The Locality of Chieftainship: Territory, Authority and Local Politics in Northern Malawi, 1870-1974

Davies, M.E.

CHAPTER 1

Stories of chieftainship:
Territory and authority in the Hewe Valley, 1870 – 1912

Part one. Pre-Colonial Landscapes

Hewe before the Balowoka: ecology, people and politics

The Hewe Valley lies in the western most part of what is today Rumphi District, a predominantly Tumbuka locality in the northern region of Malawi. In pre-colonial times this area formed part of a "healthy tsetse-free land bridge that […] functioned as a natural funnel of people into the hospitable highlands of Malawi";[1] this "Tumbuka-Zone" welcomed a variety of people, over a long period of time, from southern Tanzania and north-eastern Zambia and developed a distinct character which was quite different from Tumbuka areas to the south, both in terms of inheritance, settlement patterns and, indeed, structures of authority.[2] It is generally agreed[3] that before the arrival of a group of traders-turned-chiefs known as the *Balowoka*[4], the communities that lived here were, whilst unified by language, pretty fragmented. Vail infers that the physical landscape itself accounts for both the nature of settlement and the structures of religious authority to be found there:

> *"The territory in which the Tumbuka lived was not conducive to large settlements, partly because of the dryness of the land and partly because of the rough and broken nature of the terrain. Throughout the area there were no strong political leaders. The people lived scattered in small groups over the face of the countryside, and it is natural that the most frequent manifestations of the religious spirit of the people should have been local and personal in nature. Ancestor veneration was basically a family affair, and witchcraft detection and peripheral possession were village matters".* [5]

Whilst Chondoka asserts that there existed a wider Tumbuka Kingdom from as early as 1460,[6] under the "chieftainship" of M'nyanjagha, there is no strong evidence to be found in Hewe amongst the earliest known occupants[7] that they gave tribute to an authority elsewhere, or indeed that they had allegiances other than to their own clan.[8] Regardless of whether there had existed some wider structure of organisation amongst the Tumbuka in the past, by the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the influence of the caravan trade was making its presence felt in this region, no political or economic polity of any note was in evidence.[9] Furthermore any wider influence a central figure such as the M'nyanjagha King, as Chondoka would have it, could have exercised would certainly have been swallowed up in the new economic landscape that was emerging. A landscape where experience of trade and contact with coastal markets, which the *Balowoka* had, were the decisive factors in determining who would wield both economic and political power in the future.

The economic landscape had, in fact, been in the process of major change for some time. A large trading space existed which extended from the Luangwa Valley, across the Tumbuka highlands and down to the Lakeshore; exchange in bark-cloth, local cotton cloth, tobacco, grain, various foodstuffs, reed-mats, arrow poison and arrow heads, local salt, and basketry meant

that there was already much interaction and interdependence between the Tumbuka, Bisa, Bemba, Lakeshore Tonga and Nkonde.[10] Whilst it is commonly narrated that it was the groups of *Balowoka* who had first brought hoes into the area[11] there is much oral and archaeological evidence to suggest that people already cultivated their land with Phoka, and sometimes Chewa, hoes which they exchanged goats, chickens or sometimes maize for, and even that they had begun to use these precious iron tools as a form of bridewealth.[12] Furthermore the Tumbuka living in this area were also not completely ignorant as to the value of ivory, as some have suggested that they were. Official narratives state that when Katumbi arrived in the area around 1770-80 he "found people putting on bark cloth and using ivory as props on which to spread their mats",[13] but there is much reason to believe that by this time the Bisa, skilled hunters arriving from the west, had already started collecting ivory from Tumbuka areas.

According to tradition the Bisa had quite an impact on the pre-*Balowoka* society in Hewe. Coming in teams, they were "wanderers" who would rarely settle for long but who brought varied skills with them such as new ways of hunting with arrow poison (*ulembe*),[14] novel items of trade such as the copper wires they had fashioned into bangles and that are remembered to have been worn by village headmen,[15] and even new forms of dance.[16] But whilst the Bisa influenced a number of changes in Tumbuka settlements they did not seek to have a lasting impact on the political structures of the communities to the east of the Luangwa River.[17] It was the migrants who travelled from the east at the end of the 18th Century who took trading and the organisation of monopolies over it, to a new level.

An economic step-change: broader markets and better bargaining

If the people living in the Hewe Valley knew something of the value of these "bones" through their interaction and exchange with Bisa, Chikunda and other groups,[18] to what they had not been yet exposed was a more sophisticated and extensive coastal trade that had been in the process of reviving through the Kilwa route from around 1785.[19] Described often as "coming from 'the coast' (*mbwani)"* and "dressing like Arabs" the *Balowoka* group brought with them a different kind of trading mentality, a commercial perspective, and experience from the busy markets in the east.[20] Whilst there remains some debate as to whether these migrants came into the areas that they eventually settled specifically as traders or simply as people skilled in trading who had come looking for land on which to stay,[21] what *is* apparent is that they were able to use this experience to further stimulate, extend, and eventually take control of the ivory trade as it passed through the areas in which they stayed; and to increase their personal wealth and status in doing so. The clan histories which the missionary Thomas Cullen Young collected during the early part of the twentieth century demonstrate that "a marked political change, namely the centralization of power" occurred at this time with the coming of these "strangers"; and that a "reliable" historical tradition emerges only once this settled contact has been made with "the commerce of the coast".[22]

Indeed the official dynastic tradition which has been inherited by the descendants of these trading migrants has tended to commence from this "political" moment, when the *Balowoka* are remembered as offering a form of sub-chieftainship to the people living in the areas they had been trading in:

> *"Chieftainship was introduced by people who came across the lake for trading purposes, such people as Katumbi and Chikulamayembe. They came here with ideas and practices which were already developed where they had come from, and because they brought many good things with them, they were easily accepted as chiefs by the people who were already living in this area".*[23]

This is, of course, a rather simplified version of events; the process of what might have taken some decades compounded into one easily remembered sentence. It nevertheless captures the essence of the changes taking place. Impressed with the new commodities they brought with them and with their proficient bargaining skills, it is likely that local Tumbuka clan heads began looking to these "more superior"[24] men who were pointing out the value of ivory, and skins, to them. Whether they were migrants seeking greener pastures or traders seeking markets they were in a good position to secure their residence in these areas through exploiting the presence of abundant game and negotiating economically prudent trading agreements with "the locals". Then, through what is likely was a combination of strategies, which corresponded to the economic and political conditions which the different migrant groups found themselves, the various *Balowoka* moved beyond the setting up of key commercial alliances by marrying into the loosely organised local populations and associating themselves with local religious institutions.

