the general public in the 1990s was job cuts, increased cost of living and reduced funding of social services. Nazneen Kanji provides statistics to the effect that 60 000 workers were retrenched by the end of 1993. The cost of living for low income families increased by 45 percent between mid-1991 and 1992. In January 1992 primary school fees were introduced and secondary school fees in urban areas were raised. [105] Such factors increased poverty levels.

The harsh economic climate provoked political disaffection. Adebayo Olukoshi finds a strong link between economic crises and the popularity of opposition politics. He notes that it is usually under such situations that opposition political parties thrive electorally.[106] Without a positive economy to endorse its stay in power, ZANU PF suffered a crisis of legitimacy. The connection between economic crises, chiefs and government intensified as the 1990s decade went by. As discontented voices grew in strength, they provoked government into systematic human rights abuses as it sought to frustrate opposition forces. This further re-invigorated the civil society.

Another connection between the economic crises and the diminished popularity of ZANU PF came in the late 1990s. In 1998, Harare and some key towns were affected by food riots and related job 'stay aways'. These were protests against sharp increases in the price of basic commodities which merged with workers' calls for increased wages. They later developed a political dimension. Indeed, in 1998 a suspicious ZANU PF politician, T. Mberi expressed his concerns in parliament about the political implications of such riots and strikes. He asked the

[103] Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 178.
[104] For a more nuanced analysis of the impact of ESAP in Zimbabwe see A. Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: The case of Zimbabwe, 1990-1995*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1997.
[105] N. Kanji, 'Gender, poverty and economic adjustment in Harare, Zimbabwe', *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1995, p. 39.
[106] A. O. Olukoshi, 'Economic crises, multipartyism and opposition politics', in A. O. Olukoshi (ed.), *The politics of opposition in contemporary Africa*, Upsalla, Nordiska afrikainstitutet, 1998, p. 55.

Minister of Home Affairs: 'What does the rioting mean politically. What do you consider to be the political effects'?[107] The political connection was made by the militant ISO slogan 'Smash ESAP, Smash ZANU PF' and '*Shinga Mushandi Shinga*! (Workers fight on)'.[108] Its pamphlets described the developments as a struggle 'against poverty, ZANU PF lies and…the land issue.'[109] The 1990s, described by Joseph Sutcliffe as 'a decade of activism', highlighted developments that alerted ZANU PF to its growing unpopularity in the urban areas.[110]

The growing strength of voices critical of the government culminated in the establishment of a powerful opposition party, the MDC. Formed in 1999, the party instantly dominated urban politics and enjoyed some rural support. It successfully persuaded the electorate to reject the government-sponsored constitution in the 2000 plebiscite. In Makoni District's three constituencies, the rejection rate was almost 50 per cent.[111] Barely less than a year after its formation, the MDC won 57 of the 120 parliamentary seats in the 2000 election.[112] It almost claimed all urban seats. In light of all these urban-based developments, ZANU PF became more determined to protect rural areas and what a better way to do this than by using the chiefs? As van Kessel and Oomen have noted of many African governments, they tend to turn to chiefs in order to deal with political and electoral shocks.[113] The developments in the urban areas greatly influenced ZANU PF's reaction in the rural areas, and to chiefs in particular, as the last chapter will show.

The secondary use of chiefs

Although politics was of paramount importance in the government's need for chiefs, other factors came into play. It is chiefs' historically and culturally acknowledged concern for law, order and stability that prompted various government ministries to reconsider their administrative, social control and developmental value. The various ministries included those

[107] *Parliamentary Debates*, 3 February, 1998, col. 2920, T. Mberi.
[108] International Socialist Organisation, *Flyer*, undated, National Constitutional Assembly Resource Centre, Harare.
[109] International Socialist Organisation and ZCTU, *Poster*, undated, National Constitutional Assembly Resource Centre, Harare.
[110] J. Sutcliffe ''Shinga Mushandi Shinga! Qina Msebenzi Qina!' (Workers be Resolute! Fight On!): The labour movement in Zimbabwe'', *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, Vol. 8, Winter, 2012/13, p. 9.
[111] www.electoralgeography.com: accessed 22 August, 2015.
[112] Kriger, 'ZANU PF strategies in general elections, 1980–2000', p. 26.
[113] van Kessel and Oomen, 'One chief, one vote', p. 561.

that dealt with culture, environment, mining and state security. To the Ministry of Home Affairs, chiefs enhanced the security of the country. In 1987 Chief Ndiweni of Umguza District in Matabeleland South had put forward the security argument in the wake of the 1980s Matabeleland dissident crisis. He reasoned that 'there would be no prospects for peace until chiefs were involved in such efforts at ending this crisis.'[114] Makoni's Chief Chiduku concurred, saying the argument still holds up to this day. He said:

> If there is an enemy in the area it is the role of the chief to report the matter to the government of the day. [But] how can we report this enemy to the police if there is no good rapport between the government and the chiefs. It is important that the government work closely with chiefs.[115]

Minister of Home Affairs, Enos Nkala, conceded in 1987 that 'Chiefs [are] the eyes and the ears of the government.'[116] The idea was not difficult to consider as lessons from history had shown how the Ian Smith government used chiefs as its 'eyes and ears' during the liberation war.

Even councils, despite their avowed disdain for chiefs, sometimes considered tapping into chiefs' influence. They often struggled against villagers in the implementation of policies and plans. This was especially the case in the collection of various levies. Although they were reluctant to admit it openly, the Makoni RDC conceded in 1993 that the success rate of levy-collection mechanisms was 'rather disappointing' and suggested that chiefs and headmen be mandated with ensuring that their villagers fully complied with payment.[117] This was not unfamiliar territory for the chiefs as 'This provision used to be there during the colonial days. The chiefs collected revenue for the council and even for the government.'[118] Former Mayo councillor remembered how villages began to hate councillors and resettlement officers for compelling them to pay levies. Sometimes villagers across the district refused to pay livestock dipping fees, cattle permits and various other development levies. He said, 'Often times our financial coffers were depleted because villagers simply refused to pay. Sometimes they threatened violence. Sometimes they threatened to stop supporting ZANU PF.'[119] Such

[114] *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September, 1987, col. 569, Chief Ndiweni.
[115] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 23 September, 2014.
[116] *The Herald*, 16 September, 1987.
[117] Makoni District Council minutes, quoted in Dande, 'Changing oral memory', p. 50.
[118] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 22 July, 2014.
[119] Interview, anonymous former Mayo Resettlement Scheme councillor, 19 February, 2015.

challenges implored the government to begin to seriously consider chiefs as an administrative and political ally.

Environmental conservation was one area in which the post-colonial government would benefit from the services of chiefs. As already noted, before independence Makoni chiefs were involved in environmental conservation activities. Chiefs also reminded the government that they were crucial in conservation matters. In 1987 Chief Mangwende said: 'Some young men think the chief is not capable to do anything…Look at the environment, the trees, the deserts, and siltation. [It is because] we have been sidelined.'[120] Despite this diagnosis, the government distrusted chiefs and was reluctant to 'environmentally' empower them. Dispirited chiefs responded by staying out of environmental matters. The result, as exemplified by the case of Mayo, was accelerated environmental degradation. Ranger noted that when councillors tried to intervene in the early days of the establishment of the resettlement area, they were ignored or threatened by villagers expressing their new found independence in exploiting resources.[121] His account is corroborated by a former Mayo councillor:

> The councillors were not effective because chiefs were not in good terms with us. Also, the government was afraid of using a heavy hand against the villagers for fear of losing political support. To villagers, independence meant doing as they pleased with the land, the trees and the rivers.[122]

As earlier noted by Ranger, restricted areas, including grazing areas and river banks, were ploughed and trees were indiscriminately cut down.[123] According to Chief Chipunza, areas like Bingaguru, Bamba and Nyahawa suffered extreme deforestation in the 1980s because of the exclusion of chiefs in active environmental protection. He also cited rivers like Bonda, Chikobvore and Magokwa as exposed to intense siltation as villagers continued with streambank cultivation and overgrazing in the presence of powerless chiefs.[124]

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[120] *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September, 1987, col. 565, Chief Mangwende.
[121] Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*, p. 311.
[122] Interview with anonymous former Makoni Rural District Council member, 2 March, 2015.
[123] Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*, p. 311.
[124] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.

The government responded through the 1995 Chiefs and Headmen (Amendment) Bill which apportioned chiefs some environmental roles, such as reporting culprits to the police and other relevant authorities. However, it still did not effectively empower them. Only in 1998, with the passing of the TLA were chiefs' environmental roles enhanced. The act appointed chiefs as co-guardians of the environment, together with councillors. This was a response to increased pressure from environmental stakeholders. In March 2000, Gara explained that 'The problem of land degradation, siltation of rivers and deforestation can only be solved by this advanced role [of chiefs] in environmental matters.'[125] On the same date, DA Makoni also hailed chiefs' environmental role, saying 'their eventual inclusion was because if anything happened at a village level, it does not take time for the chief to know what has happened down the line. That is why we felt we must include this as one of the functions of a chief.'[126] This contrasted with earlier anti-chiefs attitudes by councillors and DAs. The ceding of certain environmental responsibilities to chiefs presented double advantage. While it helped to improve on environmental protection, it also drew chiefs closer to the government and, ultimately, to the party.

The quest for social stability in the rural areas also contributed to government's realignment of its relations with chiefs. It was sometimes argued that social stability was disrupted by the withdrawal of chiefs' powers. Child and adult delinquency, divorce rates, stock theft and incest were said to be increasing and a sign of weakened chiefly rule.[127] In light of these problems, the deputy Minister of Local Government admitted that:

> The government has now realized that it was a mistake to take away some of the powers of chiefs…we have watched the general decay of traditional society over time and we have come to the realization that the loss of cultural identity of our people, the absence of Africanness among our younger generation is partly traceable to our downgrading of traditional leadership structures at independence.[128]

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[125] Speech by Deputy Minister for Local Government, Rural and Urban Planning, Tony Gara, on the official installation of Rivai Mbaimbai as Chief Chiduku, 22 March, 2000, (uncatalogued, Makoni DA file).

[126] Speech by DA Makoni, on the official installation of Rivai Mbaimbai as Chief Chiduku, 22 March, 2000, (uncatalogued, Makoni DA file).

[127] Although evidence is rather anecdotal, the general impression gleaned from interviews with Makoni chiefs and from parliamentary debates and newspapers show that chiefs and some government officials believed that there was an increase in such social ills. However, Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe*, p. 147, alludes to the debates about social restructuring that arose in colonial Zimbabwe's reserves when chiefly authority was undermined.

[128] *The Herald*, 19 August, 1995.

However, by the end of the 1990s, chiefs had not been effectively empowered. The powers they got were still marginal. They were overshadowed by councillors and magistrates. As the Deputy Minister of Local Government conceded in 1998:

> Today's chief is a mere figurehead who has no real leadership responsibilities and powers…he has been sidelined to watch processes of government from afar while society under him falls apart. The ordinary person is left with no focal point of loyalty, obedience and protection.[129]

It was seen as necessary to restore authority to traditional leaders 'in order to avert what may lead to a complete breakdown of law and order in the rural countryside.'[130]

Chiefs had earlier warned the government of political consequences that would befall it if it did not allow them more powers to arrest social dislocation. They argued that the government alienated itself from the people because:

> If the people ask us why there is no rain, why cattle are dying of various diseases, we tell them the problem is with the government. They have disregarded the chiefs and the ancestors are angry. Most chiefs are not hearing cases, the task has been moved to party functionaries. Their authority has been taken and people are beginning not to recognize them.[131]

Chief Chiduku also linked the various social ills that affected his area to chiefs' diminished administrative roles. He said during the period his area was characterised by increased stocktheft, HIV infections, alcoholism and domestic violence.[132] As social mobilisers, peacekeepers and discipline minders, chiefs believed that they were better-placed to control the situation. Chiefs were also averse to some of the modernist statutory developments that affected their patriarchal agendas. For instance, they were generally averse to the legal reduction of the age of majority and the setting of equal rights between husband and wife. They perceived these as attacks on patriarchy and, by extension, chieftaincy.[133]

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[129] *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 October, 1998, col. 914, Gara.
[130] *Ibid.*
[131] Quoted in Maxwel, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 181.
[132] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 22 July, 2014.
[133] The Legal Age of Majority Act (1982) reduced the Legal Age of Majority from 21 to 18 years. The Matrimonial Causes Act (1985) resulted in the further emancipation of Zimbabwean women. For instance, the provision for inheritance were revised to allow for 50 per cent entitlement to a deceased husband's estate-by the surviving spouse.

