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Headman Mzilawempi's eviction from Rhodesdale Estate in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and the struggle for restoration of lost status—1953-2021

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses enduring effects of traditional leadership demotion and forced migration in Zimbabwe. It draws from experiences of headman Mzilawempi and his people who were evicted from Rhodesdale Estate in 1953 and relocated to Hurungwe District, Mashonaland West Province whereupon Mzilawempi was downgraded from the position of a chief to a headman. The study addresses how the relegation continued to impact on Mzilawempi chiefdom/headmanship and ways in which colonial reconfigurations of traditional posts haunt Zimbabwe today. We examined mechanisms which have been utilized by Mzilawempi and his people in their struggle for elevation to the position of chief since coming to Hurungwe district. This qualitative research concluded that the demotion of the traditional leader led to increased differences with the minority regime, challenges of asserting authority in the new destination by Mzilawempi culminating in demands by the incumbent headman for elevation by the Zimbabwean government partly using post- 2000 newly resettled adjoining former white commercial farms as a further justification for a bigger title. From 2019, the struggle Mzilawempi's reinstatement led his people to constitute themselves into a committee to map and lead the struggle. That committee was seeking to have Mzilawempi elevated to the position of chief at the time of undertaking this research.

KEYWORDS:

Chief, headman, District Commissioner, eviction, Crown Land

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Introduction

The study of Hurungwe traditional leadership is part of an attempt to historicize district which was generally neglected by the colonial government and remained so even after the attainment of independence. Rutherford (2000) acknowledged that it was only during the Second World War that the district began to attract White farming community in Rhodesia. Some white soldiers who had fought for Britain during this war were being rewarded with farms by the government of the day. The idea of settling white and displacing African people in and to Hurungwe was arrived at this time thus configuring patterns of traditional leadership. At first, Africans were moved to Hurungwe in order to make way for European tobacco farmers in 1941 (Annual Reports, Urungwe District, S2827/2/2/3-7, National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), Harare, 1955-1961). Listed for removal in 1942 and 1943 were Chiefs Chanetsa, Dendera, Nematombo, Dandawa and Bepura. Nematombo eventually remained in his area while Bepura was not moved to Hurungwe. Thereafter, Hurungwe became a destination of traditional leaders and their people who were being displaced when Chanetsa and Mzilawempi's land was allocated to whites.

Mudzimu, Nyamhunga, Dandawa and Chundu were also resettled to Hurungwe in order to pave way for the construction of Kariba Dam. We focus on Mzilawempi whose land in the Midlands province of Rhodesia was taken away to create commercial farms in the wake of the World War II. Nyambara (2005) points out that in 1947, Rhodesdale was bought by the Rhodesian government from London Rhodesian Mining and Land Company (Lonrho), surveyed and divided into farms and ranches that were allocated to ex-servicemen under the Ex-Servicemen Land Resettlement Scheme. As such, by 1950, some 496 ex- servicemen had been settled on farms under the scheme. It was within this context that Mzilawempi and his people were forcibly moved.

Mzilawempi is a headman under Chief Nematombo. His people, however, prefer to call him 'Chief'. He belongs to the Karanga ethnic group and shares boundaries with chiefs Chanetsa, Mudzimu and Mujinga who are all of the Korekore ethnic affiliation. Prior to development induced forced migration; Mzilawempi and his people lived in what was then referred to as Rhodesdale Estate or Goldfields (Gorofiru in vernacular) lands of the Midlands Province. This area was bounded by a line connecting Gweru, Kwekwe, Hartley (now Chegutu), Enkledoorn (now Chivhu), Mvuma and Lalapansi [Z.N.A., S160/LS100/3A (-106/1/50), Movement of Natives, Map of Rhodesdale]. After the

World War I, Mzilawempi's area was first managed by a white man, remembered as Gilpin, and subsequently his son Jeffrey (Interview with Mr Maunyani Gweru, 17 October 2021). During this period, whites on farms were notorious for exploiting African tenants on that land whom they treated as squatters especially from the 1940s as whites began to appropriate the land (Nyandoro, 2019). In exchange of staying at Jeffrey's property, farming and grazing their cattle, people under Mzilawempi provided the farm owner with unpaid labour. It was within these circumstances that Mzilawempi was demoted and then banished to Hurungwe district as a headman in 1953.

Mzilawempi belongs to the Mhara (eland) totem and the praise name is Chikonamombe. The founder of the chieftainship, Zimowa, had 3 sons namely Mzilawempi who was the eldest, followed Masocha and the youngest, Hlabangwe. Zimowa's grandparents are said to have migrated from Mutasa in Manicaland to Mhondoro District in Mashonaland West Province. Zimowa was taken by his mother as a child to the Midlands where he grew up to become a traditional leader. He was the first chief installed in 1911 and was followed by Bhandi and then Masocha. The current headman Maringindo Zimowa was installed on 15 March 1976 (Focus Group Discussion at Mzilawempi's court, 18 June 2021). It is under his administration that a dossier on the history of Mzilawempi people has been prepared as part of formal submissions for the elevation of the traditional leader (from a headman to a chief).