It is important, however, to note a crucial periodisation in the way in which this leadership took shape, which isn't reflected in the official narratives. From the wider oral evidence it seems as though some of these first generation migrants, at least, did not immediately "settle" and they wielded no more power than that which their practiced bartering skills could create for them. As the coastal trade began to boom, and expand, this new pattern of authority was ushered in. The early incursions of such foreign intrusions in to the interior, as exampled by the *Balowoka*, marked the beginning of "the set of the tide from the Arabised east toward the interior".[25] As Cullen Young argues, using the example of the Yao who were also moving deeper into the country to the south of the lake, "it was not until the Arabs began to realise to what an extent the more pushing and mercantile-minded of the inlanders were enriching themselves as middlemen that they began themselves to penetrate the continent".[26]

The oral evidence available suggests a distinction between two periods; a time when the first generation *Balowoka* travelled and traded freely and widely, possibly even "going back" to the markets at the coast, and afterwards when "the Arabs began to come" to them in order to collect the ivory which was being "made ready for them".[27] A local historian of the Hewe area once told of the fact that the famous Arab King Mlozi, who operated from a base in Karonga at the lakeshore, sent his people to go straight "to house of Katumbi that was where the hunters who had ivory went to sell it". [28] This distinction is important because, as one village headman emphatically asserted in an interview with the anthropologist and linguist Leroy Vail in 1970, "a chief does not leave his people to go and trade".[29] A significant change had taken place, a founding that marked the beginning of the chieftainship narratives that are seen in Hewe, Nkamanga and Muyombe today.[30]

From Trader Barons to Chiefs

So what had facilitated this turn of events, this shifting of priorities? And what were the implications of it? As far as the limited evidence shows it seems that this conscious and extensive Arab incursion had the effect of shifting the scale of trading in the northern Tumbuka Highlands up yet another level. Increased traffic on the routes which the *Balowoka* had in fact played a major role in opening up, and the resultant dwindling amount of game, provoked the need for new tactics of accumulation. Kalinga sums it up as follows:

> *"It was not long before elephants became scarce in the region and the new chiefs were forced to depend upon tribute and tolls extracted from the caravans passing from the Luangwa Valley to the lakeside ports. It seems likely that the second generation coincided with this depletion of resources.*

> *The sons either had to seize political control to tax the caravans or never expect to equal the affluence of their hunter-trader fathers".*[31]

So whilst the first generation of *Balowoka* chiefs might feasibly be described as "trader barons" the "second generation used their fathers influence and prestige to take over political control";[32] they were no longer able to rely on their trading prowess alone in order to accumulate wealth. Even whilst the extent of this new 'political control' has been debated,[33] it is evident that some form of adaptation in authority was made amongst these different factions quite early on. In Nkamanga, for example, it seems increasingly likely that at this time the ancestor of Chikulamayembe, Gonapamuhanya, began "tactfully [building] political power in the area" by making "commercial visits" into the areas of the leading Tumbuka clans;[34] by the time that the second or third generation of *Balowoka* had been established, the trade was coming to them as they had established their seats of power as nodal points on the caravan route. For example Bwati I, the son of Gonapamuhanya (the second generation Mlowoka, known also from this stage as Chikulamayembe), "was not a travelling trader, but when the Arabs came, he sold some of his ivory to them and distributed the goods which he obtained among the people".[35]

On account of their new political position the second-generation of *Balowoka* (if a generalisation like this can be permitted) wielded new responsibilities of patronage. With this patronage there came a right to draw labour from amongst their people and when necessary to "hire the services" of appropriate representatives to conduct business at coastal markets on their behalf.[36] This had become essential, not only in order to maintain the display required of chiefs of their ability to accrue agents to act for them, but also to enable them to maintain their new territories effectively. The caravan routes which opened up by the early nineteenth century engendered an extremely competitive landscape; chieftaincies were made and broken in such circumstances. With the journey to and from market places such as Zanzibar taking upwards of a year to complete these envoys enabled chiefs to maintain their territory, secure local markets and fight off competitors when necessary. The importance of these representatives was reflected in the rich rewards these travelling salesmen were thought to have received on their return.[37]

Oral sources suggest that the presence in the interior of Arab traders, and their representatives, was increasing throughout this time. Remembered as being associated with "Arabs from Mwela", the Ruga-Ruga are one such example[38] who are said to have traded just like them bringing better cloth, "superior" guns, and high quality metal tools.[39] Mlozi was said to have used them as his representatives in the interior[40] and they are often recalled in oral histories as having operated in Hewe.[41] A superiority and sense of confidence that people saw in Katumbi as he dealt with these errant and unpredictable groups is expressed clearly in local sources:

> *"People differed from one place to another in their evaluation of goods. There were those like Katumbi who had come from the East (Mbwani), where they knew trading ways, and hence could deal successfully with the Ruga-Ruga. Then there were others in the area who didn't know that ivory was valuable and were willing to have it exchanged for a small amount of cloth".* [42]

These people would mainly trade with "chiefs" like Katumbi because "they were the people who had a lot of wealth […] The Ruga-Ruga would come to Katumbi's court with cloth, guns and beads […] They bought all the ivory and slaves that they wanted and then made friendship with the chief so that they could come again".[43] The caravan trade did not simply enrich these men

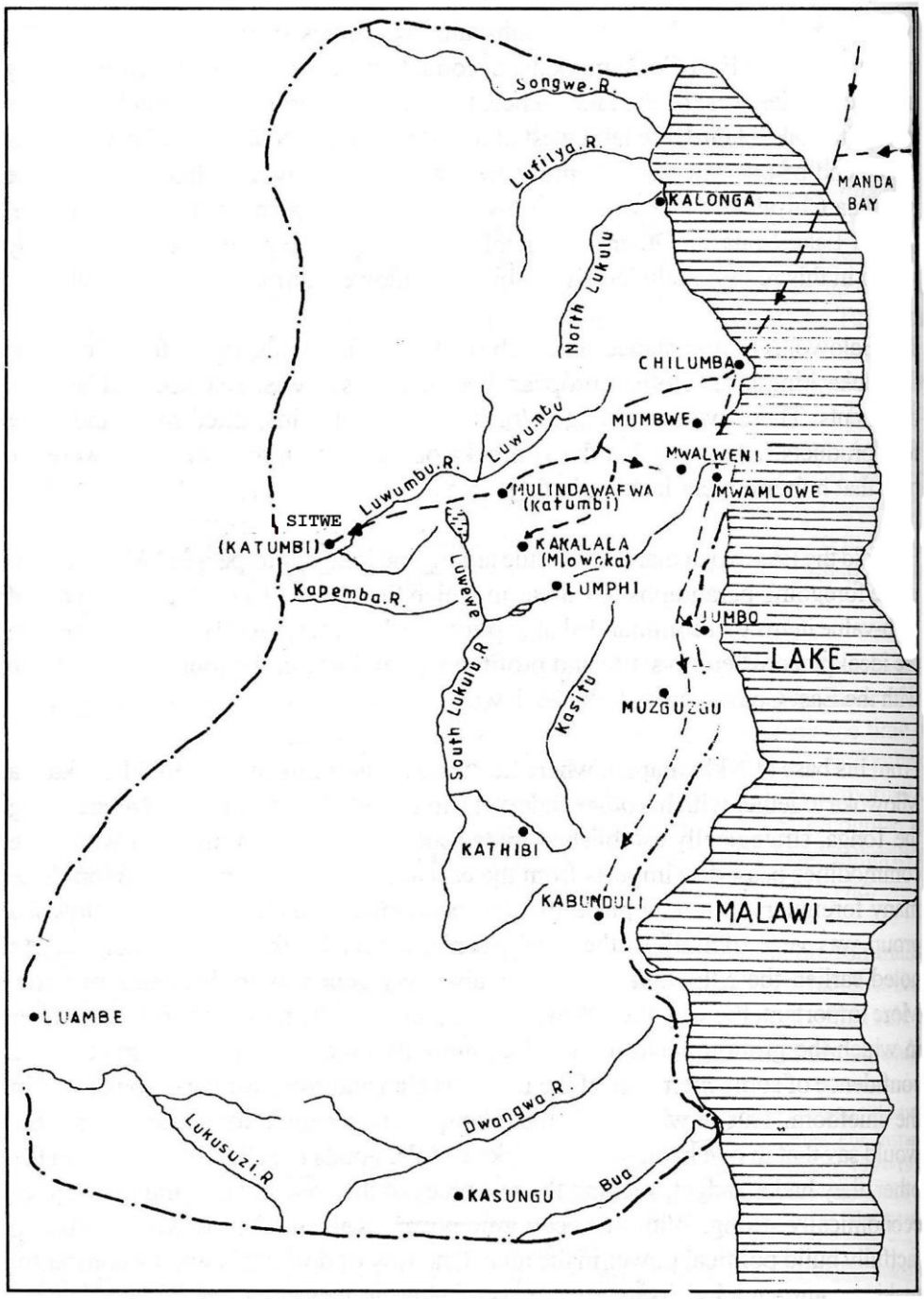
however; it offered new opportunities for accumulation amongst the local people themselves, and new avenues for hierarchies to emerge. This 'new' commodity, ivory, enthused a local population into tracking down the source of this wealth for themselves; "classes of professional hunters (*Fundi*) and professional traders who became rich and highly respected in society" grew up.[44] Furthermore people "specialized in manufacturing weapons with which to kill elephants and other large animals"[45] began organising themselves to make knives, spears and axes but also "excellent imitations of the European guns and [...] locally manufactured ammunitions".[46] It is unlikely, however, that such people sold this ivory directly to the traders. Whilst some accounts emphasise that "the parties of Arabs" in fact traded with "anyone who had ivory",[47] in reality this must have rarely happened. The *Balowoka* had effectively developed monopolies over the ivory business in their area. Whilst there was some space for village headmen (and occasionally commoners) to sell their ivory and skins, even slaves at times,[48] independently of the new chiefs, they had tended to win out with their skilled negotiation and sufficiently developed patronage network; this had kept them well stocked with the commodities the traders required, and the loyalty the chiefs needed.[49] The different *Balowoka* families had accumulated a lot of wealth as traders by this point, and with this wealth they were able to distribute widely to increase their prestige and power.