With political challenges in the urban areas threatening the party, there was a risk of them spreading into rural areas. To a significant degree, government's reaction in rural areas was greatly influenced by political developments in urban areas. Eric Makombe's study of the interactions between urban and rural societies in Zimbabwe acknowledges the fluidity of information and ideas from urban areas to rural areas and how the flow helped reengineer some aspects of the rural social structure. The government was not oblivious of such processes, and how, if ignored, they would upset the political stability of the villages.[134] Cognisant of this factor, the government sought to enlist chiefs so that they would help in the making of 'disciplined' villagers and to avert the growth of anti-government political thought. Writing on Zambia, Wim van Binsbergen found a link between social stability and political ideology, positing that chiefs still represented 'an indispensable part of the ideology that defines social order, legitimacy and power…not just by reference to a distant past, but also to values, norms, procedures and cultural forms that are still very much alive.'[135] As regards Makoni District, Chief Chipunza believed that:

> Chiefs need to play a direct role in the preservation of the family as well as encourage the maintenance of useful traditional customs, control the use of land and natural resources and generally to maintain law and order in the society. If nothing is done about it our people will not understand us and there will be chaos which will not spare even the politicians.[136]

The idea was that social discipline brought with it political discipline. With four chiefs and over 20 headmen in Makoni District, such numbers would exert a tremendous force on communal political thinking. The need for social stability by the government was increasingly appreciated as the political challenges intensified. The Minister of Local Government revealed the connection:

> The stability of the state cannot be assured unless the elective governance structures that govern people at the local level are made to pay due respect to the traditions and institutions that distinguish us as Africans and have bound local communities together since time immemorial….The people are demanding a leadership that attracts their traditional respect, not one that demands respect with no corresponding positive return for society. Respect has to be earned…We must therefore acknowledge the

[134] E. Makombe, 'A social history of town and country interactions: A study of the changing social life and practices of rural urban migrants in colonial Harare and Goromonzi (1946-79)', PhD, University of the Witwatersrand, 2013.
[135] W. van Binsbergen, 'Chiefs in independent Zambia: Exploring the Zambian national press', *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, No. 25, 1987, p. 14.
[136] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.

> existence of traditional institutions which still attract the respect of our rural people....[137]

The chiefs were important once again. In order to reverse that, the chiefs had to be made to feel important again. However, it should be acknowledged that despite identifying such use value for chiefs, the government was still reluctant to effectively empower them.

Convenient delays in chiefs' empowerment

Despite public pronouncements and policy and legal changes, the position of chiefs as regards their powers remained fundamentally unchanged by 1999. The various overtures made to chiefs were, in borrowed parlance, 'winds of small change'. ZANU PF perpetuated the myth that it had restored chiefs' powers. At times it even denied having stripped chiefs of such. This feeds into the argument of the thesis that government's policy regarding chiefs between 1987 and 1999 was inconsistent. In 1987, Mugabe insisted that 'far from working to erode the functions of the chiefs, we have enhanced their functions after independence.'[138] For instance, it celebrated the Customary Law and Local Courts Bill as a sign of the respect it accorded chiefs. The government claimed that 'any legal system that leaves out our traditional chiefs will lack the authenticity which has always been recognized by the involvement of our traditional chiefs in the legal system.'[139] Yet chiefs still complained that they did not see the powers brought about by new and amended legislations.

In 1992 Chief Chiduku saw through the charade and told a District Development Committee meeting that:

> We are told merely that the chiefs would have their former powers restored. We are told that powers are being restored to the chiefs but we do not see where these powers are. Although they persist in saying that the powers are there but we the chiefs who are supposed to exercise these powers do not see them.[140]

Little changed in the ensuing years. As late as 1998, chiefs and headmen remained excluded from land processes and had very limited judicial roles. This chiefs' status potentially

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[137] *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 October, 1998, col. 921, John Nkomo.
[138] *The Herald*, 11 February, 1987.
[139] *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August, 1989, col. 144, Tranos Makombe, Midlands Governor.
[140] Speech by Chief Chiduku on the occasion of the World Environment Day, 5 June, 1992, p. 2, (uncatalogued Makoni DA file).

contained seeds for political reaction. As opposition parliamentarian Margaret Dongo observed, this failure by the government to honour the promises it made to chiefs promoted anti-government sentiment among the chiefs. According to Dongo, 'It is not surprising to hear chiefs saying that Smith was better….It is because of the problems that they are facing.'[141] As shown earlier in the chapter, it was not uncommon for post-1980 chiefs to nostalgically reminisce about aspects of the colonial past. This was the case with Makoni District chiefs. They lamented their being restricted to ritual functions and the government's typical response of unfulfilled promises.[142] Rural governance issues continued to be the exclusive domain of councillors, DAs, Land Committees and magistrates.

Government's reluctance to effectively implement change was further highlighted by delays in formulating and enacting promised legislation meant to empower chiefs. It took a frustratingly long time for Bills to be brought to parliament, debated, passed and signed into law. When Mugabe promised chiefs new legislation in 1985, it took five years for the Customary Law and Primary Courts Act (1981) to be repealed and the Customary Law and Local Courts Bill (1990) to be passed. It took another two years to receive presidential assent. Chief Rusambo was concerned that:

> The President mentioned that there is going to be a bill on chiefs that will reintroduce their powers. But there is a question mark as to when that is going to be…The chiefs are now anxious to see that this becomes a reality, the pipeline seems to have got longer and longer.[143]

Experience led them to believe that they could wait for an even longer period. When the Bill was adopted by parliament in 1990, it was not immediately signed into law. Frustrated, chiefs responded by unilaterally and illegally assuming judicial functions. The government threatened prosecution but the impatient chiefs protested, insisting that the blame was not with them but government. Said Chief Mangwende in 1991:

> Last year a bill was passed which enabled the chiefs to get back their powers, but up to now it is still in the pipeline. I do not know what is happening to this bill. When shall we get back our powers…Right now some chiefs are already practicing these powers, but if caught practicing before

[141] *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 May, 1998, col. 4747, Margaret Dongo.
[142] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 22 July, 2014.
[143] *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August, 1989, col. 151, Chief Rusambo.

> the powers are warranted, they will be sued. What was the purpose of passing this bill if it does not become law as soon as possible? [144]

In Makoni District, Chief Chipunza was threatened with prosecution in 1992 for illegally allocating land to villagers upon payment of a land allocation fee. He was threatened with fraud charges, defeating government directives and frustrating municipal processes.[145]

Legislative delays and consequent chiefs' frustrations can also be captured in the context of the Chiefs and Headmen (Amendment) Bill. It was introduced in 1992 in order to enhance chiefs' powers. However, it was only adopted by parliament in 1995. It was never signed into law as it was overtaken by the Traditional Leaders Bill (1998). In 1998, Moses Mvenge expressed the feeling of those frustrated by the delays:

> Up to this day in 1998 it [Chiefs and headmen Act] has not seen the light of day. There are so many of them. I do not want to say this is criminal, it is unparliamentarily. But I think Ministers should not put the president in a position he tells something to the nation and the nation has got hope that something is going to happen and it takes five years before that can take place…this is really ridiculous when we get bills that were supposed to be debated in 1995, in 1998 they are still outstanding, and the president puts them on his speech year in year out.[146]

The government sustained its relations with chiefs by conveniently extending the period required to implement change. It strove to keep them to the party without giving them more than the barest powers and responsibilities.

These processes of simultaneous accommodation and rejection of chiefs can also be viewed in the context of the extent to which the government took care of their welfare. Parallels can be drawn with the colonial era. As the case of colonial Makoni District revealed, for a long time, colonial governments were not concerned with the financial or material comfort of chiefs. However, with the rise of nationalism, it allowed chiefs enhanced access to state resources so as to turn them into their supporters. From the 1980s and 1990s, ZANU PF was not ready to financially or materially invest in chiefs. The party was still electorally strong. It did well in the 1980, 1985 and 1990 general elections, both nationally and in Makoni District,

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[144] *Ibid*, 5 July, 1991, col. 755, Chief Mangwende.
[145] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[146] *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 July, 1998, col. 60, Moses Mvenge.

without systematic support of chiefs.[147] Therefore, it kept chiefs' allowances to a minimum. In 1986 chiefs were getting $300. From 1986 to 1989 it was only increased by $100. Another round of increase was way into the 1990s. The allowances were too small for a government that wanted to ensure chiefs' political support.[148]

In 1991 Chief Nyangazonke of Matobo District, in Matebeleland South, put the issue to light when he said, in apparent comparison with the colonial period:

> Today's chiefs are totally forgotten….There is no money for chiefs. Isn't that a disgrace? I am trying to remind them that they have forgotten about the chief. Just look at the state of your chiefs and look where they are placed….Let us try to be proud of our chiefs.[149]

Eighteen years after independence chiefs were still complaining about their inadequate monthly stipends. In 1998 Chief Makoni urged the government to review their allowance of $1000: 'How do you develop such an important institution by neglecting it?' he asked the government.[150] The Makoni District situation paralleled that of Chief Matura who revealed that:

> People believe that a chief has a lot of money. I will give you the correct situation. Up to now I have been 13 years as a chief but the money that I received does not exceed $1000…people should realise that [we] are chiefs by name…If you go to where a chief sleeps in the rural areas, you will be shocked. I appeal to you legislators that when the chiefs' bill comes before the house, you must look into the matter of the chiefs' salaries…You must remember that the chiefs have nothing in terms of salaries.[151]

The government contained chiefs with promises. At a 1995 campaign rally in Gwanda, Mugabe promised to respond to chiefs' pleas for transport, improved access to water and deplorable housing. He said 'It is terrible in my own view to expect chiefs to use their own cars, own fuel, hitch-hike. It is undignified. We are going to improve that.'[152] He also promised to improve chiefs' allowances from $630 to $5000 per month. However, very little had changed by 1998. It is only in 1999 that the government reminded itself that for a political institution to function effectively there should be a system of rewarding the stakeholders

[147] Sithole and Makumbe, 'Elections in Zimbabwe', pp. 125-129.
[148] N. Kriger, 'Struggles for independence', p. 479.
[149] *The Herald*, 3 April, 1991.
[150] *Parliamentary Debates,* 19 March, 1998, col. 4304, Chief Makoni.
[151] *Ibid*, col. 4308, Chief Matura.
[152] *The Herald*, 31 March, 1995.

involved.[153] The first major allowance increment was only approved in 1999 and effected in January 2000.

The sudden allowance increase was a political response to the emergence of the MDC and ZANU PF's challenges at maintaining its support base. According to Alexander, though less visible in the short term, the party was declining at a local level.[154] The turnout for local rallies steadily decreased, election victory margins declined, and the dynamism which characterised local politics in the early 1980s slowly vanished. A combination of the dying independence euphoria, the strengthening and rise of other parties, and the disenchantment of the people by lack of access to economic opportunities, affected the party's support base. Nationally, the co-option of chiefs became important because of their significant local following. Some people were not oblivious to ZANU PF's plot to use chiefs. For instance, Lazarus Nzarayebani queried ZANU PF's new obsession with chiefs. He said: 'I am not quite sure what precisely the motive behind this drastic change is…and some of us are confused. We seem to be moving left, right and centre.'[155] However, the government responded that the new interests was nothing more than being 'responsive to the submissions of the people.'[156] Different and fresh strategies were required to survive the challenges. As the Minister of Local government observed, 'a revolution requires replenishment and strategic management in order for it to survive. So it is with our revolution.'[157] Dominant in rural politics, the chiefs were redirected to exert the will of the government on the people, much akin to Mamdani's 'decentralized despotism.'[158]

The affirmation of the continuing role of chiefs raises an important point. Why was it easy for the government to co-opt a people they barely a few years before discredited as collaborators and an affront to development? The answer has roots in Rhodesian policies. As Hadzoi concludes, the renewed interest in chiefs was an adaptation of the colonial government's

[153] Hadzoi, 'Continuity and change', p. 59.
[154] Cited in Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, pp. 183-4.
[155] *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 January, 1990, col. 2758, Lazarus Nzarayebani.
[156] *Ibid,* 18 January, 1990, col. 2756, Minister of Justice.
[157] *Ibid*, 13 October, 1998, col. 941, Minister of Local Government.
[158] Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 109-137.

relations with chiefs.[159] Chiefs must also be allowed agency. They also demanded reincorporation into government structures. As evidenced throughout this chapter, they explicitly appealed to government for protection against, for instance, their own subjects and councillors. It is in this respect that van Binsbergen asks in the case of Zambia: 'Are chiefs penetrating the Zambian state, or alternatively is the state seeking to capture the chiefs' ideological and political support in order to reach down to the rural masses?'[160] In the case of Makoni District, it was both ways. Both chiefs and government sought each other but only in order to give advantage to their respective interests.