Methodology

The study was a purely qualitative as it relied on the interpretation of ordinary people's oral responses, archival sources and analysis of (un)published secondary sources. We were still able to make use of some files from the National Archives of Zimbabwe on both Rhodesdale and Hurungwe. The collection of primary information took place between May and November 2021 although some earlier interviews were also invoked. Data was gathered primarily using interviews (physical and telephonic). There was one visit to Chief Mzilawempi's court. This was followed by telephone conversations with one of his advisors to gain more insight on issues that had been overlooked, but still needed answers. Researchers interviewed Chief Gambiza who occupies the general area where Mzilawempi's chieftainship is said to have originated. The reason for taking interviews to the Midlands was to authenticate claims on whether or not Mzilawempi was given chieftainship by Chiwundura. The cooperation of key informants, however, made the collection of data a lot easier

than would otherwise be expected under difficult circumstances of travelling created by Covid-19 induced restrictions.

In October 2021, one key interview with Mr Maunyani, a resident of Mzilawempi but lived in Gweru, was conducted. He was among one of the few remaining survivors who were physically moved as a young boy in 1953. Discussions with him yielded insightful responses which were subsequently augmented by another interview with his other surviving colleague John Magudhu in November of the same year. We managed to take advantage of our presence in Hurungwe to also interview one of the advisors to the current Mzilawempi. Content analysis of secondary sources assisted researchers to get a clear understanding of the general context of forced evictions in Rhodesia.

Traditional leaders under colonial rule

Henry Maine came up with a theory of nativism as cited in Mamdani (2013) which centres on major differences between the settler and the native as popularized in the mid-19th century. According to the theory, if the settler was modern, the native was not, if history defined the settler, geography defined the native. If continuous progress was the marker of settler civilization, native custom was thought as part of nature, fixed and unchanging (Mamdani, 2013). The native was said to represent triumph of geography over time. Kinship according to Maine was the central focus of primitive life (Mamdani, 2013). Kinship ultimately meant that men are not regarded, and treated, as individuals but always as members of a particular group. To reduce tension with regards to the colonized, colonial powers were pre-occupied with establishing credentials of their native allies as traditional and authentic (Mamdani, 2013). Ultimately, by appointing a chief, the colonial state became the custodian and enforcer of tradition while enforcing tradition was a means of entrenching colonial power.

Colonial authorities did not hesitate to punish disobedient or non-submissive traditional leaders by demotion, dissolution of the traditional leadership or even death. Mamdani as cited by Gapps (2018) sees chieftainship as 'decentralized despotism' or the rural arm of the bifurcated state that was created throughout the continent during the colonial period. The puzzle among settlers was how to extend their effective rule to Africans given that whites were so few in number as compared to Africans. In order to assert authority over their African subjects, settlers did not hesitate to reprimand chiefs or headmen, sometimes with

extreme violence. For example, in early colonial Natal, the Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone attacked chiefs Fodo, Sidoyi and Matshana at different points between 1845 and 1858, seized their cattle and declaring them deposed (McCledon, 2006). In 1954, the police arrested a Chief and Village Head who were resisting eviction at Rhodesdale (Nyambara, 2005). This was meant to prove that enjoyment of the traditional title and its benefits by the chief or headman was a privilege of those who obeyed colonial masters and their representatives. Deposition was, therefore, a necessary way to bring chiefs to order.

Despite the end of colonial rule, the mechanics that governed the appointment, demotion and duties of traditional authorities did not change much. Traditional rulers are still rooted in specific geographical areas, are appointed by authorities from government and usually operate according to the dictates of the same. Some traditional leaders though rooted in certain defined areas, have now been attempting to extend their spheres of influence by occupying neighbouring former white commercial farms. In a similar way to colonial rule, the District Administrator (DA) is the most senior government representative at the district level (Chigwata, 2016) meaning that he is above the chiefs just as was the case with the District Commissioner in Rhodesia.

Importance and sole of traditional leaders

A King or Chief in many parts of Africa was regarded with religious awe because he was believed to form a link in the hierarchy of society which passes from men to kings, to ancestors, to gods up to the supreme God of all. Among the Bantu people of South Africa, a Chief was not merely head of a *tribe*; he was the symbol of tribal unity. He was understood to be the priest and magician, ruler and lawgiver; war leader and source of health. Under Tshaka (the Zulu King), the King had a godlike eminence. Among the Venda of Limpopo province in South Africa, not only was the chief regarded as semi-divine during the greater part of his life, but towards the end of his life when he had abjured all contact with women, he made a solitary dance which made him in very truth a god (Parrinder, 1968). Among the Lovebu in the Transvaal, the queen was traditionally held with high esteem.