Whilst all these changes were taking place within the sphere of influence of individual chiefs, new forms of trade diplomacy and competitiveness were being shaped between them; a competitiveness that, it will be argued, has remained embedded in their royal narratives up until today. This change in interaction with each other, from being interrelated migrants less than 30 years before to becoming commercial rivals, is more easily understood if we take into account the growing need to assert a form of territoriality in this "fluid and mobile space" [50] of exchange. Likely comprising a "patchwork" of activities and interactions, this space might have looked something like how Gray describes certain mid-nineteenth century southern Gabonese trade routes, "with those districts near commercially active and nodal points being more fluid and those in the peripheral areas being more stable". His use of the notion of territoriality can be employed by us to analyse how the commonly expressed narratives of competitiveness might have been shaped in Hewe and Nkamanga:

> *"Territoriality was exercised in two ways in pre-colonial districts: In the efforts of commercial big men to regulate the movement of goods and people as well as controlling access to neighboring districts and in the organization of self-defense from external threats. Those districts more fully integrated into the long distance trade spent considerable energy trying to control trading activity but at the same time this increased activity was creating instability and paranoia. Thus, leaders in districts that contained key commercial nodal points were generally unable to organize effective resistance to colonial rule as they did not trust each other nor were willing to jeopardize their own participation in these newly lucrative networks".*[51]

Map 3.

The arrival of the Balowoka in Northern Malawi and Zambia



Adapted from Y. Chondoka and F. Bota, A History of the Tumbuka from 1400 to 1900: The Tumbuka under the M'nyanjagha, Chewa, Balowoka, Senga and Ngoni Chiefs, (Lusaka, 2007), 160

The Hewe Valley and the Nkhamanga Plain, the territorial bases of the Katumbi and Chikulamayembe dynasties respectively did not of course behave in the same ways as the Gabonese, but that they were "nodal points" on the coastal trading caravan route is in little doubt; whilst ivory was collected from the interior in several places and several routes developed around the northern end of the lake, most of these routes are remembered to have passed through the areas of these chiefs. Indeed, it has been posited by Kalinga that the political culture of these chiefdoms was influenced to a large extent by their competitiveness between one another and their need to maintain (and increase) their power so as to ensure collection of tax from passing trade and open access to the lakeshore trade points.[52] As Gray suggests, leaders at such nodal points were "more likely to exercise territoriality to control access to neighboring districts and obtain toll revenue".[53]

It is unlikely, given that this fluidity of territoriality existed, that there could have been one centralised kingdom under the rule of Chikulamayembe as has been claimed by a long list of people beginning with the European missionaries at Livingstonia[54] and the African elites who informed them, on in to the creators of the history syllabus of high schools in present-day Malawi. Aside from the fact that no common dynastic narratives exist to suggest this anywhere other than in Nkamanga itself, from a purely economic standpoint it is clear to see that the *Balowoka,* whilst certainly interdependent on each other ensuring the safety of goods and people from the other Balowoka regions, were each trying to establish their "own economic region from which he ensured the safety of the local trade routes and tapped ivory and other resources for his long-distance trade with the East coast".[55]

In the early stages of their arrival within these communities the traders were evidently operating as classic Big Men; by their own efforts they were able to take up leading roles in local politics without the need of obtaining a local title. The special position they held in the economic landscape of their localities meant they controlled labour and received tribute; key factors which enabled further accumulation and the maintenance of their position. However, whilst their economic activities were useful in establishing prowess, they maintained a rather precarious position; as Apter points out with Nigerian examples, such men held no "formal authority", because "a Big Man's power is sustained solely by his clients".[56] An authority premised on economic power alone is always vulnerable to the vagaries of external factors.

Furthermore, and for the most part, the *Balowoka* struggled to establish strong social control over their populations. Kalinga argues that this was their strategy of rule, accommodating indigenous institutions by adapting "them to suit their convenience".[57] Rather than imposing a strange new system their approach, he argues, was to give themselves an advantage over their fathers by gradually intermarrying with leading families,[58] enabling them now to "be considered as native sons because of kinship connections on the maternal side".[59] Chondoka is rather less impressed by their strategy, describing it more or less as the only option that was open to them. He argues that they could only rule the "scattered" Tumbuka "through a system of indirect rule […] through the existing political structures".[60] Whether their methods were innovative or pragmatic, in the end the results echo the same conclusion: "wherever they ruled, the *Balowoka* left the Tumbuka local traditional authorities to rule over their people according to their custom and creed. Thus, the grassroots rulers at village level […] were the indigenous people. The appointing authorities were the local people and the *Balowoka* rarely rejected such appointments. This system of rule made it difficult for the *Balowoka* to change the Tumbuka way of life".[61] The people of Nkamanga and Hewe put it another, though not entirely contradictory, way:

> *"Chikulamayembe was a man of traditions and he took it a responsibility of his to preserve the traditions he had found among the ancestors who were here before he came. This was the case in the field of religion because he patronised a number of priests at various places in his area".*[62]

> *"As far as I know, the Balowoka did not change anything that they found here. Instead they listened to the owners of the land – the Tumbuka."*[63]

The reasons for the "preservation" or "persistence" of local custom must have rested partly on the nature of the political and spiritual landscapes which were most commonly found in this Tumbuka-Zone. Unlike the Chewa chiefs to the south, who "ruled over defined areas and who enjoyed considerable power and authority",[64] the *Balowoka* were attempting to centralize their authority over small pockets of country which contained only very localised notions of territory. The people in these areas had a parochial sense of theology and only a very intermittent relationship with wider-based territorial spirit cults,[65] which they consulted rarely, largely only during times of disaster or general drought; "with such basically local foci for territorial worship, and with such a locally-oriented theological pattern"[66] control over land, fertility and agricultural production would also have been localised affairs. These dynamics did not make it easy for the *Balowoka* to truly establish themselves amongst the people, and produced a more fragile type of leadership.