Conclusion

The chapter has made three important points. Firstly, it has argued that political considerations were a major factor that influenced the rise of new forms of interaction between chiefs and government towards the end of the 1980s. It has shown how various sections of the Zimbabwean society put pressure on the government in response to their frustration with political and social exclusion, economic marginalisation and contracting democratic space. This was particularly the case in the urban areas. This provoked the government's enlisting of the chiefs to help protect its political interests in rural areas in the face of opposition groups. Secondly, the chapter has proved that despite the realisation of the importance of chiefs, the government never really gave them any significant powers. Despite the change in relations in 1987 and its portrayal as the beginning of the period of change, little had changed in terms of chiefs' position by 1999. Chiefs remained powerless and marginalised in the important domains of land and judicial affairs. The third important point is that despite the refusal to give chiefs back their powers, the government managed to win most of them to its side. The government tried hard to balance the co-option of chiefs as a political ally and its rejection of their demands. It is remarkable that it managed to sustain the relationship for such a long time. The chapter has also shown that it is mostly developments in the urban areas that influenced the change of approach to rural politics in general and to chiefs in particular. The broader point to make is that little change was witnessed in the supposed era of change.

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[159] L. Hadzoi, 'Continuity and change in the powers of chiefs, c. 1951-2000: A case study of Gutu District', BA, University of Zimbabwe, 2003, p. 8.
[160] van Binsbergen, 'Chiefs in independent Zambia', p. 191.

Chapter four

Rediscovering chiefs: ZANU PF government and chiefs since 2000

Introduction

The end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s coincided with remarkable and sudden change in chiefs–government relations. The change hinged on major political and electoral developments which were characterised by the rise and intensification of anti-government sentiment throughout the country. This anti-government movement was epitomised by the formation of the MDC at the end of 1999. The party enjoyed immense nation-wide support from its inception and presented ZANU PF with its first major political threat since 1980. However, it was strongest in urban areas.[1] Many people were attracted by its predominantly pro-worker discourse. In the two elections following its formation, the MDC performed extremely well. It was instantly popular that it successfully campaigned for a 'No' vote in the constitutional referendum of February 2000 against ZANU PF's wish for a 'Yes' vote.[2] It inflicted on ZANU PF its first major electoral defeat since independence. In June of the same year, less than a year after its formation, the MDC won almost half of the 120 contested parliamentary seats. Two years later, in the presidential elections, it scored 42 per cent of the vote, an unprecedented performance by opposition politics since 1980.[3]

As will be shown as the discussion unfolds, the MDC's electoral strength unsettled the ruling party and prompted it to reconfigure its political strategy. Part of the new strategy was to enlist the services of many government and quasi-government institutions to reinforce its weak status. Such institutions as the police, the army, war veterans and youth militia, among others, were adopted as active components of ZANU PF's political structure. As the first two post-2000 elections had shown, ZANU PF had lost much of its urban support to the MDC. It could not afford to allow the MDC to establish another stronghold in the rural areas if it was to maintain its hegemony. To reverse or stall the MDC's advance in rural areas, ZANU PF added chiefs to this set of political auxiliaries. From their total exclusion in the early 1980s, to

[1] Human Rights Watch, *Neighbours in need: Zimbabweans seeking refuge in South Africa*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008, p. 46.
[2] B. Raftopoulos and I. Phimister, 'Zimbabwe now: The political economy of crisis and coercion', *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2004, p. 364.
[3] *The Guardian*, 14 March, 2002.

partial incorporation from the late 1980s to the late 1990s, chiefs were effectively co-opted into ruling party structures after 2000. The amicable relationship which the government had begun to establish from 1987, was buttressed in the post-2000 era as chiefs became even more politically significant for the ruling party. So powerful was the electoral factor in the politics of chiefs–government relations that it overshadowed other issues that had defined such interactions since 1980. These include chiefs' quest for the return of their judicial and land powers. Barely, did these issues arise after 2000.

The chapter explains the rise of a more overt and comprehensive political alliance between chiefs and government since 2000. Focusing on developments in Makoni District, it analyses how the new relationship affected, or was itself affected by, broader economic, political and social factors. It examines how the relationship since 2000 revolved around ZANU PF's quest for political survival in the face of a strong political challenge from the MDC. Overall, the chapter investigates the extent at which developments in urban areas informed the new direction of ZANU PF politics in rural areas. In order to substantiate my argument, I present the chapter in three interconnected parts. First I give an over view of the political environment since the formation of the MDC. This allows for the establishment of the extent to which the MDC worked as a catalyst in the development of the new association between chiefs and ZANU PF. This would simultaneously illuminate the relationship between chiefs and opposition parties. Second, I look at the persuasive forces that were used to bring Makoni chiefs to ZANU PF politics. Third, I focus on coercive strategies and how they were used to force Makoni chiefs and, in turn, villagers into supporting ZANU PF.[4] While insights can be drawn from the experiences of other districts in Zimbabwe, the nuanced case of Makoni District will allow for an in-depth appreciation of the factors involved.

Courting the chiefs

In 2000 government reconsidered its relations with chiefs. This was in light of the emergence of more intense political challenges that arose as a result of the formation of the MDC in 1999. The period was marked by significant loss of support by ZANU PF and substantial gains by the MDC. As one of its reactive actions, the government turned to chiefs for support. Barely two

[4] That all Makoni District's chiefs will be generalized as ZANU PF supporters is because they were all active members of the party. Also, not a single one of the chiefs acknowledged supporting opposition parties.

months after the formation of the MDC, Mugabe apologised over the 'shabby treatment chiefs and headmen had been given since independence.'[5] He promised chiefs, among other things, enhanced land powers, improved allowances, decent housing and government-sponsored cars. In 2000 Minister John Nkomo also conveniently apologised: 'I personally feel aggrieved that we have taken so long to address your problems. Each Minister of Local Government always says it will be fixed...we are sorry to continue treating you in this shoddy way.'[6] These were reflexive moves by the government to help reclaim chiefs and, by extension, rural support.

ZANU PF controlled state institutions like the army, the police and the judiciary, and also quasi-state groups like war veterans and youth militia. They were used in various ways to strengthen the party's weakening support base. However, chieftaincy was seen as the most convenient institution for rural areas. The logic of co-opting chiefs was hinged on three factors. First, despite the fading of many aspects of a traditional rural society, chiefs still possessed significant influence over their subjects. The government would tap into the institution's mobilising influence reminiscent of the liberation struggle when the Smith regime attempted to harness the power of chiefs.[7] Interviews with ordinary Makoni District villagers showed that they had more respect for chiefs than for distant and seldom inaccessible politicians. As rural administration and politics revolved around the discourse of the 'grassroots', chiefs were an *entreport* for the state's access to rural areas. Alex Aidoo explains that the moment one talks about grassroots issues in rural areas one is already making overtures to chiefs. One could not successfully implement a developmental or a political programme in the rural areas without chiefs' involvement. He said of the situation in Ghana:

> You cannot go to any village and start propagating an ideology or political programme or anything in the air….the chiefs are very important if we are going to think about participation of all the people in government. We have to use them from the grassroots level to the national level.[8]

[5] *The Chronicle*, 19 November, 1999.
[6] *The Herald*, 19 January, 2000.
[7] J. Wood, *A matter of weeks rather than months: The impasse between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith, aborted settlements and war, 1965-1969*, Bloomington: Trafford Publishing, pp. 568-569.
[8] Quoted in J. R. A. Ayee, 'Traditional leadership and local governance in Africa: The Ghanaian experience', *Paper presented at the Fourth National Annual Local Government Conference,* Quo Vadis', Durban, 2007, p. 2.

For this reason, as will be later shown in the chapter, Makoni chiefs were turned into grassroots representatives of the party, not to promote development processes, but mainly for their strong mobilising capabilities which could used for political ends.

The second major reason why chiefs were important for the beleaguered government is that they were closer to their subjects than most administrative and political officials. Typical of Zimbabwean political elite, they are usually separated from their rural constituencies by both class and geography. MPs, ministers, provincial governors or DAs spend much of their time away from the rural constituencies, but in major towns and cities. Various interviewees in Makoni District confided in the researcher that officialdom was notorious for not visiting their constituencies unless it was election time. Said one Makoni Central villager: 'If you go to the DA's office or the party office, you will find that the most important people are not there. They are in Harare. As for our MP Patrick Chinamasa, he is never around as he used to do during election time in 2013.'[9] Indeed this was confirmed by the researcher when he struggled for days to see both the DA and his deputy as they were said to be in Harare on official business. These officials do not have strong grounds or legitimacy to summon meetings, mobilise for grassroots projects or give political orders. As such, the answer lay in ZANU PF's recognition of the electoral influence of the more proximate and accessible chief. In Makoni, for instance, Chief Tandi lives among the people he leads. He is in constant contact with them and they interact at many different levels. The third factor was the party's appreciation of the demographics of the country. As highlighted in the first chapter, most of Makoni District's population live in the rural areas. Such demographic calculations suggested that capturing the rural vote would give the party an edge in electoral numbers, since urban areas had generally turned opposition.

The return of chiefs was in line with the general trend across Africa and in history. Politicians often revived the notion of culture whenever their political hegemony was threatened.[10] Just as the colonial regimes made chieftaincy an organ of settler control in the reserves, ZANU PF also turned to chiefs in 2000 when it was politically threatened. This cross-referencing was

[9] Interview with anonymous villager (iii), 23 February, 2015.
[10] J. Beal, 'Exit, voice and tradition: Loyalty to chieftainship and democracy in metropolitan Durban, South Africa', *Crisis states working programme series*, No. 1, p. 1.

popular with independent Zimbabwean newspapers. *The Financial Gazette* captured the similarities between the colonial and the post-colonial state as regards chiefs in this way:

> Today Smith's manipulation of tribal leaders has come full circle. Faced with the same fate of having to deal with a restive population, the ruling party has decided to turn back the clock by revisiting a classic case of how those who were expected to stand with the people decided to sell out. Sensing imminent defeat in the last parliamentary election, the party suddenly remembered the chiefs. Those of our traditional leaders who were around during the Ian Smith era must view their current position with a frightful *de ja vu.*..it is a matter of when all else fails, turn to the chiefs.[11]

Similarly, New Zimbabwe wrote:

> ZANU PF copied the whole strategy used by Smith in enlisting the services of chiefs. It never hid its intentions to co-opt and groom them for greater political roles. Mugabe outlined their post-2000 political role, advising that they should go beyond being 'mere repositories of oral history.[12]

As the second chapter has shown, most of Makoni District's war-time chiefs were perceived as supporters of the Ian Smith regime.

Mugabe redefined chiefs to make them useful in the face of new political challenges. All Makoni chiefs were co-opted and drilled into fighting both imagined and real political enemies. It became the responsibility of chiefs to be, according to Mugabe's new discourse, '...guardians of our national sovereignty and guard against those who delight in associating with our detractors and those who work in cahoots with powers that seek to mislead our people.'[13] These enemies included western countries, especially the United Kingdom and the United States of America. MDC was labelled *'zvimbwasungata'*, meaning agents of imperialism and western countries.[14] As the sections on patronage and coercion shall reveal, Makoni chiefs became central in ZANU PF's ideological battles.

[11] *The Financial Gazette*, 3 July, 2003.
[12] www.newzimbabwe.com, 16 May, 2004: accessed 22 September, 2014.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] ZANU PF accused Western countries, particularly Britain and the United States, of sponsoring the MDC in order to effect regime change in Zimbabwe.