The life of the country under her jurisdiction was bound up with her. As such, she was called 'the soil'.According to traditions, "the country died with its owner" and many people fled because of the famines that were expected in the wake of her death since the queen was primarily a rainmaker (Parrinder 1968 p. 69). Ncube (2020) emphasises on the spiritual role of traditional leaders in precolonial Zimbabwe.

Among the Swazi, the King as a traditional leader, was not supposed to come into contact with death which is why he was not expected to stay at his predecessors' village but to build a new one. He was not to touch a corpse, approach a grave, or even mourn for more than a few days (Parrinder, 1968). The King was so important that when he died, the whole nation was without 'strength'. This explains why his death was kept a secret so that at its weakest point, the country would not be vulnerable to attack. In short, the position of the king/chief or sub-chief is that of outstanding power and authority.

The chief in traditional Africa was the personification of the people and was often called by the name of the whole group he presided over. He also had first choice of land for cultivating or grazing. When it came to rituals like rain-making or first fruits ceremonies, it all started at the chief's court. Headmen, village heads and heads of families would follow likewise. Where a traditional leader had been uprooted from outside and placed in an alien land under new authorities, problems of allegiance would normally arise (Chlouba, 2019). The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) has been kin in avoiding that because the failure of the chief to rein in his people in turn negatively affected development projects and on the whole, mistrust in government institutions would arise.

The importance of having a chief among Africans was understood though differently by the colonial masters. The British indirect colonial policy mistakenly took it that throughout Africa, there must be a system of chiefs and sub-chiefs; they appointed some in areas that had no chiefs (Tignor, 1971). The chief was not an absolute ruler because he depended on his people to maintain his position (Ncube, 2020). He could be de-stooled if he abused the power bestowed upon him by the ancestors. In an interview undertaken by one of the researchers in 2014 in Hurungwe District of Zimbabwe, Chief Mudzimu was demoted to a headman (sub- chief) in 1953.

The problem came in 1950 when Mudzimu married off his daughter Karuva whom Matapura Zaranyika had promised to marry three years back and they had actually exchanged tokens (*nhumbi*). Matapura Zaranyika had gone to

work in Chakari and for three years his whereabouts remained unclear. Karuva was then married by another man. When Zaranyika returned, he reported the matter to the DC at Mwami culminating in the temporary suspension of the Mudzimu chieftainship (Interview with Headman Mudzimu and his advisors, 11 July 2014). The suspension was duly upheld in the capital Salisbury, because it was an abomination for a chief to violate cultural norms in this way. From 1953, Mudzimu fought for reinstatement until he got back his chieftainship in 2019. The struggle points to the living legacies of colonial interference with the status of traditional leaders.

Colonial rule in Zimbabwe had adverse effects on the position of some traditional chieftainship. For example, the Ndebele kingdom was ended following defeat by the BSAC in the 1893-4 war (Ncube, 2020). Ellert and Anderson (2020) acknowledge that the dignity of chieftainship in the pre- colonial era ended with the arrival of colonial authorities in 1890. Administrative structures that were introduced by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) reduced the role of the chief to that of a government officer. Native Commissioners facilitated the installation of new chiefs and screened candidates to make sure those who were considered right in their eyes were chosen (Ellert & Anderson, 2020; Chigwata, 2016). At the same time, the role of spirit mediums in the installation of traditional leaders was watered down. Additionally, chiefs were now salaried and served in the Native Affairs Department to enforce colonial policies such as hut tax (Fredrikiese, 1982).

The department, therefore, survived partly because of the collaboration of chiefs. The rise of Zimbabwean nationalism therefore found chiefs already suspect in the eyes of their people. It is not surprising that before the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, the then Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, first sought the support of some selected chiefs from the government-financed Council of Chiefs (Fredrikiese, 1982). This explained why during the liberation war in Zimbabwe, traditional leaders were mistrusted on suspicions that they were government mouthpieces. In Zimbabwe today, one only becomes a chief with the approval of the President of Zimbabwe who in turn either personally attends the installation ceremony or sends a delegation often made up of the president of the Chiefs' Council, the Minister of Local Government, the Provincial and District administrators among other dignitaries.

Despite the importance of traditional leaders to their people as noted above, sometimes they have been ditched and later on sought after at the pleasure of ruling political parties. For example, after attaining independence, the new

Frelimo government of Mozambique in 1975 banned all traditional authorities, rituals and beliefs under the auspices of 'anti- obscurantist'. Having realised their mistake, in June 2000, the Council of Ministers passed a decree to recognize "customary" chiefs as legitimate local units of government (Obarrio, 2010). Traditional leaders got into complex relationships with the colonial system. Those who resisted policies such as apartheid could get dismissed. In Dinokana of the Tswana reserves (Northwest Province), Chief Moiloa was deposed (Kelly, 2015). Although the new government of Zimbabwe was indifferent to chiefs on the attainment of independence, it was not as radical as the independent government of Mozambique. The chiefs and Headmen Act of 1982 limited the powers of traditional leaders (Chigwata, 2015). Village Development Committees (VIDCO) and Ward Development Committees (WADCO) led by war veterans and other ruling party supporters replicated the role of traditional leaders (Ncube, 2020).