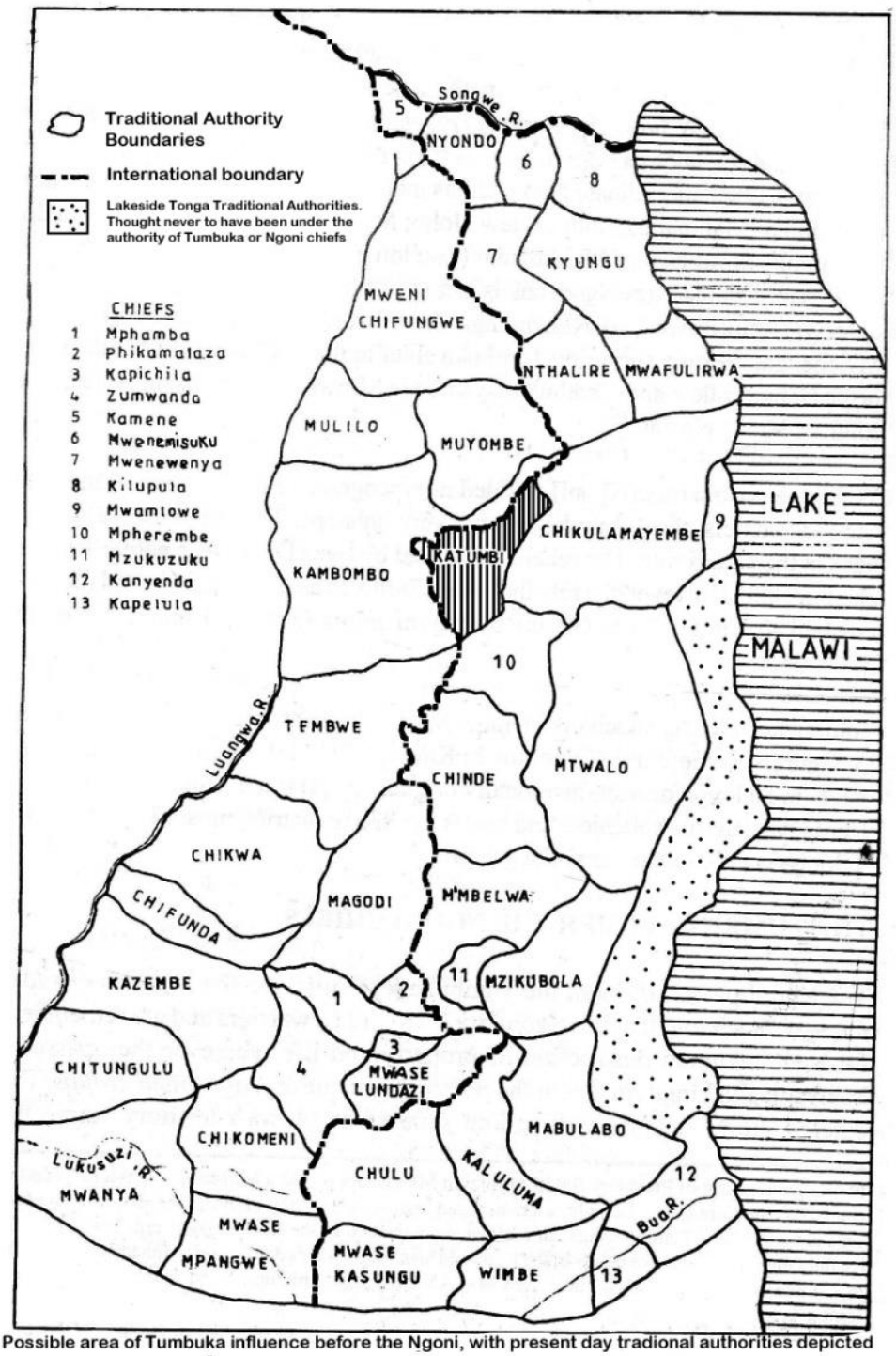
History and Ritual: constructing a place in the landscape

In order to counter the pessimistic prognosis for their long-term authority, a more significant control over the social and political life of the Tumbuka communities and a more substantial authority in the land was required. Over time the way in which these chieftaincies did this, with varying degrees of success, was by founding a political tradition around a centralising historical narrative, as well as by penetrating or manipulating indigenous religious institutions;[67] linking themselves and their clan histories with the practices of ancestral worship that were found across this zone. They made connections (usually through marriage) with ancestral shrines and rain-making cults, bringing ritual specialists under their control and taking on the exercise of ritual power themselves; this role being "one of the most potent sources of chiefly authority".[68] The bringing into existence of an enduring, though flexible, historical narrative of the royal lineage which could be co-opted and performed to suit was equally important.

It was by shifting the focus from the many local ancestral cults to that of the 'new' centralising royal lineage that several of the *Balowoka* dynasties tried to move beyond their purely commercially anchored credence; they wanted to create an authentic credibility derived from more esoteric underpinnings. At Pwezi, for example, in the Henga Valley where another *Balowoka* chief, Mwahenga, had established himself, worship began to be conducted "at a pool controlled directly by the chiefly family and took the form of the cult of the ancestors of the chiefly lineage itself".[69] This was in essence the only way that such chiefly institutions, whose power was premised so much on commercial prowess, could shift people's allegiances; in order to have longevity they would need to be able to offer protection over crops, favorable weather conditions, and the authority to resolve local disputes ensuring the health of the community.

But whilst "ancestors of chiefly lineages came to be most important as rain-cult spirits"[70] in many places, there is little oral evidence to testify to the role of pre-colonial *Balowoka* chiefs in organising and controlling the day-to-day agricultural affairs of the people. They received tribute – from people's harvests as well as the obligatory animal skins and ivory – but the practicalities of land management, and the connection that people had with their natural