Quest for legitimacy

ZANU PF's capture of chiefs is strongly linked to the party's renewed need for approval in the rural areas. The government intended to use chiefs as a validating tool for its rural political manoeuvres. This stemmed from chiefs' perceived connection to the country's cultural and spiritual roots, an aspect that generally lacked in government officials. Studies from other parts of Africa have shown that authoritarian regimes usually appeal to culture only to legitimate themselves.[15] Hence, chiefs were important in making such governments acceptable to villagers. For example, Mobutu SeSe Seko's 'return to authenticity' of the late 1960s in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo[16] and Togo's Gnassibe Eyadema's 'return to earth' of the 1980s[17] were philosophies designed to win traditional leaders' approval of their rule. As Maxwell paraphrases Weber, 'The privileged never rest content merely to regain their good fortune; they always want to believe it is merited.'[18]

ZANU PF wanted to be seen to be carrying sanction from both the past and from the cosmological or spiritual realm. Mugabe expressed this exaggerated notion of culture when he flattered Zvimba people at the installation ceremony of Stanley Mhondoro as Chief Zvimba in Mashonaland West Province in 2009. He said: 'If we do not consult chiefs on governance, whom do we consult? As custodians of the land, natural resources and culture, chiefs have to jealously guard these. You must ensure that the land is not grabbed away...through this other party [the MDC].'[19] These cultural appeals to chiefs were made easier because ZANU PF's main competitor, the MDC, rarely acknowledged the importance of *madzishe* (chiefs) and seemed disengaged from the related cultural and spiritual issues.

According to ZANU PF's 1980s interpretation of history, Makoni chiefs' liberation war conduct was deplorable.[20] However, in order to win chiefs, it sustained its systematic readjustment of

[15] van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs', pp. 44-55.
[16] G. Stewart, *Rumba on the river: A history of the popular music of the two Congos*, New York: Verso, 2000, pp. 171-72.
[17] K. M. Aithnard, *Some aspects of cultural policy*, Rennes: United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation, 1976, pp. 30-31.
[18] Maxwell, *Christians and chiefs*, p. 37.
[19] *The Sunday Mail*, 18 October, 2009.
[20] T. Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2004, pp. 215-234 criticises ZANU PF's distortive version of history which he says only serves to further its selfish interests.

chiefly liberation war history that had begun in the late 1980s. As Edward Carr observed, there is always an opportunity for both historians and politicians to be selective with historical facts in order to promote certain agendas.[21] Throughout the post-2000 period, the party adopted a new historical rhetoric for chiefs. For example, government and party deputy president, Joice Mujuru, conveniently described the relationship between ZANU PF and chiefs as bound by culture and a shared history. She said: 'Our chiefs have been of great value to us and their support for the party is greatly appreciated. They played a major role in the liberation struggle....Without them the war could not have been won.'[22] This reconstruction of history, emphasising chiefs' indispensability, was a *volte face* if the nature of prior relations is considered.

The government was not really concerned with the well-being of chieftaincy or the related spiritual and cultural aspects. It was worried about the immediate need to mobilise against opposition forces. It manipulated chiefs in order to make them feel obliged to the party for the continued existence of their institution. For instance, it often reminded them of the fate of chieftaincies in other African countries. Minister of Local Government, Chombo said: 'The president has continued to support the role of chiefs while other African countries have done away with the chiefs.'[23] Chiefs were thus put into a dependent. As Chief Tandi recalled, 'it is possible that ZANU PF could have ended chieftaincy if it wished. However, it chose to allow it to continue. We as chiefs are happy about the situation. Where would we be without ZANU PF.?' Indeed, chiefs like Tandi were more appreciative especially as their predecessors were said to have shown anti-nationalist inclinations in the 1960s and 1970s.

It should be pointed out that while the state sought to win chiefly support, the chiefs also sought governmental recognition. Thus there was a major 'coincidence of wants' as both needed to legitimise each other. Chiefs could not rely on their subjects alone for legitimacy. As the administrative developments of the 1980s revealed, the government had the power to impose its will on chieftaincy. The nature of post-2000 politics also confirmed that the base

[21] E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, New York: Random House, 1961, pp. 3-35.
[22] *The Herald*, 4 November, 2009.
[23] *The Financial Gazette*, 5 November, 2010.

of chiefs' power no longer lay in their local areas but the government and the party.[24] Through legal and political means, government determined such aspects as dethronements and installations. As the case of the 2014 Makoni chieftaincy succession wrangle shows, politics determined winners and losers in succession disputes.[25] The dependent relations were further entrenched by the fact that chiefs' allowances were paid by the government. It was for their convenience, therefore, that chiefs joined ZANU PF. Throughout the post-2000 period Makoni chiefs hardly insisted on regaining their independence. They could not afford to antagonise the government for fear of a recurrence of the 1980s neglect. This greatly informed their exaggerated conformity to ZANU PF politics in the 2000s.

With chiefs captured by the state and redesigned as agents of political control, 'vestiges of downward accountability were eliminated.'[26] Chiefs' need for local legitimacy was replaced by upward accountability. That it was better to be responsive to the government than to the villagers is revealed by one anonymous chief who recalled how he was reprimanded when soon after his installation in the 2000s he allowed the MDC to campaign freely in his area. He punished perpetrators of political violence regardless of their political backgrounds. He also allowed freedoms of political expression and association. He said: 'I tried to instil the idea of political tolerance among villagers. However this was perceived as giving space to the MDC. The resultant pressure, particularly from the DA, forced me to ban the MDC in my area.'[27] This way, Makoni District's chiefs were contained.

Politics of patronage

The development of patronage networks characterised the relationship between chiefs and government at the turn of the millennium. Typical of governments growing unpopular, patronage is usually convenient as it rescues them from the brink of defeat.[28] While patronage lines had begun to form in the 1990s, they matured starting 2000 when ZANU PF's rule began to be effectively questioned. Raised to new and unprecedented levels, this

[24] Interview with anonymous Makoni District chief, 23 September, 2014.
[25] Discussed on the forthcoming section on 'politics of coercion'.
[26] Logan, 'The roots of resilience', p. 2.
[27] Interview with anonymous Makoni chief, 21 February, 2015.
[28] B. Hillman, *Patronage and power: Local state networks and party-state resilience in rural China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014, defines political patronage as the support, encouragement, privilege, or financial aid that an organization or individual bestows to another in return for rewards.

politico-economic system permeated all aspects of the Zimbabwean society. Many social and political groupings such as war veterans, youth organisations, women's groups and labour organisations, among others, ingratiated themselves with ZANU PF in this context.[29] The system was more defined in the security forces, that is, the army, the police and the Central Intelligence Organisation. As Knox Chitiyo notes, their top hierarchy enjoyed massive material benefits in return for intimidating of opposition parties.[30]

However, to sustain its control of rural areas, government had to win chiefs. To effectively tie chiefs to the party, both at individual and at group level, it offered financial and material benefits. This way, Makoni chiefs became part of this large and efficiently synchronised political machinery. So effective was the system that none of them escaped the new strategy. President Mugabe boasted that by 2011 'only three chiefs are against ZANU PF.'[31] The rest were on its side. The party forced an alliance between itself and chiefs and converted all Makoni District chiefs to its side after 2000. (See next page for pictorial evidence of ZANU PF-chiefs' connections). Remarkably, this was achieved without any noticeable resistance by the generality of chiefs. Of all political and bureaucratic arrangements designed to win over chiefs, patronage was the most central.

Evidence from Makoni District suggests that chiefs were driven to ZANU PF by promises of financial and material rewards. The benefits were accessed by proving loyalty to the party. The lifestyle of Makoni chiefs was substantially transformed as they accepted patronage relations. The benefits ranged from improved allowances, cars, farms to homestead electrification. In return, chiefs turned their constituencies into what van Nieuwaal calls 'loyalty banks' or 'vote banks'.[32] This arrangement provided the mainly hitherto impoverished chiefs with the opportunity for upward social and economic mobility and to join other groups already embedded in patronage transactions.

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[29] J. Alexander *et al* (eds.), *Politics, patronage and the state in Zimbabwe*, London: Taylor and Francis, 2013 contains various articles that allow or an in-depth discussion on the development of patronage politics in post-independence Zimbabwe.

[30] K. Chitiyo, 'The case for security sector reform in Zimbabwe', Occasional Paper, 2009, p. 3.

[31] *The Financial Gazette*, 5 November, 2011.

[32] van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs', p. 45.

***Figure 3**: A poster advertising the inauguration ceremony for new Makoni chief, Cogen Gwasira, in 2014. The more dominant image of President Mugabe, a ZANU PF flag, and the inscription 'POWERED BY ZANU PF', significantly reveal the power relations that defined the relations between chiefs and the party. (Picture by researcher).*

The post-2000 economic crisis and the absence of an independent and viable source of income were strong push factors for chiefs to accept ZANU PF's advances. Cushioned from the vagaries of a struggling economy, they were pressured into accepting political roles as party assistants. They became less dutiful to their subjects and focused on their re-discovered status and material gains. It is, therefore, not surprising that all Makoni chiefs were active members of ZANU PF.[33] As the MDC Information and Publicity secretary for Manicaland and former Makoni South MP, Muchauraya observed of Chief Chiduku:

> Although, technically, he could not hold party positions, Chief Chiduku was in fact a party commissar. He mobilised support for the party, helped in electoral strategies and was active in frustrating opposition parties. I do not think that without these benefits he could have done this.[34]

[33] By their own admission through interviews.
[34] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.

Increased allowances was the immediate way in which patronage was extended to chiefs. In January 2000 allowances were increased from $2000 to $10 000. This was an unprecedented 400 per cent increase. So unconcealed and dramatic were the financial rewards that they provoked a flurry of responses from the concerned but mainly urban-based public. Their argument was based on three premises. First, the weak economy could not support unbudgeted extra expenses. Second, the increases were effected at a time when workers from all sectors struggled to convince the government and other employers to review their own salaries.[35] Third, chiefs were said to be not worthy of the $10 000 pay awards, especially as it put them at par with, and at times higher than, qualified professionals. For the better part of 2003, for example, teachers were earning much less than chiefs.[36] Asked one individual: 'An average civil servant is getting $5 000 per month. So why should chiefs get more? How many civil servants are getting $10 000 per month.'[37] Another person complained about the $5 000 awarded to headmen. He argued that he had 'worked for a prominent company for over 10 years and I am not paid $5 000. What about mere headmen getting such an amount and for what reason?'[38] As the chapter shows, the reason was political.

Indeed, patronage transactions were effected regardless of the economic environment. Service delivery was crumbling. Foreign currency was in short supply. Companies downsized or closed shop. In 1997 the government triggered a hyperinflationary deluge that lasted over a decade by giving war veterans millions of dollars in unbudgeted state funds.[39] The effects of such a debilitating move were still felt many years later. At its zenith in 2008, inflation reached record-breaking levels of over 200 million per cent per annum. Labour strikes were a common feature. It is for this reason that the period was generally referred to by scholarship as the 'era of crisis'.[40]

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[35] Sutcliffe ''Shinga Mushandi Shinga! Qina Msebenzi Qina!', pp. 8-9.
[36] *Daily News*, 24 November, 2003.
[37] *The Herald*, 28 November, 1999.
[38] *Ibid,* 22 December, 1999.
[39] P. Bond and M. Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's plunge: Exhausted nationalism, neoliberalism and the search for social justice*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2003 discusses in greater detail the connection between the war veterans' gratuities and the intensification of Zimbabwe's economic demise.
[40] The Literature on the Zimbabwean crisis is immense. It includes D. Moore, 'Is the land the economy and the economy the land? Primitive accumulation in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2001; A. Hammar, B. Raftopoulos and S. Jensen (eds.), *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis,* Harare: Weaver Press, 2003; Bond and Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's Plunge*; Raftopoulos and Phimister, 'Zimbabwe now'; M. Meredith, *Our votes, our guns: Robert Mugabe and the tragedy of Zimbabwe,* New York: Public Affairs, 2002.

It is in this context that a warning against government's financial rewards to chiefs was raised: 'If the government allows some people [chiefs] to get rich overnight, surely the strikes will never end. All workers will now be galvanised to demand 200 per cent.'[41] Another letter concurred, warning about the effects of such 'reckless reviewing of chief's allowances', adding that the government 'needed some education in simple economics.'[42] In Makoni, councillors in the RDC responded to the state's overindulgence of chiefs by demanding that their remuneration be revised upwards also. A councillor in Makoni RDC Council from 2000 to 2005 said that while he was not against chiefs earning more money, the government tended to 'concentrate on the welfare of chiefs only. It is in the context of excessive attention to chiefs that we began to ask for a review of our allowances.'[43] He revealed that $10 000 was above what most chief executive officers of the RDCs earned at the time.