Temporarily, the GoZ also proposed democratising the countryside by taking away the judicial and land-allocating power of chiefs, headman and kraal heads, thereby making them 'redundant' in rural administration (Tshuma, 1997). The government however still recognized traditional authorities. Ten seats were reserved for them in senate. They remained key figures in traditional functions associated with their areas of jurisdiction. Their salaries were maintained while the VIDCOs and WADCOs who were being directed to do a lot of work were not paid (Mkodzongi, 2016). More importantly, chiefs continued to enjoy popular support among their people despite being sidelined by government. Therefore, returning full power to traditional authorities especially in the wake of the land reform was intended to consolidate waning political support for the ruling ZANU-PF party. After all, unlike VIDCOs and WADCOs, traditional authorities were not entirely dependent on the ruling party for legitimacy and support.

In the contemporary sense, chiefs remain central as a point of community development. A study undertaken in Malawi has proved that in the present day they are responsible for initiating development projects, community and resource mobilization and monitoring development (Gondwe, 2020). The same research indicates that there is a close link between role of traditional leaders, decentralisation and rural development because chiefs are considered as reliable and dependable eyes and ears of people and they act as entry points for rural areas. As such, since rural development also involves traditional leaders in order to uplift the living standard of the rural poor they are considered as

catalysts of development. Respondents from Mzilawempi pointed to successful development projects coordinated by their leader from the time of settlement to date. When the community came to Hurungwe, they brought with them 2 primary schools, Todhla and Magudhu which were eventually changed to Nyamutora and Mukakatanwa upon settlement in the new area. They also brought with them an adequate number of teachers to run these schools.

In postcolonial Africa, the role of the chief has largely remained legal. Trutz von Trotha (1996) explained that from colonial days to date, the chief has been a double gatekeeper on a social and legal as well as cultural level with control over the state's intervention in local affairs. At the same time, since 'it is impossible for the state to physically exert its powers to every village', the chief on behalf of the government takes care of that weakness by exercising more direct control. On a cultural front, the chief is a guardian of tradition and a patriarchal head of the community he presides over. The chief is the defender of local tradition. The position of the chief is at the centre of political life, it fights and struggles especially during the election of a new traditional leader. It is the responsibility of the chief to settle public disputes in the area under his jurisdiction. In postcolonial Africa, the role of chiefs has been further diversified. In some cases, the position of chiefs has been raised by giving them posts in the political systems as members of assemblies on different levels from local councils to national parliament (von Trotha, 1996). With these positions, traditional leaders have been able to enrich themselves, influence development of their areas and above all create clientelist networks. These developments help to explain the struggles for elevation because some of these benefits do not accrue to headmen.

Demotions and promotion of traditional leaders

Demotion or promotion of traditional leaders is something that not only runs in the heart of the Zimbabwean history, but also that of Africa in general characteristic of colonial rule. In Zimbabwe, it reached its apex with the abolition of the position of king when the Ndebele were defeated in the 1893-4 War of Dispossession by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) which went on to occupy the whole of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). As some were demolished, other chieftainships were also being created. The post-colonial government of Zimbabwe has even gone a step further to create chieftainships where none existed before. One of these is that of Jethro Mutendi where land constituting Chirisa Game Reserve was sliced for his chieftainship (*The Chronicle*, 8 July

2014). This was done using the Traditional Leaders' Act (Chapter 27:17) which gives the government power to install chiefs where there is administrative need.

The imposition of colonial rule generally saw some traditional leaders across Africa being deported, stripped of their position and power or otherwise maltreated (von Totha, 1990). The promotion and demotion of traditional leaders became characteristic of Rhodesia especially after the 1896-7 Chimurenga war. Beach (2012) has detailed some of the unfortunate predicaments which befell traditional leaders following the victory of the BSAC Company in the wars of 1893-4 and 1896-7. After the war, Njanja sub-rulers (headmen) who had collaborated were put on an equal footing with their superior, Gambiza. On the other hand, in Chivi, the Musipambi group was suppressed and the Poko removed from the land they had seized during the fighting. Chivi's son Tarwireyi was granted a special subsidized title. What this means is that colonial rule greatly interfered with positions of traditional leaders. Some were promoted, others demoted and yet another category dismissed. In 1914, another chief in the Chirumhanzu area of Rhodesia was deposed for connivance at cattle theft (Beach 2012). These dismissals and demotions continue to plague Zimbabwe and many African countries as traditional leaders fight to regain lost status.