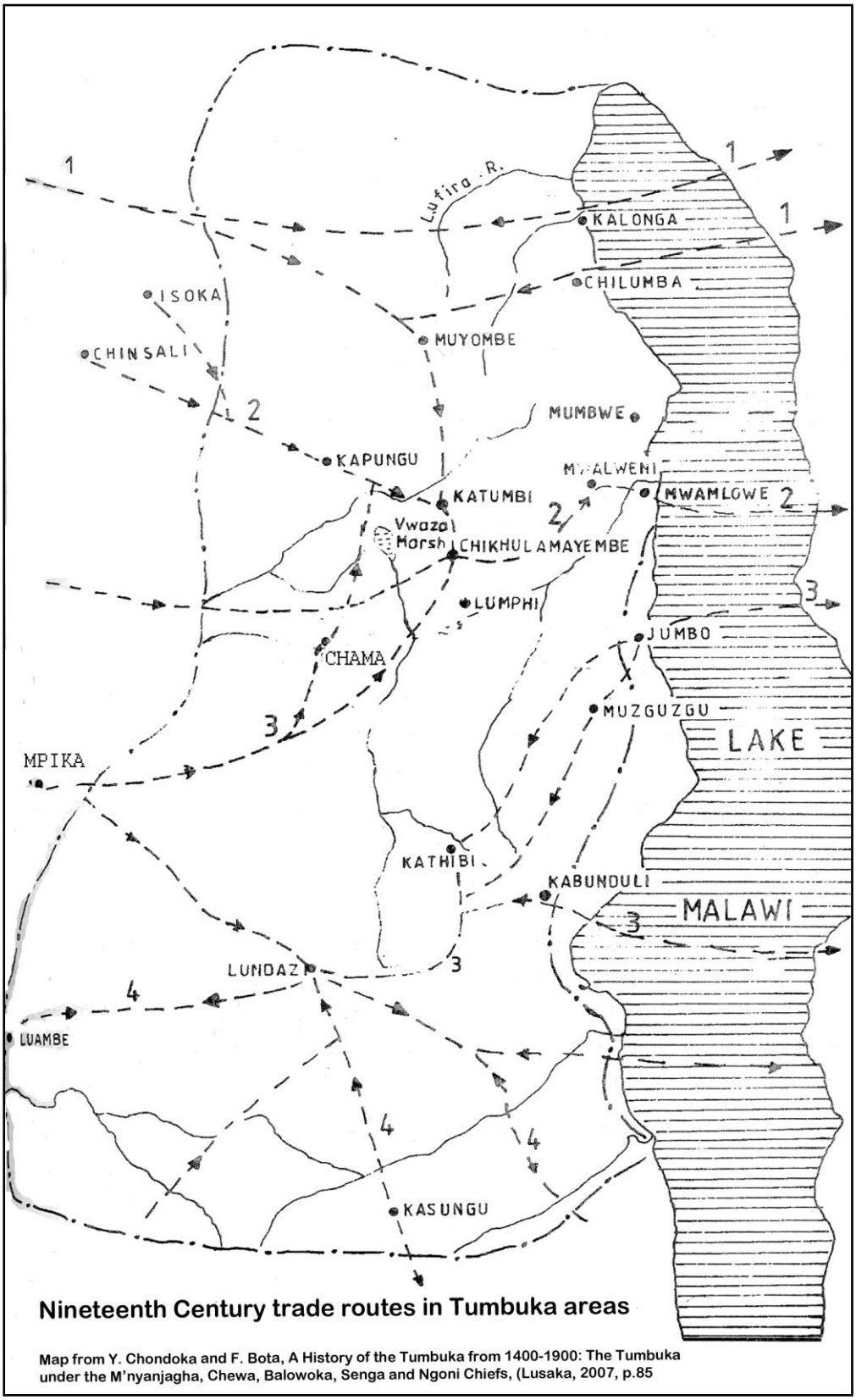
Map 4. Tumbuka influence before the Ngoni invasion



Possible area of Tumbuka influence before the Ngoni, with present day tradional authorities depicted

Map adapted from Y. Chondoka and F. Bota, A History of the Tumbuka from 1400 to 1900: The Tumbuka under the M'nyanjagha, Chewa, Balowoka, Senga and Ngoni Chiefs, (Lusaka, 2007), p.196

Map 5



Nineteenth Century trade routes in Tumbuka areas

Map from Y. Chondoka and F. Bota, A History of the Tumbuka from 1400-1900: The Tumbuka under the M'nyanjagha, Chewa, Balowoka, Senga and Ngoni Chiefs, (Lusaka, 2007, p.85

environment was still left largely to the individual family institutions. This distance was not really surprising given that in the pre-colonial setting authority over a given group of people did not necessarily correlate to a control over their land.

As the introduction has made clear, a substantial link between sovereignty and control over territory was only established once the colonial administration came in. There was some direct control over the land once the royal families began marrying into autochthonous lineages, but anything more was unimaginable. This nebulous relationship between these *Balowoka* chiefs and the land on which they settled is important to remember once the analysis turns to assessing the impact of the colonial administration. The Nyasaland government wanted to create a framework of authority where a close relationship between chiefs and the land was at the heart of what it was to be a Native Authority; this assumed set of customary rights was bestowed upon them, with certain power to manage arenas of farmers lives where they had had borne no such responsibility before.[71]

Divergences and Difference: establishing fault lines in the chiefly narratives

Until now little differentiation has been noted amongst this 'group' of travelling, trading, migrants; rather more broad strokes of economic and political change have been painted. The preceding story of "arrival" and the "establishment" of various dynasties – Chikulamayembe, Katumbi, Muyombe, Mwahenga, and Mwamlowe – across this Tumbuka Zone has been a somewhat generic one. As crucial as their commonalities are, and as interesting as they are in highlighting trends in the formation of these chieftainships, it is in the foundation of their diverging narratives that we can find ruptures that are played out throughout the colonial period, and are referred to even today. Certainly as these men made transitions over a generation or two from trading migrants to chiefs their trajectories into leadership varied significantly. On account of geographical opportunities or constraints, relationships within and external to their territories, and individual "techniques of rule", their patterns of power diverged from one another. Furthermore, and sometimes on account of the aforementioned divergence, they experienced significant differences from one another during the Ngoni and Bemba wars, and so on then with the dawning of missionary influence, and later as the colonial administration was established.

Some of the key motifs of difference that can be seen in the oral sources had implications on colonial expressions of chiefly authority in these areas and many still have currency today as disputes over the past have significant implications for the present. Whether these contestations are about who wielded power over whom in the past, as a way of increasing their political status or they are statements about indigeneity and autochthony, "who was here first", as a way of ensuring priority access to land and natural resources in an environment of land shortage and private property rights, they are always premised on a debate which references "unresolved and irresolvable"[72] histories. For this reason it is useful to highlight a few of these diverging stories now. These differences centre on the following three aspects: their "arrival" and the establishment of the dynasties; their interaction with spiritual and ancestral shrines of Tumbuka inhabitants they found living there; and finally their geographical position and ecological setting and the relevance these factors have in particular during the period of Bemba and Ngoni Wars.

Dealing first with arrival we come to see quite different integration patterns. In Muyombe where the Wowo clan founded themselves as the ruling dynasty the establishment process was described similarly to Chikulamayembe's dynastic origins: "the Wowos became the uncontested rulers, and their chief, whose praise name is Mlowoka ("he who crossed over")

gained control of the external trade in ivory";[73] it is in their potential subordination to Kyungu, king of the Ngonde at Karonga, where key differences are noted. Bond goes on to explain, "It would seem that the Uyombe chiefdom was a tributary of the Ngonde and that Yombe chiefs were nobles of the Ngonde rule, Kyungu, and sent him tribute".[74] This is borne out in some of the oral testimony collected by Vail in 1970 and 1971. Vinkakanimba (the other name for Mlowoka or later Chief Muyombe) is described as almost passively taking on the mantle of leadership under direction from Chief Kyungu and with the consent of an uninformed local population, who appear to have handed over ivory and political power to this stranger with no second-thought. The local praise of both Kyungu and Muyombe by Kumwenda, the main clan found in the area by Muyombe, depicts the tributes he paid first to Kyungu, and later Muyombe and how he lost his political power to a stranger without shedding blood: *Ine Kumwenda vyande vyaminyanga ya zovu na peleka kwa Muyombe na Kyungu*.[75] The oral testimony of Chief Muyombe taken in 1971 confirms this somewhat passive shift in the balance of power:

> *"Vinkakanimba killed elephants and, as was customary in the place from which he had come, he took some of the ivory and went to give it to the Mbambala [Kumwenda] but they did not know that the ivory was worth anything. They rejected the ivory, saying, "These are bones, so why are you bringing them to us?" So Vinkakanimba carried the ivory to Chungu at Karonga. Chungu was delighted, and he made Vinkakanimba an induna for the hills of Nthalire and for Uyombe".*