However, ZANU PF politicians hardly shared such public concerns. On the contrary, officialdom proudly pronounced such allowance increases as indicative of the respect government accorded chiefs. From 2000 to 2014, chiefs' allowances were usually significantly increased during election seasons. Chiefs made rich pickings particularly in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2013, all of which were election years. For instance, ahead of the 2013 elections *newzimbabwe.com* reported that 'The cash-strapped government has effected a 60 percent increase on the allowances of traditional leaders in what critics dismiss as a cynical inducement ahead of crucial elections this year.'[44] It is in this context that the *Daily News* jested that it was more financially rewarding to be a chief than a civil servant.[45] However, chiefs never accepted that they were involved in patronage connections. According to Chief Chipunza, the election time allowance increases 'had nothing to do with elections. If the increases came during election times, it was coincidental.'[46] Both government and chiefs never acknowledged the wider economic implications of such actions. Chiefs were interested in the benefits, while ZANU PF was more concerned about its continued stay in power.

[41] *The Herald*, 22 December, 1999.
[42] *Ibid,* 28 December, 1999.
[43] Interview with anonymous former Makoni District member, 2 March, 2015.
[44] www.newzimbabwe.com, 7 January, 2012: accessed 22 September, 2014.
[45] *Daily News*, 24 November, 2003.
[46] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September 2014.

Makoni District chiefs enthusiastically welcomed the new connections. They praised Mugabe in appreciation. Now, more than ever owing his livelihood to ZANU PF, Chief Tandi likened Mugabe to a higher deity, describing him as the 'real son of God' who 'must rule forever'.[47] It is not surprising as his installation in 2008 coincided with another round of allowance increases for chiefs. The government allocated him the formerly white-owned Lesburg Farm, in Makoni District. He was given a vehicle, among other benefits. He expressed his gratitude thus:

> We are very much determined to defend what Zimbabwe and chiefs have gained as a result of the liberation struggle and if anybody threatens that we are ready to deal with them. As chiefs we have realised we are what we are because of what the government has done for us. We must show our appreciation by helping defend President Mugabe from our wayward children who have agreed to be bought by whites. ZANU PF is the future for us and our children and their children.[48]

Appreciative chiefs thanked the 'generous' government by making their areas 'no-go' areas for opposition elements. As will be detailed in the next section, rural Makoni District became a place for political violence against 'anti-revolutionaries' and 'sell-outs'.[49] Indeed, history repeated itself. This was the same tactic used by the Smith regime in order to gain the support of the chiefs.

Chiefs got more active as patronage connections deepened. They began so comfortable in them that they began to ask for more. Every so often they would make demands to the government, some of them outrageous. As Chief Chipunza explained, this was imperative 'so that we regain our status and the respect of our subjects.'[50] They, like the government, cared less about the state of the economy. Expectedly, election times proved to be the most lucrative for chiefs. For instance, in 2012, a few months before the 2013 harmonised elections, they made a wish list which included, among other things, guns, bodyguards, free import duty on vehicles, diplomatic passports, road toll fees exemption, and a new car every five years. This would help restore their lost 'image of royalty' ahead of the elections.[51] As

[47] Interview with Chief Tandi, 29 July, 2014.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] R. Pilossof, *The unbearable whiteness of being: Farmers' voices from Zimbabwe*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2012, pp. 1-3, discusses how language and terminology of the liberation war was resuscitated by the government in post-2000 Zimbabwe in order to intimidate and label dissenters.
[50] Chief Chipunza, interview, 23 September 2014.
[51] www.africareview.com, 8 March, 2012: accessed 22 September, 2014.

Chief Chipunza added, there was nothing amiss about the situation: 'It is difficult to understand why an MP or even a deputy minister drives a better car than a chief. As chiefs we should demand better respect than MPs.'[52] As political expediency took precedence ahead of democracy, the economy and social cohesion, ZANU PF met most of the demands.

Besides monetary remuneration, patronage was also in the form of material goods. Especially starting 2001, the government campaigned for the material comfort of chiefs 'in recognition of the good work they are doing.'[53] Mugabe impressed upon them in 2001 that:

> [he] will ensure that they have decent homesteads so that their subjects will not look down upon them. The electrification of their homesteads is an on-going programme…I was thinking all the chiefs now have cars and those still to get them we will ensure that something is done. We will replace old and battered cars.[54]

In July 2001 the government instructed RDC to upgrade roads leading to chiefs' houses. It also instructed them to drill boreholes on their homesteads.[55] In February 2005, Mugabe drew a plan to spend an unbudgeted $27.5 billion dollars on chiefs' vehicles and other perks ahead of the March parliamentary elections.[56] In 2004 the electrification of Makoni chiefs' houses had begun in earnest. While to chiefs this was a government keeping its promises, opposition parties perceived this as vote-buying. It is instructive to note that electrification of chiefs' homes was prioritised ahead of more important public service centres, like schools and clinics in the District. According to Parliament of Zimbabwe, by 2011 almost all Makoni West Business centres had no electricity.[57] While chiefs' houses were electrified, many schools across the district were still without electricity, despite having been established decades ago. These include Gwidza Secondary School, Bembwe Secondary School, Rugoyi Primary School and Chikunguru Primay School. As such they were, for instance, 'unable to offer computer

[52] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[53] *The Herald*, 30 July, 2001.
[54] *Ibid,* 2 June, 2001.
[55] *Ibid,* 18 July, 2001.
[56] *Zimbabwe Independent*, 18 February, 2005.
[57] Parliament of Zimbabwe Research Department, *Makoni Central Constituency Profile*, Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2011, p. 8.

studies due to non-connectivity to electrical power supply. This therefore means that teaching and learning…largely remained rooted in the traditional models of delivery.'[58]

All Makoni chiefs were beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). Chief Chiduku and Chief Chipunza were given prime commercial farms seized from white farmers at the height of the 2000 Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Chief Chiduku grabbed Tikwiri Farm in April 2003. Chief Chipunza got Harrington farm while Chief Tandi later got Lesburg Farm. Added to these farms, the three chiefs were perennial beneficiaries of state-funded agricultural input schemes.[59] They benefitted in terms of free and loaned tractors, fertilisers, scotch-carts and crop seed. A visit to the homestead of chief Chiduku revealed that he had boreholed water, electricity and a state-sponsored truck.

None of senior government officials conceded that chiefs were trapped in patronage politics. In 2000, Deputy President, Joseph Msika, said the rewards were 'a token of appreciation for the important role played by chiefs, not an inducement to win the support of the ruling party.'[60] In 2002 Minister of Local Government, Ignatius Chombo, said the relations 'had nothing to do with the elections as some people would like to believe.'[61] However, as evidenced by the timing, government's 'generosity' was a political strategy to bond chiefs. As Adam Smith observed, 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.'[62] The resources channelled to chiefs throughout the post-2000 period had little connection with rural development or administration, but were a political investment. The expected returns were in the form of the chiefs' gratitude, which expressed itself through what the *New York Times* termed a 'reciprocal harvest of votes'.[63] Indeed chiefs like Makoni did everything in their power to ensure that ZANU PF won elections in their areas. Their zeal is exemplified by the 2008 case whereby Chief Chiduku demanded $50 fine from those suspected of supporting the

[58] E. Mandoga *et al*, 'Challenges and opportunities in harnessing computer technology for teaching and learning: A case of five schools in Makoni East District', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2013, p. 105.
[59] Interview with Chief Chiduku, 23 September, 2014; Interview with Chief Tandi, 29 July, 2014.
[60] *The Herald*, 30 December, 2000.
[61] *Ibid,* 20 January, 2002.
[62] A. Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations,* Vol. 1*,* London: A. Stratham, 1789, p. 32, (online edition).
[63] www.nytimes.com, 26 March, 2008: accessed 11 June, 2015.

MDC. The most affected villages were Mutinhira, Tseriwa, Chinyan'anya and Muzawazi. Those who did not pay the money were threatened with eviction from villages under the chiefs' jurisdiction.[64]

Like other chiefs throughout the country, Makoni chiefs accepted incorporation into ZANU PF mainly for fear of losing privileges. Entrenched into the dependent relationship, they also became anxious that the end of ZANU PF rule would end the benefits. According to Minister Chombo's 2004 assessment, 'chiefs are comfortable with the life they have and I don't see them departing from the stance they took in Masvingo [of endorsing ZANU PF and Mugabe].'[65] This partly explains chiefs' pleas that ZANU PF 'should rule forever.'[66] Said Chief Chipunza: 'It disturbs us everytime we hear rumours that the president is sick, wants to retire, or is dead. We want him to continue ruling. That is why we campaign for him during elections. He must not go.'[67] This is a scenario ZANU PF sought to achieve.

As already emphasised, patronage promoted chiefs' upward accountability and disregarded responsibility over their subjects. Makoni chiefs attached more value to their alliance with the government than to their people. Said Muchauraya:

> ZANU PF always comes up with new ways of buying over the chiefs everytime there is a critical election. We are aware that the vehicles they have been giving them are meant to be chiefs' passes to the gravy train. Handing largesse to unassuming chiefs to coerce them to mobilise for ZANU PF is in the party's rigging manual.[68]

The situation of opposition parties was made worse by the fact that they could not match ZANU PF's resources. The ruling party had the advantage of incumbency and would tap into government resources. For instance, despite the poor status of the economy, Mugabe declared in 2003 that 'it will not be a problem in getting 266 vehicles'[69] for the country's 266 chiefs. Indeed this pledge was honoured as all Makoni chiefs received government cars. This showed how the party prioritised its survival more than anything else, including the economy.

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[64] Interview with anonymous villager (iii), 23 February, 2015.
[65] *The Herald*, 24 August, 2004.
[66] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.
[69] *The Herald*, 31 May, 2003.

Politics of coercion

Patronage alone was not enough to draw all chiefs onto ZANU PF's side. Parallel to the carrot approach, government also used force and threats to mobilise chiefs. State-sponsored intimidation was pervasive both nationally and in Makoni District after 2000. It was used against perceived anti-ZANU PF elements, including chiefs. As Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler noted, it is common place in Africa for weak incumbents, devoid of popular legitimacy and numbers, to use repression in order to achieve political ends.[70]

While Makoni District's chiefs did not suffer direct intimidation and violence, they however witnessed it being inflicted on uncooperative chiefs from other districts. They also witnessed it being used on lower level traditional leaders from both within and outside of Makoni. Their vulnerability is revealed by the 2008 case of Makoni headman Solomon Saungweme. Saungweme had acquired a farm near Old Mutare through the partisan FTLRP in 2005. However, in 2007 he declared his allegiance for the MDC. As a beneficiary of ZANU PF's patronage systems this move by Saungweme was bound to cause him problems. Indeed in 2008 ZANU PF supporters retributively chased him off the farm. He only got his property back around 2011 and resumed his headmanship after a humiliating public apology and denunciation of the MDC at a ZANU PF rally in Makoni West.[71] This case is illuminating on the connection between patronage and coercive political strategies and how they forced Makoni chiefs to comply with ZANU PF. Such cases instilled fear on many chiefs who may have contemplated leaving ZANU PF for opposition politics.

One of the major consequences suffered by unpliant chiefs was government withdrawal, or threats to withdraw their allowances. None of Makoni chiefs failed the loyalty tests. However, other districts in both Manicaland and beyond had several cases whereby chiefs' allowances were withdrawn for refusing to submit. For example in 2007 chiefs Masivamele and Sengwe from Chiredzi and Chief Ziki from Bikita had their allowances withdrawn for alleged sympathy for the MDC. Chief Ziki explained his situation thus: 'I was summoned by officers from the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development and advised that my

[70] P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, 'Greed and grievance', *Policy research working paper*, The World Bank Development Research Group, 2000, p. 11.
[71] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.

allowances had been stopped…they said I was not politically correct ahead of next year's polls.'[72] They were charged with allowing opposition party meetings in their areas, denouncing violence or associating with opposition people. Such situations scared Makoni District's chiefs. As regards the implications of losing an allowance, one former messenger to Chief Chiduku noted that 'Such an income was very important to most chiefs, especially those who did not have viable alternative sources. More importantly, being marked for denial of allowances automatically meant that the concerned chief would lose other related benefits.'[73] In a harsh economic environment, such allowances were an important source of livelihood which only few chiefs afforded to lose.

Evocative of the colonial era, coercion also came in the form of depositions from chieftaincy. As alluded to in earlier chapters, colonial administrations in Rhodesia removed disloyal chiefs from their positions and replaced them with their trusted men. In some cases they abolished the chieftaincy altogether. After 2000, while direct dethronement was not common, that it was possible was enough to keep chiefs in order. This was more threatening for chiefs as ZANU PF was fixated with the political character of chiefs. Its influence was more visible during succession processes. Potential candidates were screened for their loyalty. The role of village and clan elders and spirit mediums was subordinated to that of government officials. Government officials spoke out in protection of, or against, certain chiefly candidates. In 2013, ZANU PF National Secretary for Administration, Didymus Mutasa, involved himself in Makoni chieftainship dispute. He pushed for the party's favoured candidate, Tichafara Rukungutai. He accused the rival Gwasira family of possessing oppositional traits. Mutasa unambiguously declared the party's interest in the chieftainship: 'One thing for sure is that we do not want anyone who is MDC to be chief. Anyone to take over that chieftainship has to be from ZANU PF.'[74] Cogen Gwasira eventually won the chieftainship, but only because he also had strong support within the party structures. It is therefore not surprising that, as mentioned earlier, all Makoni District chiefs declared their allegiance to ZANU PF.