In Zimbabwe, the positions of chief, headman and village head are hereditary (Ncube, 2020). The chief holds the highest office followed by the headman and then the village head. Chiefs are appointed by the President of Zimbabwe at the recommendation of the Council of chiefs; headmen are appointed by the minister responsible for traditional affairs upon the recommendation of the relevant chief. Village heads are appointed by the national government secretary responsible for traditional affairs upon the recommendation of the relevant headmen with the approval of the chief of the area (Chigwata, 2015). The same applies for the removal or demotion of traditional leaders. The chief being the senior of all draws a host of benefits from the government. These include an allowance, a car, access to land in former white commercial farms, free agricultural inputs among others. Being the first citizen in his area, he is also the first to get any donation that may come in times of difficulties. Some chiefs today even sit in parliament. Most of these benefits are elusive to headmen. It is not surprising that people feel that their leader (headman) should have a higher status. Headmen and village heads also receive monthly allowances, but these are insignificant compared to those of chiefs (Chigwata, 2016). In addition, chiefs also keep to their own use fines imposed on offenders who come to court. Chiefs also benefit from vehicles, electrification of their homes, housing schemes and

so on. Chigwata has shown that as of 2014, chiefs were receiving an allowance from the government of US$300 per month (Chigwata, 2016). Such benefits have heightened the interests of those who have the potential to become chiefs.

Origins of the Mzilawempi headmanship

According to Mzilawempi traditions, as told in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), a man called Zimowa kept stray cattle for a period of three years and eventually handed them over to the paramount Chief Chiwundura. As a result of this honesty, the Chief was impressed and excised part of the territory under his jurisdiction for Zimowa to rule. The territory which was given to Zimowa fell between Gweru, Mvuma and Zibagwe Districts roughly beginning at the confluence of Chomukonde and Mbembeswane Rivers. At the recommendation of Chiwundura, the Native Commissioner installed Zimowa a chief in 1911.

The first chief died in 1927 and was succeeded by his son Mzilawempi. It was during the reign of Mzilawempi that land grabs by the colonial regime began in an area under his jurisdiction. In 1950, Benjamin Burombo, Kesiya Madzorera and Saizi visited Rhodesdale to mobilize the people against forced labour, evictions and human rights violations (NAZ, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Box 158086). At that time, people under Mzilawempi were paid a paltry £1.50 every four months. Only maize meal was given to these laborers. They were regarded as squatters because their land had been expropriated. A committee was constituted to spearhead resistance to these abuses under the banner of Burombo's Voice. Those who were in the committee were Job Malaba, Hotho, Rahathani, Ntabeni, Jonas Zinto and Zimunhu Shirichena. All these members had unwavering support of the chief. Prior to World War II, European farmers acquired vast areas of the best land in the country, they lacked labor, and "with no labor on it [the land] had little value" (Nyambara, 2005). Therefore, the tenancy system strongly worked in favour of the conditions of white settler-farmers, particularly in the early stages when land was plentiful and capital scarce. The system proved ideal because it helped European farmers to raise the much-needed cash without labouring given that they were heavily undercapitalised (Nyambara, 2005). Labour tenants were often accused of reluctance to work. Migrant workers were thus sometimes compelled to work on threats of eviction (ZNA, S235/518, NC Annual Report, Gwelo, 1946).

Between 1939 and 1949, land alienation became apparent and the attitude towards African tenant farmers changed. With the end of World War 2, those who had fought, particularly whites were being rewarded with land (ZNA, SI

830/577787, Ex-Servicemen Land Resettlement Scheme). Rhodesdale Estate was targeted for evictions. Tensions with between Jeffrey and Mzilawempi were also increasing at the same time. One incident which sparked outrage occurred in 1952 when Jeffrey shot a duck in a dam and forced Paul Mukunu to collect it despite pleading the later pleading that he could not swim. As a result, Paul drowned. Africans in the area were greatly infuriated by this event. Jeffrey further angered the people by taking away Paul Mukunu's body and never returning it for proper burial in line with the local culture. With the help of Bejamin Burombo and Joshua Nkomo, Mzilawempi enlisted the services of a lawyer Ben Baron for justice to prevail but this did not succeed. He then declared that none of his people would work for whites. In retaliation, the regime revoked the Mzilawempi chieftainship in 1952 and relocated him and his subjects to Hurungwe District where they now reside. The official argument was that the new land was not big enough to warrant Mzilawempi the title of chief. On 10 October 1953, the first group of Mzilawempi's people arrived in Hurungwe District from Gwelo (now Gweru) and was allocated land by the white District Commissioner. Apparently, most Africa people living in Alienated and Crown Lands in the 1950s, were faced with removals at unprecedented levels. In that year, the Minister of Native Affairs promised that he would ensure the removal of Africans living in Crown Lands within five years (Bhebe, 1989).