The testimony of Muyombe does open up some new questions as to the much debated role of Kyungu at the time of the *Balowoka* migrations. Neither time nor the focus of this present work allow us the opportunity to indulge too much in the evidence but it is clear that Kyungu had been an influential figure at this time and may or may not have had some role in establishing the chieftaincies of several of the *Balowoka*.[76] However whilst there are some sources that suggest certain of these chiefs may have occasionally repaid him for showing them "good land" with some tribute and gifts the economic accumulation within their own territories remained firmly under the control of the individual *Balowoka*. During the later colonial period, however, as these historical performances of Royal clan history began to be established, members of the Royal Wowo clan strongly denied any political subordination to the Ngonde, claiming that Uyombe had always been an independent chiefdom and that in the dispute over chieftainship, "Kyungu was consulted as an equal among equals".[77]

Quite in contrast to Chikulamayembe and Muyombe's dynastic beginnings, the emphasis in the story of the establishment of the Katumbi dynasty lies rather less in the "arrival" of the first generation trader and his immediate interaction with the owners of the land. Mulindafwa,[78] the name given to the grandfather of the Katumbi clan, is said to have probably only "passed through" Hewe and it was not he, but his nephew Chipofya who played a key role in leading the way for the chieftaincy to be established in Hewe. It was in fact only with the second generation that the family developed connections in the Hewe Valley. Whilst Mulindafwa went through to Malambo and then Chipera (both now in Zambia) searching for ivory and other trading opportunities it was Chipofya who stayed back in the area of Nkamanga and Hewe. He would eventually go and look for his uncle, passing through Hewe he asked the people there if they had heard any rumours about this man called Mulindafwa. The oral narratives asserted at the time of Timothy Chawinga's chieftainship recall that the notable people Chipofya met at that time in Hewe were "Zolokere, Nchuka and Kanyerere who very soon after his arrival became his friends"; they claimed not to have any knowledge of Mulindafwa though having not met him on his way to Malambo. It was only as Arabs "passed through Hewe from Chipera or Chigoma in

Nthalire area" that Chipofya got information that Mulindafwa was dead, but that his children Chimbavi, Kasalika and Yapatula were still living.[79] It is remembered that Chipofya then went to find his cousins, expressed his condolences and ordered them to pack up and leave for Hewe.

On their arrival at Hewe the children of Mulindafwa reported to Zolokere who is said to have come to greet them and to have given them gifts of ivory. They built a headquarters at the Makongowa stream and nearby the spirit of Mulindafwa was buried at Vuvu; the first connection had been made to the land. Whilst the arrival narrative appears to differ from the others previously mentioned, of Muyombe and Chikulamayembe, it is clear that the essential aspects of establishing authority nevertheless remained the same. Katumbi Chimbavi, the eldest son of Mulindafwa, took on the mantle of leadership, gave the headmen in Hewe gifts of cloth, beads and shells and they respected him. The oral sources go on to explain that:

> *"While at Makongowa, Chimbavi was given the title of Themba Katumbi in place of his father. He successfully won the friendship of the inhabitants, then he had a chance to introduce to the head men the use of a black cloth on the headmen's head. He advised that a headman in order to win the respect of his subordinates must tie a black cloth on his head, which is the sign of a crown and so he tied black cloths to the heads of all the headmen, namely Zolokere, Kanyerere, Nchuka, and Mwavithinthiza. This introduction has been carried on and on until now".*[80]

We have already noted how these new families were "determined to establish their positions firmly through consolidation of their political powers with the religious territorial cults of their respective areas"[81] however each area was quite unique in this regard too. In some places it was possible that a new shrine could be established, as happened in Nthalire where Muwoma Hill became the main centre of worship. This happened also in Henga, as was mentioned above. In Hewe the localised rain cult at Mwanda Mountain enabled further differences in the establishment and augmentation of authority between Katumbi and some of the other *Balowoka* chiefs. Due to the small and parochial nature of the Mwanda cult it was easier for Katumbi to bring it under his leadership and consolidate his political power with it (this was something that the Phiri chiefs did in the Chewa area). It is said that Katumbi Chimbavi, quickly established a relationship with Mlomboji the rainmaker whom he recognised as priest of the area and he asked him if he would act on his behalf. Katumbi was able to take over a certain level of control at Mwanda despite the fact that the family in charge of the shrine was itself autochthonous.

Whilst Chikulamayembe was able to do this to some extent with Chikang'ombe Hill, its much greater spatial scope meant that it was harder to focus all outlying ancestral worship sites of the area on this one sacred site. According to Vail, the Chikulamayembes did reach some level of success in establishing "a monopoly over the administration of the *mwavi* poison ordeal in Nkhamanga". Controlling *mwavi* administration, a significant part of the overall religious complex of the Central African peoples, represented a significant attempt to "weaken the religious primacy of the Chikang'ombe shrine […] and "substitute for it a new centralization of religious authority around the new chiefly lineage". The decision to control *mwavi* administration was important because it gave the Chikulamayembes a moral position in the society; traditions maintain that pre-*Balowoka* Tumbuka society had been "unaware of the use of *mwavi*, that people were punished unjustly as a result of their ignorance, and that the Tumbuka dwelled in a most turbulent and uncertain society". With the coming of Chikulamayembe "orderly judicial administration was rendered possible". The wide acceptance of this does argue "for the success in Nkhamanga of the Chikulamayembe's attempt to control

mwavi and, through such control, the eradication of witches".[82] Despite this clear advantage it is nevertheless argued that Chikulamayembe lacked spiritual legitimacy; crucially unlike Katumbi he had no 'priest' to intervene on his behalf. All of the chiefs established themselves in slightly different ways; evidently the trajectories of chieftaincy emerging from this time were quite divergent.

Not long after these traders had managed to convert their authority into a form of chieftainship it was challenged in a different way. The intensity and frequency of raiding from the mid-nineteenth century began disrupting the patterns of power that the *Balowoka* had been successfully developing over the previous seventy or so years. Had the missionaries and early colonial administrators found these chiefly families "intact", rather than dispersed across the region it might be easier to imagine how they were identified to be the significant political authorities of the region. Indeed it is true that Europeans and the African elites with whom they collaborated did not have a problem with excavating a great number of customary authorities out of the past; however these traditions did need to have some resonance with local people for them to convert into successful Native Authorities. Before the reason for this resonance is considered, the chapter will turn to illustrate some of the ways in which the Bemba and Ngoni raiding reshaped the landscapes of authority in the region.

The impact of the Bemba and the Ngoni: the dispersal of chiefly 'tradition'

There had always been some threat, especially of slave raiding in these areas of broken country, but it was only once the Bemba began making concerted forays around 1840 into the areas to their east, including Muyombe and Hewe, that settlement patterns in these places began responding to the increased danger. Throughout this period of uncertainty the Tumbuka had begun living in fortified villages or, if they were not numerous or militarily strong, "in small scattered hamlets hidden in the bush". These Tumbuka chieftainships had no significant army so were very exposed at this time and quite unable to defend themselves effectively against a large invading force. This might not have been the case had earlier trade competitiveness amongst them, and their desire to exercise territoriality at relatively small scales in order to build wealth and prestige through the ivory trade, not bred a lack of wider solidarity. The way they then dealt with such external threats was to remain mobile. Chiefs ruled from capitals which were not permanent settlements at this time and as such were potentially able to move easily to places of safety.