[72] www.zimonline.com, 27 July, 2007: accessed 22 September, 2014.
[73] Interview with anonymous former messenger to Chief Chiduku, 22 February, 2015.
[74] *NewsDay*, 28 November, 2013.

While coercion was used to bring chiefs under ZANU PF, chiefs were in turn expected to bring villagers into the party. The most common form of coercion against opposition supporters was direct violence. Many villagers were killed or injured at the behest of chiefs. Some had their properties destroyed. Others were chased away from their areas, lost their jobs, or were refused legitimate access to state resources. It is widely reported that over 150 MDC supporters were killed during the 2008 elections.[75] While no source has provided reliable statistics about political violence-related deaths in Makoni District, evidence of political killings exist. For example, in 2008 MDC activist Thabitha Marume was killed by ZANU PF supporters in Makoni West.[76] Confronted with the violent nature of post-2000 politics, chiefs became trapped in 'an unenviable position of choosing between the state and his people.'[77] Choosing to be opposition, or even to be neutral, brought severe consequences for chiefs and non-chiefs alike.

Another common form of coercion unleashed on villagers was the 'food weapon'.[78] It was an electoral tool of intimidating villagers into voting for ZANU-PF. The strategy put chiefs at the centre of controlling agricultural inputs and food aid.[79] Annexed to the party, they distributed the resources only to the party's known faithful. In the drought-ravaged 2000s it is instructive to note that the single most important reason given by some respondents for being a member of ZANU PF was the government-funded drought relief programme. As Molutsi has noted in the case of food aid in Botswana, 'through this project, where many people are fed, subsidised, employed and assisted in so many ways, the ruling party has successfully made inroads to its popularity, especially in the rural areas.'[80] So, proving membership to ZANU PF and regular attendance at its meetings were non-negotiable requirements for one to access food aid and related resources. It was despite the fact that most of these relief schemes were funded from government coffers and were supposed to be accessed regardless of political affiliation.

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[75] Zimbabwe Peace Project, *Post-election violence report No. 4*, June 2008, p. 4.
[76] www.theguardian.com, 1 May, 2008
[77] van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs', p. 68.
[78] In this context, food power or food weapon is the use of food to manipulate the political behaviour of certain sections of the society, particularly those in desperate need of it.
[79] Matyszak, *Formal structures of power*, pp. 18-20.
[80] Quoted in R. Charlton, 'The politics of elections in Botswana', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute,* Vol. 63, No. 3, 1993, p. 364.

The 'food weapon' can be further appreciated in the context of the fact that agriculture is the main source of Makoni Districts' livelihoods. The most critical resource is land and access to it was highly controlled by the party. Chiefs were often tasked with drawing up a list of who could be allocated land in their areas. From the vantage point of the grassroots, the chief was important for their survival. Chief Chipunza's stance as regards homestead land is revealing:

> We support ZANU PF and ZANU PF supports us. How can MDC members want land in my area? How can they ask for the very land they want returned to the British? They must go and get land in constituencies they won. If I had the power I would evict everyone who opposes President Mugabe.[81]

This stance was confirmed by Matyszak's findings. He wrote of Chief Makoni in 2011:

> He is an active ZANU PF supporter. ZANU PF politicians, namely Didymus Mutasa, Patrick Chinamasa, Grain Marketing Board manager Nyakuedzwa and Brigadier General Douglas Nyikayaramba influence traditional leaders through Chief Makoni. He distributes food and farm inputs in favour of ZANU PF members.[82]

So effective was the food weapon that few dared publicly oppose ZANU PF. As Makumbe observed: 'Ravaged by hunger and poor harvest and far from the probing eyes of the outside world, freedom of choice has been infringed, with villagers too frightened to vote for candidates of their choice.'[83] A Rukweza villager was denied food aid by Chief Rukweza in 2008. He said: 'He openly told me that he was working under strict instructions not to include names of suspected MDC supporters on the food aid list. He said I should know where my bread is buttered.'[84] This was in line with the beliefs of the President of the Chief's Council, Chief Fortune Charumbira. He publicly threatened to starve MDC elements to death, declaring that:

> It is time we put a final nail of the western-sponsored party and the only way we can achieve this is by starving them to death. If they are going to survive, at least they must endure pain and suffering in the next five years and we will not give them any food aid as long as ZANU PF is in power.[85]

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[81] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[82] Matyszack, *Formal structures of power*, Appendix K.
[83] J. Makumbe, 'Local authorities and traditional leadership', p. 94.
[84] Interview with an anonymous villager (ii), 20 February, 2015.
[85] *Masvingo Mirror*, 31 August, 2013.

The need to access land resources and food aid, added to widespread compulsion, forced the majority of villagers to submit to ZANU PF and to shun opposition politics.

In order to make chiefs effectively play their new-found political role, the government appended them to the army. The systematic militarisation of state institutions was a major characteristic of post-2000 political processes in Zimbabwe. The party-government-military nexus was so strong it blurred the distinction between the institutions. Chieftaincy was not spared the militarisation. Throughout the post-2000s the military personnel in Manicaland Province worked with chiefs in forcing rural communities into supporting ZANU PF.

Makoni District was supervised by a military barrack controlled by some of the most politically active officers in the country. They often summoned chiefs to their barracks. They visited their homesteads whenever politically necessary. The most prominent convenor of such meetings was Brigadier Douglas Nyikayaramba. On many occasions he conducted 'refresher' courses for chiefs. In 2010 he summoned 200 chiefs, including all Makoni District chiefs and headmen, to his Chikanga Three Brigade base and threatened them with 'a return to war' if they allowed opposition rallies in their areas.[86] Chief Chipunza conceded that even prior to that year, they met several times with army personnel. However, he defended such interactions saying that historically chiefs were involved in the security of their areas. He reasoned that:

> Before colonialism and during colonialism, we were involved in the security of the country and of our communities. The situation is the same now. As chiefs we should constantly meet the police, the army and even intelligence organs. We have met them several times and I see no problem with it.[87]

In 2012 chiefs held closed door meetings with army and ZANU PF officials at the same barrack under the guise of Traditional Leaders' Day commemorations. They discussed political strategies for the party ahead of 2013 elections.[88] Often dressed in military uniforms during such meetings and rallies, they warned chiefs of war if they allowed the MDC in their areas. They instructed them to punish subjects who exhibited 'anti-revolutionary' tendencies. Chiefs

[86] *The Zimbabwean*, 25 October, 2010.
[87] Interview with Chief Chipunza, 23 September, 2014.
[88] *The Zimbabwean*, 13 November, 2012.

loyally transformed these military lectures into practice. This is evidenced by the beatings, evictions, denial of food, and fined opposition supporters.

Chiefs were further embedded into the army by being involved in its recruitment processes. As the Zimbabwe National Army Chief of Staff Major General Martin Chedondo explained in ZANU PF language: 'Chiefs are the custodians of the people and we have found it fit to involve them in our recruitment exercises.'[89] Chiefs identified aspiring officers based on loyalty to the party. While chiefs Chipunza and Makoni denied being involved in recruitment processes, several interviewees confirmed that at least they were responsible for compiling lists of potential cadets and forwarding them to party and army offices. Throughout the 2000s the army and the party were often accused of collusion in dubious recruitment processes designed to staff the ranks with ZANUPF sympathisers.[90]

Chiefs' fear of post-ZANU PF government

As chiefs were further entrenched into ZANU PF politics, they developed insecurities about the end of Zanu PF rule. They feared a new government whose policies towards chiefs they were uncertain of. For instance, a more economically astute administration would end patronage networks. Therefore, they preferred to continue as appendages of ZANU PF. Chief Tandi, grateful for the farm, electrified homestead and a car, among other benefits accumulated since 2000, acknowledged that 'Had it not been for ZANU PF and President Mugabe I would not be farming here. I would be living in the dark, and I would still be walking on foot. What more can one ask for?'[91] Chiefs even devised praise names to Mugabe expressing their gratefulness. They included '*Mambo wamadzimambo*' [Chief of chiefs] and *Mwana waMwarichaiye* [Real son of God]'.[92]

There were also a fears that a new government would engage in the politics of retribution. Chiefs were aware of neglect they suffered when a vindictive ZANU PF took over government in 1980. They did not want to lose their new position. They rather consolidated the positive

[89] *Ibid,* 19 November, 2012.
[90] Chitiyo, 'The case for security sector reform in Zimbabwe', pp. 4-11, systematically analyses the militarization of state civilian institutions in post-2000 Zimbabwe.
[91] Interview with Chief Tandi, 25 February, 2015.
[92] *Ibid.*

relationship they had cultivated with government than tried a new and uncertain one. The situation was compounded by opposition pronouncements, mainly those of the MDC. They warned chiefs of severe consequences if they got into power. To quote Tsvangirai, 'If they are any chiefs who say they are ZANU PF, I want to warn you that you will regret your action, because after the next election it will be us in power.'[93] Muchauraya declared that 'since chiefs chose the path of politics we shall happily treat them as political competitors with all the impending consequences.'[94] Civic society organisations and opposition-inclined newspapers also developed intense disdain for chiefs. They called for the replacement of chiefs by qualified officials in various fields such as the administration of customary law.[95] They accused chiefs of abusing their office by openly supporting ZANU PF. It is under such threats that chiefs felt intimidated and avowedly implored Mugabe to be 'president for life' and to rule 'until the donkeys grow horns.'[96] To Minister Chombo, this was an indication that chiefs 'appreciate [Mugabe's] leadership qualities and achievements.'[97] Thus, chiefs became more interested in ZANU PF's continued stay in power.

Chieftaincy's need for survival

The post-2000 behaviour of most chiefs was governed by their need to survive both as individuals and as an institution. They had to show extreme loyalty to ZANU PF. Loyalty was measured in many ways. It was to a significant extent defined by how they dealt with dissent in their villages. Chiefs severely punished villagers who failed to respond positively to their political commands. Villagers were fined, forced out of their areas or beaten for the 'crime' of harbouring opposition sympathies. In Makoni District, the most notorious chief was John Rukweza. In 2010 he was accused of many atrocities against his opposition subjects. He forced them to buy ZANU PF party cards, sent activists to attack their MDC neighbours and evicted from the area those who did not heed his political calls. He is on record saying MDC supporters 'have no place in my area.'[98]

[93] *The Herald*, 28 October, 2012.
[94] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.
[95] *The Standard*, 17 March, 2012.
[96] *The Financial Gazette*, 3 July, 2003.
[97] *The Herald*, 11 May, 2012.
[98] www.thezimbabwean.com, 4 November, 2010: accessed 22 September, 2014.

Lower level traditional leaders, that is headmen and village heads, were often forced by chiefs to coerce their subjects into ZANU PF. In 2008 Chief Chiduku sent his village heads to Muzavazi and Makore villages to collect $50 fines from villagers 'as punishment for overexcitement' after the council elections won by the MDC.[99] Even if they did not support such actions, they still had to do as was ordered. The implications of failure to heed chiefs' commands are described by one headman under Chief Makoni:

> The biggest challenge is that if you refuse to take orders you will know that you are finished. They will remove you from the throne. Usually we get direct orders from our chiefs on how to deal with the MDC people, some of whom are our relatives. The DA told us that we are supposed to inform our chief and ZANU PF leadership of suspicious people in our areas. We report all planned non-governmental organisations' activities in our area. We cannot grant them access to villagers unless they have approval from above.[100]

Chiefs often reminded everyone of their connections to the much-feared President Mugabe. They often threatened headmen and village heads by saying '*tokuitai zvekuBinga*', meaning they would suffer the same fate as their Binga counterparts if they deviated from party policy.[101] In 2013, Binga's Chief Sinamagonde fired 15 village heads in his area. He accused them of supporting the MDC during the 2013 elections. Wrote *The Zimbabwean*:

> The chief called for a meeting with all village heads at his homestead at the weekend. He then told them he was not happy that some of them had become MDC activists….he immediately fired 15 village heads and replaced them with well-known ZANU PF activists.[102]

This is despite the fact that headmanship and village headship is passed from father to son, and dismissals should not be on political grounds. Resultantly, Makoni District's headmen and village heads developed intense fear of their chiefs. Matyszack recorded Makoni District's Headmen Gandanzara's actions thus:

> In 2008 he is alleged to have worked closely with war veterans led by Mhiripiri and village head David Zimbabi to perpetrate violence. This resulted in the case of arson of Angeline Todlana's home in Ward 23. He also worked with the GMB manager in the area to distribute food in a partisan manner.[103]

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[99] *The Zimbabwean*, 10 August, 2008.
[100] Interview with an anonymous Makoni District headman, 25 February, 2015.
[101] *Ibid*.
[102] www.zimbabwesituation.com, 29 October, 2013: accessed 2 June, 2015.
[103] Matyzsack, *Formal structures of power*, Appendix K.