Forced relocation to Hurungwe increased tension between the evictees and colonial administrators. Once Mzilawempi had settled in Hurungwe, his people became militant. According to Mafa (Interview, 17 June 2021), prominent African nationalists visited Mzilawempi in 1960. These included Hebert Chitepo, Boniface Gumbo, Peter Katsande, James Ngwenya and Morton Malianga. They were also pushing for Mzilawempi's reinstatement. Several people were arrested and imprisoned in the 1960s for supporting the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Some of them included Mabhute (village head), Donasi, Zinto, Kisi, Matare (village head), Shaiso, Brandina, Vherina, Mufi, Togara and Mushungwasha.

The presence of nationalists further infuriated the District Commissioner who reacted by imposing the digging of contour ridges in the area under Mzlawempi in 1961. Mzilawempi became a sanctuary of Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZPRA) during Zimbabwe's protracted liberation war from the mid-1960s to 1979. One son of Magudhu became a central figure in supporting ZPRA insurgents. It was unusual for guerrillas to gather at his home from time to time during the armed struggle. Mzilawempi's people brought this to mind

in order to buttress justifications for reinstatement. Demand for reinstatement of chieftainship was believed by Mzilawempi's followers to increase people's morale culminating in political benefits on the part of government. Chlouba (2019) asserts that residents living under a traditional leader whose elevation they consider legitimate are more likely to trust the government than those who are grumbling or are not under such a leader. Chief Hozheri who was moved to Sanyati over the same period suffered the same challenge and tension continues with Chief Neuso today (Nyandoro, 2019).

The resistance to colonial demands which traditional African leaders such as Mzilawempi and their followers were exercising has been captured by Allison Shutt (2007) as insolence. Once colonial rule had been established, the next stage was governing Africans with creative authority. Against this background, Southern Rhodesia Native Regulations, 1910 (generally referred to as Native Regulations) and the Native Affairs Act, 1927 (NAA) were enacted in order to deal with challenges generally defined as insolence. Native Commissioners in Rhodesia needed paternal and schoolmaster-like powers to control Africans (Shutt, 2007). Native and District Commissioners oversaw programs such as animal culling, demotion of rank, forced labour, redistribution of lands, public works and notices of increased tax and so on. If an African reacted in a way which was interpreted by officials as unruly and ill-mannered, he was subject to a fine or imprisonment. The behavior exhibited by Mzilawempi and his people had all the characteristics of what was defined as insolence at the time. That explains why he was first demoted and then banished to Hurungwe though in practice his resistance represented forms of nationalism.

Forced migrations scatter people who were formerly united geographically and culturally. At the time of movement, not all people went with Mzilawempi to Hurungwe. Some went to Sanyati while others went to Kana in Gokwe district. For example, Chief Hozheri was moved to Sanyati together with 356 families. A total of 1100 African families were dumped to Gokwe Special Native Area in 1951 and another 900 in 1955 (Bhebe, 1989). A few are said to have remained in the same locality. This goes to explain how forced migration impacts heavily on the status of traditional leaders from the moment they are evicted. With probably half of the original number that Mzilawempi presided over coupled with resistance and out-migration by some Korekore village heads he found already resident in the area allocated to him, it took time for Mzilawempi to assert full authority. According to Ngongoni (6 November 2021), Headman Chanetsa claims that he is the one who gave Mzilawempi land on which to

settle. In fact, Chanetsa argues that he gave Mzilawempi land to look after on his behalf. He is only caretaker of Chanetsa's land (Chakawa, 2015). By extension, therefore, it was impossible for Mzilawempi to be promoted before Chanetsa who was moved from Umbowe in Mhangura to Hurungwe in 1942 (Chakawa, 2015).

Mzilawempi counters that Chanetsa's people were advised to move to Chanetsa's land but they did not. As a result, these people now belong to him. Following his elevation to chieftainship, Chanetsa is now using his new position to back the promotion of Mzilawempi against paramount Chief Nematombo who stands threatened by the elevation of his headman. The more headmen a chief has, the more powerful he becomes. As such, promotions of headmen have a bearing on incumbent paramount chiefs. Mzilawempi has historically always wanted government to upgrade him to the status of a chief (S2929/2/9 Delineation Report, Urungwe District, February 1967-1968). His advisor, Ngongoni explained that the District Commissioner at some point in 1976 promised to come and install Mzilawempi a chief but kept on postponing the dates until hope was lost. Now that Zimbabwe is independent from colonial rule, the argument is that time for that promotion has finally come.

Mzilawempi brought with him many village heads and retained them at the expense of those found resident. Among the village heads were Mzilawempi, Fanhiso, Mangisi, Kiwa, Magama, Matoto, Sichaleka, Matate, Mafishi, Sifelani, Maunyani, Sikonzapi, Mufi, Tondekai, Mapurazi and Mubvakure. Each of these village heads had to organize own transport. This is where one entrepreneur named Magudhu loomed large. His lorry was one of the major modes of transport from Rhodesdale. First, the new arrivals were settled close to Mukakatanwa Dam. The District Commissioner gave them land from Tengwe River to Mukonori.