The Bemba invaded Hewe in around 1840 which prompted Katumbi and many of his people to move to Mawuwu, in the centre of the Hewe Valley, "there they built a strong stockade for fear of invaders [here] they stayed peacefully for many years but he continued to trade with people in Hewe and in all the adjacent tribes".[83] In around 1845 the Bemba warrior Chepela invaded and captured the Mawuwu stockade which forced the Themba to hide with his people at Mwanda where his priest Mlomboji lived. Chepela is said to have made the stockade his camp from where he continued to raid the surrounding country. As the trouble in Hewe increased it is said that "word was sent to Chikulamayembe and Kyungu who came, heated arrows on the blacksmiths fire and they shot them on the roofs in the stockade and as a result all the houses were on fire. Chepela was force to run away" and Chivwalenkwende Katumbi was able to resettle.[84] Not long afterwards, the Ngoni campaigns wreaked further havoc upon the Tumbuka communities found here. But whilst the Bemba campaigns had targeted Hewe, the impact of the Ngoni was more significantly felt by the Nkamanga chieftainship of Chikulamayembe than Katumbi. Nkamanga and Henga were subsumed fully under Ngoni domination, smashed-up by 1855, these "Tumbuka-speaking peoples who were not conquered or assimilated were raided or

forced to give tribute".[85] Hewe and Uyombe, meanwhile, remained only on the periphery of Ngoni raiding activities. Some raiding did force the Themba to find refuge in Zolokere's stockade in Khata (a marshy place in Vwaza covered in reeds), whilst others fled to the area near Yembe Hill in Songwe, in the far north of the country.[86]

Of key importance to our story are the specific ways in which the Katumbi Dynasty was able to preserve itself at this time of disruption in contrast to the Chikulamayembe family in Nkamanga, and what implications these alternative patterns have for the colonial period. One possible reason is that the ecological setting of Katumbi's territory provided for Katumbi Chivwalenkwende (at the time of the Bemba) and Katumbi Chimgwayo (at the time of the Ngoni) safe-havens to where they could move their chiefly capitals and survive in relative safety. Katumbi's territory consists of a relatively small fertile valley, surrounded by mountainous areas in the north and west and bordered to the south by a marshland that was un-navigable for anyone but the most local of people. They also had the advantage of being able to shift their geographical base to the neighbouring community of Sitwe which sat in the hot depression over the mountains in "the Malambo country in present day Zambia" where many familial ties existed.[87]

As Ngoni raiding proliferated and threats from within Sitwe also accumulated, Senga chief Kambombo was "threatening to invade" Katumbi's country in Malambo, so it was at this point that Katumbi Mtengacharo, who replaced Chimgwayo, could no longer remain in Hewe country and moved to Sitwe. In the years just prior to colonial administration it was here that the Katumbi chieftainship was based. This is evidenced by the fact that the Presbyterian missionaries who moved into the area to set up the Livingstonia Mission in 1891, and early colonial officials who came touring the northern areas a decade or so later, record very little about Katumbi and give no sense that he had had jurisdiction in the area of the Hewe Valley. To the contrary, the ability to simply move the chiefly capital and maintain the chiefly line was much more restricted in the open country of Nkhamanga where the Chikulamayembe chieftainship was smashed completely by the Ngoni in around 1855. For these reasons of mobility and dispersal it is easy to see why scholars struggle to understand the complexities in the marriage, descent and inheritance systems of the Tumbuka. As Vail notes, "such confusion is not surprising, considering the disruption of settlement patterns occasioned in northern Malawi by the coming of the Ngoni into the area in the mid-nineteenth century".[88]

Political tradition as discourse

The pre-colonial landscapes of authority and territoriality which were in existence immediately prior to the coming of the colonial administration provide an important context from which to discuss the chieftaincy of Timothy Chawinga. It will be argued that the way in which these institutions came to manage the societies in northern Malawi during the nineteenth century has certain implications for how authority was shaped in this region once it found itself a part of the colonial state of Nyasaland at the turn of the twentieth century.

The centralised political traditions which were developed across the region were fashioned some time before the introduction of indirect rule; however they became powerful as historical tools only as they began to be collected, written down, and eventually used to demarcate administrative boundaries. As this process took place suggestions towards the extent of these chiefdoms boundaries and hints about the hierarchies that might have existed between them were recorded. Whilst there was something authentic about the political traditions that the missionaries and colonial officers dug up, there is some doubt as to whether they would

have experienced a renaissance in the area, being restored to the positions which they did hold prior to the Ngoni and Bemba campaigns, without the British administration's help.

This is particularly true for the Chikulamayembe chieftaincy which had been completely smashed by the Ngoni some forty years earlier. Once representatives of the shattered Chikulamayembe dynasty were in a position to accumulate power again on behalf of the Royal line, this time largely through their early contact with mission education, they set about dusting off the narratives of authority and reshaping them to their requirements once more. Educated Tumbuka elites, who had their own interest in re-establishing the chieftainship of Chikulamayembe, prepared the way by producing the first written accounts of *Balowoka* history; little could have served as a more powerful interpretation of authentic authority at this time.

For the Katumbi leadership it was a bit different. Despite the disruption of the wars, the dynasty had maintained a clear line of succession throughout this time; with the 'displaced' chiefs still inheriting titles and being recorded by oral accounts.[89] In fact, it could well be the case that during this time of raiding when a large number of Hewe based families all gathered together in fortified settlements, a sense of unity around the royal narrative might well have been strengthened. However, one factor which did weaken the potential for the Katumbi narrative at the dawning of the colonial administration was the split which took place in the family some time in-between the time when they took refuge by moving to Malambo (in present day Zambia) and the decision of certain clans in the royal family to "move back" to Nyasaland after it had been demarcated and appeared to offer opportunities for power.

Suffering from a lack of educated and connected representatives, the Katumbi family fared much worse than the Chikulamayembe leadership at the dawn of colonial administration. The writing of Andrew Nkhonjera and Saulos Nyirenda, both with connections to Livingstonia,[90] and then Thomas Cullen Young (inspired by the writing of these other two) advocated for the revival of the Chikulamayembe dynasty by claiming that before the Ngoni it had presided over a great kingdom.[91] This was the Tumbuka leadership that the colonial administration had been searching for. With the stakes now higher than ever, a hierarchical set of migration narratives quickly became a useful political weapon. With handsome rewards on offer for those who could prove their historical authority, the Katumbi family needed very much to up its game.

The chiefly migration narratives and the centrality of various "royal" families which emerge from them have grown increasingly important over time, especially on account of their being privileged by the colonial state. They have become the basis from which people who are fighting over resources and access to land argue their legitimate rights to them. The performance of *Balowoka* chieftainship throughout the colonial period draws continually on these narratives and rituals; for the different chiefdoms throughout this region in northern Malawi the construction, negotiation and renegotiation[92] of these tools of formal authority signify new ways of competing for resources, land and power.