Previously trusted for their better adjudication of disputes than state organs, they transformed into a source of fear rather than peace.

Chiefs, headmen and villagers alike dreaded being associated with the MDC. There are reports that people began to avoid their suspected MDC relatives, stopped buying independent newspapers, and stopped discussing politics in public. In 2008, Nzvimbe Secondary School headmaster returned donated soccer balls at the behest of Chief Chiduku after the benefactors were linked with the MDC.[104] In 2012 Muchauraya donated a waiting house for pregnant mothers in Rukweza village. However, 'most expecting mothers refused to use it for fear of being associated with the MDC.'[105] Chief Rukweza also forced a local clinic to return sponsored medicine because it was a 'political donation.'[106] Matyszack added his word to these allegations by describing Chief Chipunza in this way:

> He is an active member of ZANU PF…. He has prevented NGOs such as GOAL, BRT, and FACT from working with MDC councillors on developmental projects. Instead, the NGOs are forced to work with village heads who are pro-ZANU PF. In addition, perpetrators of violence like Mike Nathaniel Mhiripiri and Alec Garura have been seen visiting him at his home frequently.[107]

Post-2000 chiefs-government relations had inherent constitutional implications. Two broader issues emerge. First, government was central in the imposition and deposition of chiefs. The government was directly involved in installation processes. According to the TLA, chiefs were presidential appointees picked on the advice of the Minister of Local Government.[108] By extension, chiefs were obliged to submit to government officials, who were in essence politicians. Added to the powers of appointing chiefs, the TLA also bestowed on the president the power to remove a chief from office 'where he is of the opinion that good cause exists.'[109] These tenets served as a strong declaration about who was in charge. Consequently, they subjugated chiefs to ZANU PF politics.

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[104] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] *Ibid*.
[107] Matyszack, *Formal structures of power*, Appendix K.
[108] Traditional Leaders Act, 1998.
[109] *Ibid.*

The second point relates to the involvement of chiefs in active politics. The relationship between chiefs and government, especially which emerged after 2000, violated various tenets of the constitution. For instance, the TLA demanded that 'in the discharge of his functions, a chief, headman or village head shall not be influenced by any considerations of race, tribe, place of origin, creed, gender or political affiliation.'[110] The signatories to the 2008 Global Political Agreement, a multi-party governing pact that lasted four years, emphasised on the political neutrality of chiefs. Chapter 15.2 of the Agreement reads: 'Traditional leaders must not be members of any political party or in any way participate in partisan politics, act in a partisan manner, further the interests of any political party or cause or violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of any person.'[111]

Despite such constitutional dictates, all Makoni chiefs and ZANU PF established and maintained active political connections. As noted in the different cases of chiefs Chiduku and Chipunza, chiefs reneged on their obligations to promote peaceful co-existence in their communities. A frustrated MDC MP, Pauline Mpariwa, demanded 'to know what the Traditional Leaders Act say about chiefs vis-à-vis politics.'[112] The Minister of Justice, Patrick Chinamasa, confirmed government's desire to engage chiefs in politics despite constitutional provisions that barred them from doing so. He said 'The persons who get appointed on those positions are human beings like us and from time to time they have sympathy for certain political causes.'[113] In Makoni District, the involvement of chiefs in politics divided their communities as chiefs incited villagers to attack their MDC neighbours. This was much against Ayee's suggestion that 'Chiefs must be positive, neutral, dynamic and should bring all their people to the path of development. The political neutrality of the chiefs is important since it would enable them to stand and tower above rancor and divisiveness.'[114] By joining active politics, chiefs risked losing their respectability. As Aidoo noted of Ghana:

> When we meet chiefs, we bow to them. We bow because they are special people; because they are people who should be kept sacred…the only way chieftaincy would have honour is to keep away from conflicts, to keep

[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Global Political Agreement*, September 2008, Article 15.2.
[112] *Parliamentary Debates*, 25 October, 2008, col. 2377, Pauline Mpariwa.
[113] *Ibid*, col. 2377-78, Chinamasa.
[114] Ayee, 'Traditional leadership and local governance', p. 9.

> away from issues which would divide the country...let them remain an honoured group of people….[115]

However, because of the nature of post-2000 politics, the chiefs had to join ZANU PF politics in order to ensure their institution survived. They, like ZANU PF, contributed to the violation of constitutional dictates.

Another legal and constitutional ambiguity as regards the relationship between chiefs and government stemmed from the former's legislative role. Chiefs' role in parliament entrenched them into national politics. Nationally, chiefs elected sixteen of their number to represent them in parliament. This was added to two automatic inclusions of the president and the deputy president of the Chiefs' Council. Chief Chiduku and Chief Makoni were long time representatives of Makoni District in the legislature. Simultaneously patronised and intimidated, they invariably influenced legislative business in favour of ZANU PF. For instance in 2000 when the MDC won 57 of the 120 contested parliamentary seats, ZANU PF used the mandatory 18 chiefs in parliament to shift the rather balanced voting pattern.[116] Another example is seen in the voting over the Public Order and Security Act. MDC senators polled 16 votes while ZANU PF got 28 after 15 chiefs tilted the vote in favour of the later.[117] Chiefs always voted with ZANU PF regardless of the merits or demerits of it. This highlighted the contradictory nature of Zimbabwean policy and legislation regarding chiefs.

Conclusion

The above discussion has accounted for the beginning of another phase in chiefs–government relations. Focusing on Makoni District, it has explored the factors that forced the government to effectively co-opt the chiefs that it for many years neglected. The chapter has tried to show that the single most important reason was political. The rise and intensification of political-cum economic challenges made the position of the ruling party untenable. Identified as the chief factor is the emergence of the MDC. The party posed a major electoral threat that effectively challenged ZANU PF's hegemony. It has been revealed that the apprehensive party began to seek assistance from many organised societal groups. In the rural areas it identified

[115] Quoted in *Ibid*.
[116] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.
[117] *Ibid.*

chiefs and it sought to exploit their influential status to stall opposition forces. In Makoni chiefs like Chiduku, Chipunza and Tandi were incorporated into ZANU PF, and worked hard to frustrate opposition parties, particularly the MDC, from gaining ground in the District.

Through a combination of persuasion and coercion, ZANU PF co-opted chiefs and made them central to its survival strategies. The chapter has revealed how the new relationship was enmeshed in a well-crafted system of punishments and rewards, whereby chiefs were rewarded for delivering political results, and punished for showing oppositional sympathies. As shown in the chapter, all Makoni District chiefs benefitted from government's offerings such as cars and farms. Those who resisted to participate were severely punished in different ways. On the whole, the new relationship was politically profitable for ZANU PF, as it helped the party maintain dominance in rural areas.

More broadly, this chapter has shown that unlike in the first 20 years of independence, the post-2000 relationship was purely political. The period is characterised by remarkable absence of chiefs' years old demands for the reinstatement of their land and full judicial powers. Despite the fact that no change was introduced in terms of their powers, chiefs' complaints lulled and took secondary position to politics. This was an indication of the predominance of politics. The rise of strong opposition forced a reluctant government into introducing another phase in the history of chieftaincy and government.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study has traced the development of the chiefs–government relationship in Zimbabwe since independence. Using the case of Manicaland Province's Makoni District as a window to illuminate the issue at a national level, the thesis demonstrated that the relationship continuously evolved and assumed different characteristics throughout the period under study. Taking the coming of independence in 1980 as a starting point, it accounted for the changes up to the post-2000 period. It focused on how both government and chiefs interacted at different points in post-colonial history in the context of historical, political, administrative, economic and social factors. In discussing these factors, the thesis also investigated the various outcomes of the relations.

This thesis posited that the relationship had three broad distinguishing phases. These are 1980–1986, 1987–1999 and 1999–2014. They were important markers for the chapters of the study. Importantly, however, they revealed the ever changing nature of chiefs-government interactions. The phases also offered the study the opportunity to examine the various forces that worked on the relationship at particular periods and how both chiefs and government responded to them. As Chapter Two showed, the period 1980 to 1986 was characterized by antagonism between chiefs and government. Chapter Three demonstrated that from 1987 to 1999 the government sought to partially incorporate chiefs but only as far as it made them loyal to the party. The third phase, starting from 1999, points to the full co-option of chiefs into ZANU PF and the emergence of a well-defined political alliance.

This thesis argued that historical factors were important in determining the nature of the relationship. This particularly applies to the early years of independence. As shown in Chapter Two, the government virtually neglected chiefs at independence. It went on to strip them of their land and judicial responsibilities. It excluded them from all administrative processes. There were even calls from some sections of the government to abolish the institution. Chiefs were only left with cultural and spiritual responsibilities. Chapter Two's discussions on 'Chiefs and the colonial state' and 'The advent of independence', reveal the colonial conduct of some

Makoni chiefs such as Chendambuya and Tandi. They implemented unpopular agricultural and environmental policies and promoted the then government's anti-nationalist agenda. Sometimes they actively punished or caused the arrest of suspected supporters of the liberation war. It is in this respect that the thesis concurred with Ranger and Lan's observations that the war conduct of some chiefs forced nationalists to abandon them for more reliable and loyal spirit mediums in the mobilization of nationalist support.[1] So, the response of the government was a carryover of processes that had been established in the colonial years. The thesis concluded that there was a direct connection between, for instance, Chief Tandi's status as a favourite of the colonial administration, and Chief Chipunza's connection to ZUPO, and their post-colonial exclusion from presiding over community courts or controlling land allocation processes. This detachment of chiefs from the government can be viewed in the context of retributive politics of the 1980s. Despite propagating the discourse of reconciliation, ZANU PF sought to punish various elements of the society that they viewed as collaborators during the liberation struggle.

Additionally, in the early years of independence ZANU PF was yet to solidify its hold on power. Without governmental experience, and with many of its war-time adversaries still active on the political terrain, ZANU PF did not feel effectively secure. The party distrusted such elements as RF, ZANU, ZAPU, UANC and chiefs. While it could have opted to eliminate these institutions, it could not do so because of its advertised 'magnanimous' politics. It, therefore, opted to allow these institutions to survive, albeit at the edge of the state-building project. It could not totally incorporate them because, as shown in the second chapter and as supported by such scholars as Herbst, these elements still showed varying degrees of disapproval of the nascent ZANU PF rule.[2] For instance, although the majority of chiefs did not actively oppose the new government, that chiefs like Chikore and Chipunza were linked to opposition parties after 1980 strengthened the government's case for excluding them from public and party positions of responsibility.

As shown in Chapter Two, and as evidenced by election results, ZANU PF was electorally strong in 1980. The party averaged 95 per cent of Makoni District's vote. This signaled a strong

[1] Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*; Lan, *Guns and rain*.
[2] Herbst, *State politics in Zimbabwe*, p. 31.

support base for the party. It is in this context that the thesis suggested that this status of ZANU PF was central in informing its decision of abandoning chiefs at independence. While other political players were decidedly anti-ZANU PF, history had shown that chiefs were a fluid grouping which could be remoulded into a status the incumbent government wished. ZANU PF had an option of transforming chiefs into its political machinery after 1980. However, as it won the elections resoundingly without chiefs' active contribution, it saw no need for urgency in appending them to the party. Although some chiefs supported ZANU PF, they were not actively co-opted as part of the party's political machinery. For instance, when Chief Makoni campaigned for ZANU PF in Makoni during the election, he did so of his own volition.[3] Enjoying popular support, the party could afford to ignore chiefs without significant electoral consequences. The post-election displacement of chiefs in judicial and land matters through such laws as the Customary Law and Primary Courts Act (1981) and the rise of various grassroots development initiatives that culminated in the formation of WADCOs and VIDCOs in 1984 highly explain how chiefs seemed dispensable at the time.