When Mzilawempi arrived, there were already other village heads of the Korekore ethnic affiliation. These were Mukakatanwa, Karima, Makoshore, Nyamutora, Themba Kondo, Beremauro and Nyakuzviranga. The Korekore village heads were given a choice of going to live under Chief Nematombo or headmen Mudzimu and Chanetsa or joining the newly arrived traditional leader. Themba Kondo and Beremauro left for Rengwe and Kapare respectively on grounds that they could not be ruled by aliens. Some of the Korekore village heads, already resident in Hurungwe, were also demoted because Mzilawempi had brought his own men to head villages. This became a source of hatred once more. Part of those who refused to be led by Mzilawempi came under

an unrecognized headman called Kariyana. He has remained defiant to the leadership of Mzilawempi on the basis that Hurungwe is a territory of the Korekore ethnic group. Makaza (13 September 2021) showed that Kariyana is just a senior village head responsible for rainmaking and other traditional ceremonies (*marenda* in vernacular). Though defiant, his land is under the overall headmanship of Mzilawempi. The challenge however is that at the time of settlement, Kariyana continued to preside and try cases of people belonging to the Korekore ethnic affiliation while Mzilawempi tried cases of people he had brought. Technically, this meant that Kariyana was running a parallel system. This changed as Mzilawempi assumed more power.

There are even further dimensions which are a cause of friction between Mzilawempi and adjoining traditional leaders. Generally, the land which was allocated to Mzilawempi belonged to Chief Nematombo. In his capacity as headman, Mzilawempi therefore remains under the jurisdiction of Nematombo. The elevation of Mzilawempi to the position of a chief would naturally rob Nematombo of the land which he thinks is rightly his and at the same time reduce his power. The elevation of Chanetsa to the position of chief in 2016 for example, was done at the expense of Nematombo. Further analysis would then indicate that forced migrations of traditional leaders and their people en masse to new lands under colonial rule created an identity crisis and friction among traditional leaders. These frictions continue to haunt present and maybe future generations in Zimbabwe. For example, Hurungwe's Chief Nematombo (born Ben Shiridzinodya) filed summons in early April 2016 under case HC3475/16 claiming that the recently installed Chief Chanetsa had encroached into his area of jurisdiction (*The NewsDay*, April 12, 2016). Respondents were Hurungwe's District Administrator, Mashonaland West Provincial Administrator and the Minister of Local Government, Saviour Kasukuwere.

In our deliberations with chief Gambiza, we sought to authenticate whether Mzilawempi was installed a chief in 1911 but the then 24-year-old chief and his adviser were not sure. The incumbent chief Gambiza argued that Chiwundura chieftainship had not been created by 1911 which seemed incorrect. Beach (1980) confirms that Chiwundura *shava* and Gambiza *dziva* moved into the Kwekwe valley in the 19th after the fall of the Rozvi state. Chief Gambiza however acknowledged that Hozheri settled in Chiwundura before moving to Sanyati. This information concurred with that provided by Makaza from Headman Mzilawempi. Chief Gambiza pointed out that following the Second World War, some people migrated to Hurungwe. To date however, the link

between Mzilawempi and Chiwundura has remained strong. Respondents from Hurungwe and Chiwundura both agreed that Mzilawempi was born to the Dube clan on the maternal side. That clan was known in the whole area. Both also agreed that Hozheri was the most senior of them all in the Kwekwe valley. What cannot be disputed is that Mzilawempi was a leader of his people before moving to Hurungwe. Against this background, he has remained in the leadership position.

Why evaluation?

Mzilawempi's advisors advanced many reasons for the elevation of their traditional leader to the position of substantive chief. One of the reasons given was that Mzilawempi is a Karanga and cannot work best under the leadership of a Korekore Chief (Nematombo). The Karanga and the Korekore have different cultural traits and none can represent the other. As such, Nematombo cannot enforce Korekore values on the Karanga and neither can he supervise and represent Karanga cultural values because what is acceptable in one's culture is unacceptable in the other. Examples that were listed were as follows:

1. *While it is taboo for a Korekore chief or spirit medium to attend a funeral, the Karanga in the same capacity can attend.*
2. *It is acceptable among the Korekore for one to marry an aunt's daughter but taboo among the Karanga.*
3. *Mzilawempi has a lower status compared to other traditional leaders around him and this displeases himself and the people he leads.*
4. *Some Korekore exhibitions and other ceremonies are taboo to the Karanga culture.*
5. *Other rituals like rainmaking ceremonies greatly differ in how they are conducted.*
6. *Chisi (weekly day when people are not supposed to work in fields) is observed on Thursday whereas the Korekore observe it on Monday. Since Mzilawempi is technically under Nematombo, it means his people do not work in their fields for 2 days per week. If they are Christians, it follows that they set aside a 3rd day thereby taking a heavy toll on production.*
7. *Mzilawempi's jurisdiction is big enough to warrant the position of chief. He has 48 village heads in the communal areas and 20 in the adjacent resettlement area and a total of 25 602 people under him as of 2020. In addition, his area boasts of 12 primary schools, 6 secondary schools, 1 clinic, 3 dip tanks and 9 business centres.*
8. *Some chieftainships in Hurungwe District which were demoted under colonial rule have since been given back their right titles. These include Mudzimu, Chanetsa and Nyika. Elsewhere in the Mashonaland West Province, Zvimba chieftainship was split into 3 (Zvimba, Nyamangara and Chidziva. With these elevations taking place, Mzilawempi sees no reason why he has been left out in the cold.*
9. *Massive contribution by the people of Mzilawempi during Zimbabwe's war of liberation was cited as one of the reasons in the fight for elevation.*

Already, there is a full committee entitled Combined Wards for the Chief's Medal Committee. The office bearers as from October 2020 included Edward Makaza (Chairperson), Kanisiyo Jorona (Vice Chairperson), Wilson Kakono (Secretary), C A Benganayi (Vice Secretary) and Mike Dube (treasurer). Their duty is to lay out justifications for elevation, to represent their leader and various forums that relate to the topic under discussion and to find out additional information that may be needed at the office of the District Administrator.

The struggle for elevation should be understood within the configurations which the land reform beginning in 2000 implied to the powers of traditional leaders. The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) was a land redistribution exercise which was implemented by the Zimbabwe government from 2000 with a view to redistributing land from about 6000 white commercial farmers to landless black peasants (Mwandiringana & Jingzhong, 2021). Chiefs were authorized to take an active role in leading their people in invasions (Ncube, 2020). In the same year, the state revived the chieftaincy through the promulgation of the Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17). This was intended to utilize traditional leaders to mobilize political support for the ruling, ZANU–PF party during elections in the countryside. Chiefs were however not authorized to allocate land in the resettlement areas but they were encouraged to take up land and have people in the same areas to be under their traditional authority. In other parts of Zimbabwe, chiefs used the FTLRP to reclaim and buttress their traditional lands (Dande & Mujere, 2019). The FLLRP has enabled Mzilawempi to renew his struggle for elevation.

With a view to benefit from the land reform, Chiefs have utilized the Traditional Leaders Act which stipulates that all resettlement areas should be placed under relevant traditional chiefs or headmen (Mkodzongi, 2016). New demands by chiefs for more land in resettlement areas has become commonplace in Zimbabwe as indicated in the study above. Mzilawempi too has taken advantage of that to claim that all resettled people in adjoining farms fall under his traditional leadership. He has asserted this by appointing his own village heads. *Landlocked* chiefs such as Mudzimu and Dandawa were equally allocated farms in former commercial farms but it is difficult for them to effectively claim village heads as the areas under their jurisdiction do not constitute a continuous block of land with resettlements. The occupation of farms by Mzilawempi confirms that traditional leaders are confined to geography. They need a block of land

to claim relevance. Without land, one cannot be a chief or headman. The same occupation shows that traditional leaders were not naïve in relation to the FTLRP. They used it to their advantage and in the case of Mzilawempi, to lay claims for elevation.

Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated ways in which colonial land dispossessions, displacement and forced migration and relocation weakened the powers of traditional leaders in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Headman Mzilawempi was a victim of all the above and to date, still struggles for elevation to the position of substantive chief in Hurungwe district of Zimbabwe which has been the home of his people since 1953. The struggle Mzilawempi against colonial (labour) exploitation started during the Second World War culminating in demotion and subsequent banishment to Hurungwe 70 years ago. Frustration with colonial misrule compelled the evictees to vent out their anger through support of ZAPU and ZPRA during the war of liberation. Mzilawempi's people supported the struggle side by side with fighting for the elevation of their traditional leader. The demotion to a lower status of headman led to loss of morale among Mzilawempi's people who still feel strongly short-changed. Both the Rhodesian government and that of independent Zimbabwe have not elevated Mzilawempi to his desired stus of chief. In Hurungwe, Mzilawempi has struggled to assert full authority over the Korekore community and at the same time extend his leadership to a rival claimant, Kariyana. In relation to the role of government to traditional leadership, the study demonstrated that the government retains the power to appoint and dismiss traditional leaders. Mzilawempi is thus turning to the government for elevation. We have also shown that since the FTLRP, chiefs have been utilizing the newly settled land to extend their influence. Mzilawempi's fight for elevation is one among many where the thinking has remained that the independent government has an obligation of correcting colonial injustices through restoration of those who were unfairly dismissed or demoted from their positions as traditional leaders.

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Interview with John Magudhu, Mzilawempi, 5 November 2021

Interview with Mr Ngogoni, Magudhu Homestead, 6 November 2021.