While historical-cum-political explanations account for the rejection of chiefs at independence, Chapter Three also emphasized the importance of politics in defining the 1987 to 1999 period. The chapter's discussion of 'The impact of national political developments' shows that the government reconsidered its relations with chiefs from the late 1980s. It sought to reduce the tension that had been established at independence. As mentioned earlier, this was partly done by amending laws so as to give chiefs a role in grassroots judicial affairs and a say in land matters. However, it should be acknowledged that the incorporation of chiefs was part of a wider process of appeasing groups that had been neglected by, or totally excluded from, government. For instance, this is the same period that ZANU PF started courting ZAPU, a process that led to the Unity Acord of 1987. It was after the realisation that such factors as plans for a one-party state and poor economic performance were providing rallying points for anti-ZANU PF sentiment. The rise of ZUM in 1990 converged with the adoption of unpopular economic policies such as ESAP, factors that affected the confidence

[3] Interview with anonymous villager (ii), 20 February, 2015.

of many people in the party. This forced ZANU PF to look for additional sources of support. Chiefs were the most convenient in the rural areas.

The study concluded that the predominance of politics was most evident from 1999 onwards. All Makoni chiefs were effectively and unambiguously co-opted into ZANU PF politics. As highlighted by Chapter Four, this was the government's reaction to the emergence of strong opposition politics in 1999. The formation of the MDC, its instant popularity, and the impressive electoral performances of 2000, forced ZANU PF to introduce a new set of relationships with chiefs. As the MDC was most popular in the urban areas, including Makoni District's Rusape town, ZANU PF had to reverse the MDC's penetration of the rural areas if it was to successfully defend its hegemony. It is in this context that all Makoni chiefs became active members of ZANU PF and expressed deep loyalty to the party through both words and deeds.

While chieftaincy is a rural-based institution, the study made constant references to the urban areas. Aspects of the third and fourth chapters advance the notion that it is mainly developments in urban areas that prompted government's reactions in rural areas and, by extension, chiefs. This argument is supported by Makombe's conclusion that there exist a strong nexus between rural areas and urban centres and that they affect each other's social, political and economic structures.[4] From the late 1990s to the 2000s, ZANU PF struggled with various forces opposed to its rule. These forces were inspired by ideological differences, the deteriorating economic climate and the reinvigoration of the human rights discourse. These various sentiments were represented by organisations such as ZCTU, ISO, NCA and the MDC. Mainly based in urban areas, their rise in popularity meant a decline in ZANU PF's support. The 1990s food riots and labour strikes and the 2000s dominance of the MDC in urban politics obliged the government to strenuously defend its rural support base. Its very survival depended on its continued dominance of rural politics. Attempting to delegitimise the MDC, a frustrated Mugabe labelled urban dwellers 'undisciplined', 'unpatriotic' and 'sell-outs' who

[4] Makombe, 'A social history of town and country interactions', p. 271.

lacked nationalist consciousness.[5] In contrast, he praised rural dwellers as disciplined and patriotic. It is in this context that ZANU PF courted chiefs in order to access the rural areas and to make them active supporters of the party.

The co-option of chiefs after 2000 should not be viewed in isolation. This study has argued that the incorporation of chiefs should be viewed as part of a wider government-sponsored process of bringing into alliance those groups operating outside of the party in order to boost its mobilisation structures. The party also systematically appended some state institutions to itself. Besides chiefs, the government engaged security forces, including the army, the police and intelligence agencies to intimidate perceived MDC supporters. Youth militia, women's groups and war veterans were also incorporated for the same purpose. Chiefs were identified as the most important instrument in working for ZANU PF in Makoni District. As exemplified by chiefs Chipunza and Chiduku, Makoni chiefs worked closely with party youths, military personnel and war veterans to intimidate recalcitrant villagers.[6]

It is important to acknowledge that just as in the colonial era, it was the government that very largely determined the status of the relations at any given point. During the two decades or so of post-colonial history, the government used legislative amendments to reject chiefs at independence and to reincorporate them in the 1980s and 1990s through various laws. In the 2000s the government took the initiative again when determining the new direction of the relations. All Makoni chiefs were enlisted as party functionaries who were expected to mobilise for the party and to frustrate MDC activities in their areas. Looking at the interactions over the period spanning over three decades, it can be concluded that it is the government that chose when to reject or engage chiefs and how to relate with them.

This thesis has concentrated on the long-term unfolding of a complex relationship which simultaneously shaped and, in turn, was shaped by economic, political and administrative developments. However, in doing this, the study noted that ZANU PF's various forms of

[5] S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Making sense of Mugabeism in local and global politics: 'So Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 6, 2009, pp. 1139-1158.
[6] Interview with Muchauraya, 18 February, 2015.

interactions with chiefs closely reflected what was happening in the colonial era. As shown in Chapter Two, and as supported by Ranger in *Peasant consciousness* and *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*, at colonisation the administration replaced chiefs like Mutota Makoni with NCs and stripped them of their cultural and historical powers over land and judicial affairs. This was paralleled by ZANU PF's replacement of chiefs with party-linked development and judicial structures at independence. As the administrative challenges of the 1940s and 1950s deepened, the colonial administration partly restored chiefs' powers. They looked to chiefs for the implementation of unpopular land and environmental policies such as those contained in the NRA and the LHA. As noted in Chapter Two, Chief Zambe Makoni was given special praise by the Queen for his dedicated implementation of these policies. This also served to placate some chiefs who wanted their powers restored. During the period 1987 to 1999, the new government sought to have chiefs on its side in the context of dealing with political and administrative challenges. However, it never intended to empower them beyond the marginal land and judicial responsibilities.

The 2000s parallel the nationalist years of the 1960s and 1970s. When the Rhodesian government was subjected to nationalist pressures, it sought the help of chiefs like Tandi and Chendambuya in Makoni District in order to mobilise against the forces of independence. Submissive chiefs were materially and financially rewarded. Nonconformity was punished. Similarly, as the fourth chapter suggests, when the ZANU PF government was challenged by the MDC, it co-opted chiefs and redesigned them as tools to guard against opposition activities in rural areas. Acquiescent chiefs, of which all Makoni chiefs were, were rewarded with improved allowances, cars and farms. The few dissenting ones, all from outside of Makoni District, lost their allowances or their position. Traits of Mamdani's 'decentralised despotism' and elements of 'indirect rule' contained in this kind of relationship reflected on aspects of colonial rule. Indeed, there were similarities in the way both the colonial and post-colonial governments interacted with chiefs in Makoni District. There were also similarities in the factors that influenced the form of interactions that arose at given moments.

This thesis has also suggested that the post-colonial government's effort at recapturing chiefs from 1987 through to the post-2000 period were encapsulated in three important tactics. This is excluding the patronage and coercive tactics most pronounced after 2000. First, as Chapter

Three's 'Rhetoric on the new importance of chiefs' shows, the government reshaped its terminology. From labelling chiefs as 'misfits', ZANU PF began to portray them as central to development processes and, as noted in Chapter Four, after 2000, as defenders of the country's sovereignty and independence.[7] Second, it reinterpreted its own original version of chiefs' liberation war history. The new history presented chiefs in a favourable light. Third, it accorded the subject of culture and traditions a new importance. This aspect was developed under the rubric of Africanist appeals to preserve culture and was meant to enhance the party's mobilisation efforts. It, ironically, had roots in 'Rhodesian traditionalism' of the 1960s and 1970s. The new version of culture connected the government to the chiefs. In line with van Kessel and Oomen's observation of South Africa that governments tend to manipulate culture in order to legitimate their stay in power, this study also observed that government officials began to attach importance to cultural and spiritual ceremonies, something which they shunned in the first years of independence.[8]

This study suggested that ZANU PF's chiefly political and electoral calculations were correct. Examination of the period 1987 to 1999 reveals that while chiefs remained disgruntled by the partial restoration of their powers, generally they did not move to opposition politics. All Makoni chiefs remained ZANU PF as they preferred to fight for their cause from within the party. The successful use of chiefs as a political strategy became clearer after 2000. While throughout the post-2000 period the MDC generally dominated urban politics, it struggled to penetrate a significant number of rural areas. This was partly due to the vigilance of chiefs. The study posited that chiefs successfully frustrated the MDC in Makoni District. The argument is supported by van Nieuwaal who observed that ruling parties in Africa often convert chiefs into 'vote brokers' and 'vote banks' in order to make rural areas exclusive 'block-vote areas' for their advantage.[9] ZANU PF converted Makoni chiefs into political agents of the party. Having accepted this position, they turned their areas into 'no-go areas' for opposition parties. As electoral trends in the district show, rural Makoni was generally ZANU PF. Chiefs like Chipunza and Chiduku resorted to such actions as violence to stop opposition

[7] In the context of post-2000 politics, ZANU PF presented Zimbabwe as a country under siege from western countries who wanted to recolonise it using the MDC as their agent. Hence, the party rallied 'patriots' to protect the country's 'sovereignty' and 'independence'. See also *The Sunday Mail*, 18 October, 2009.
[8] van Kessel and Oomen, 'One chief, one vote', p. 561.
[9] van Nieuwaal, 'States and chiefs', p. 45.

activities in their areas. MDC supporters were denied access to food aid, beaten, fined or chased away from the villages, sometimes at the behest of chiefs. Generally, the result was continued electoral domination of ZANU PF in Makoni District.

Overall, this dissertation has traced the changing relationship between chiefs and government in post-colonial Zimbabwe. It has endeavoured to highlight the relationship through the various connections the two institutions established. Sometimes looking beyond the case study of Makoni District, and referring back to the pre-1980 period, the study has explored points of both co-operation and antagonism between chiefs and government. It has done this through emphasis on the social, economic, administrative and political environments and how they influenced the various chiefs-government transactions. Therefore, it has considered several features, incorporating administration, politics, culture, tradition and law. In this way, the thesis has sought to recover the history of the complex relationship between ZANU PF, government and chiefs since independence.

While making special reference to Makoni District, the study also referred to the wider national picture. It looked at how national factors affected Makoni District, and how local developments in Makoni reflected on the national picture. What the study observed is that developments in Makoni were not peculiar to the district. Most of the issues that affected the district as regards chiefs-government relations were representative of what was happening in other districts. That Makoni District followed the national pattern is shown by how the study made numerous cross-referencing with other districts like Binga, Umzingwane and Masvingo. This reveals how chiefs elsewhere also experienced rejection and then accommodation by ZANU PF, and how they were used as political agents since 2000. The example of Makoni allowed this study to make a more nuanced analysis of the subject in order to get a finer picture of the relations.

The contribution of this study lies in its historical approach, which allows for a long view of the subject. It departs from those analyses which privilege a ‘presentist’ social science discourse of scholars like Makumbe, Helmsing and Mutizwa-Mangiza. By contrast, this study sheds light on how the coming of independence affected chiefs and how their status was transformed over time. Also, while scholars like Ranger and Lan looked at long-term changes

in chiefs-government relations, they concentrated on the colonial period. They only made a cursory glance at the post-colonial period. Scholars like Mamdani, Logan and Van Nieuwaal discussed a great deal about chiefs, albeit in non-Zimbabwean settings. This study, therefore, has gone beyond the early 1980s period, where Ranger and Lan ended. It gave attention to a localised Makoni District case study while borrowing ideas from non-Zimbabwean studies.

Appendix

Section 31 of the 1898 Order-in-Council highlights typical responsibilities given to chiefs by colonial administrations up to the period of independence.

31. A chief shall be responsible within his tribal area for:

(1) the general good conduct of the natives under his charge;

(2) the immediate notification to the Native Commissioner of all crimes or offences or serious attempts at crimes, of all deaths and suspicious disappearances, of any epidemic or prevailing diseases whether among members of his tribe or their stock;

(3) the due publication of all such public orders, directions or notices that may be notified to him;

(4) the nomination of a sufficient number of men to act as district headmen for sections of his tribe for appointment by the Secretary for Native Affairs who shall also have the power to remove them and to appoint others in their stead;

(5) cognition and control of natives not being people of his own tribe who may come into his tribal area, and stock other than stock known to be property of his own tribe;

(6) the notification to the Native Commissioner of all applications by new-comers to build and reside in his tribal area;

(7) the prompt supply of men called for under the terms of section 6 of Part 11 of this Proclamation as and when ordered to supply the same by the Administrator in Council with the approval of the High Commissioner through the Native Commissioner;

(8) the discharge of such further and other duties as may from time to time be prescribed by the Administrator in Council subject to the approval of the High Commissioner.

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