Plainly it was not the colonial structures alone that served to re-establish the position of such men as Timothy Chawinga within their communities; they also depended on the existence of a local historically embedded political discourse which they, or their agents, could effectively reformulate along the way. As Spear notes, "intellectuals need historical raw materials to construct their stories if their reinterpretations are to ring true", but raw materials cannot be fashioned from nothing; "Precisely because struggles over tradition, custom and ethnicity are so embedded in local discourse and so emotionally fraught, they are readily evoked but not easily created".[93]

Part two. Debating the raw materials of history

Writing hierarchies into history: the impact of missionary and colonial writings on the Balowoka chieftainships

As Hamilton has noted, claims to traditional legitimacy do not emerge from no-where, but they have their own constructed historiographical past; the creation of the narrative of custom very definitely has roots in the missionary, anthropological, amateur historical studies from the early part of the twentieth century.[94] The influential writings of the Scottish Presbyterian missionary Thomas Cullen Young, in particular the 1923 "Notes on the Speech and History of the Tumbuka-Henga Peoples", represent some of the first written historical accounts of the region,[95] and they have had an enormous impact on the historiography of the region. Contrary to the work of other missionaries such as Elmslie and Fraser, who concentrated on chronicling the "noble" conquering Ngoni,[96] Young was clearly trying to make a case for the indigenous Tumbuka in his writing. In the light of this, Young's fascination with illustrating a powerful unifying Tumbuka figure in the shape of Mlowoka (Chikulamayembe) is given new significance. Peter Forster, who has provided an extremely comprehensive analysis of Young's work – and the various scholarly responses to it – states that "Young clearly admired Mlowoka" in whom he saw "a synthesis of the Tumbuka virtue of open-handedness and the idea of 'legitimate commerce' which Livingstone had advocated"; he painted a benevolent picture of the chief, kindly, skilful in hunting and "in no way connected to slaving".[97]

The unfolding of Young's specific historical production of the Tumbuka was a process defined by several factors, primary among them was his receipt of a manuscript in Chitumbuka around 1909 from an ex-Livingstonia pupil Saulos Nyirenda which laid out a version of history concerning the Chikulamayembe Dynasty. Nyirenda, along with another ex-Livingstonia student who had the Henga-Tumbuka agenda on his mind, Andrew Nkhonjera, expressed in their writing a growing desire amongst many Tumbuka for the need to 're-establish' the Chikulamayembe Chieftaincy, restoring it to its 'former glory'. It is worth noting that at the very time when Young was preparing his history, he was teaching John Gondwe, the son of Chief Chikulamayembe, and was hence in direct contact with the font of 'official' history. This union between a missionary eager to understand and integrate into a local culture and several Tumbuka elites who, since the Ngoni, had found themselves with only limited access to power, saw an opportunity to gain new authority via the mission and the colonial state; this politics within the production of the 1923 edition of *Notes on the Speech and History of the Tumbuka-Henga People's* is plain to see.

The debates that Young's 1923 book provoked demonstrated an interest in the past from "enthusiastic, and in the majority of cases, far from impartial clansmen who desire that the story of their fathers may not be under-estimated".[98] In a 1932 revised edition of events, called *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples,* Young laid out these different versions unexplored in his earlier text, including the Ngonde and Tonga points of view, claiming to make no judgement upon the new evidence; the tone of the text, however, remained strongly in favour of his original thesis. One only need observe the date of the revised text to garner its political significance; Indirect Rule was being put into practice in Nyasaland and this was the ideal opportunity for people to try and assert their rank. Largely on account of this context, and for the fact that Young gives no information on his informants, Vail is damning of the text as inaccurate and simplistic. Concerned with the uncritical circulation of Young's ideas within political and academic literature alike Vail's own scholarship works hard to overturn their

hegemonic representations. In regard to a later publication of Young's most famous work Vail wrote determinedly "his lack of appreciation of the complexity of Tumbuka history, and his uncritical acceptance of traditions", made the reprinting of the book "a positive menace to an accurate knowledge of northern Malawi's history".[99] Forster illustrates the influence of the book, explaining that "Young's historical studies frequently *were* quoted by colonial officials when information was needed upon which to base Indirect Rule".[100] There grew something of a special relationship between the Livingstonia Mission and the Tumbuka communities they came to live alongside. When the mission established itself at Kondowe (Livingstonia) in 1889 these 'victims' of the Ngoni campaigns were ready, and open, for the new opportunities. Until the colonial administration moved officers to the north certain other aspects of the administration of this part of Nyasaland was to a large extent undertaken by the Mission. As a result, their ideas about local customs and traditions, not to mention their notions of local power structures, had already become very influential by the time that the District Administration Native Ordinance of 1912 came in to effect.

Whilst Young's ideas about the Tumbuka have been largely discredited from an academic point of view following the in depth and convincing critiques of Vail,[101] amongst the people who continue to construct their histories within these localities they retain much power. It is easy to observe how the histories which he assembled have been clearly used and assimilated into the narratives of local populations as well, and it is directly and indirectly referenced when headmen across the region narrate their clan histories. Such publications radically affected the oral historical culture of the region, and their connection to the creation of legitimacy was clear, peddled about as they were by African mission teachers and ministers bent on demonstrating their influence. Collecting oral histories from people in Hewe today one is only too aware of the power that Young's rendition, along with a later vernacular publication from Livingstonia Mission, *Midauko Gha WaNgoni* (1948), displays. Large sections of Young's book are quoted at length by people re-telling their clan histories in Hewe and who are thankful for the useful 'truths' it provides them.[102]

If the depictions of the crucial historical moment of "arrival" is considered, and especially how different versions of "arrival" are popularized through these publications, it can be noted that each are performed with subtle differences by the chiefs in question at different times; the importance of the telling is plain to see. Take, for example, the now famous story of Chikulamayembe's dynastic beginnings:[103] Cullen Young writes that in establishing himself in Nkamanga, Mlowoka's "dealings were marked by great liberality. In this sense he seems to have differed from several of his companions who […] appear to have taken advantage of the ignorance of the local population".[104] This is a key point of difference, especially as the authority of these chiefly dynasties became increasingly hinged upon a benevolent entry into Tumbuka society. In making this statement the missionary anthropologist was delivering to the historiography a narrative of hierarchy amongst these groups. Throughout his later *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples* the emphasis remains on Chikulamayembe's rise to precedence amongst the group of people with whom it is most commonly thought he travelled with; Katumbi (Mulindafwa) and Chipofya. In the revised version Young "sets right" an apparent historical wrong by acknowledging that Chikulamayembe had not always been the prominent member and that although "we have been calling Mlowoka the leader of the party so far, certain evidence suggests that actually his supremacy came later, and at the time with which we are dealing, Katumbi was in charge of the expedition".[105] Yet, in some ways this altered narrative is more damning for the Katumbi leadership as it is suggestive that he lost prestige on account of Mlowoka Chikulamayembe's more strategic decisions and benevolent performances of power:

> *"The elder nephew, whom we only know as Mlowoka, stayed where he first settled – that is, on the Runyina River, in the centre of the Nkamanga Plain – and before he died had succeeded in establishing his authority to such an extent that the Chikuramayembe title which his successor inaugurated stood for a form of centralised chieftainship such as the country had never previously known [...] Mlowoka did not, however, confine his activities to the comparatively small area which it is geographically correct to call Nkamanga. He seems to have moved through the whole country in some sort of state, and with sufficient proofs of wealth to secure for himself recognition as "superior"".*[106]

This story has remained an extremely powerful motif in the Chikulamayembe dynasty and the fact that today his chieftainship is now recognised by the government as being of Paramount status, superior over all other Tumbuka chieftaincies, surely stems from this early depiction of historical precedence and the power it had on local political imagination, despite the fact that local chiefs now assert that this narrative is somewhat over exaggerated.[107] As has been outlined above, however, these historical depictions need nevertheless to be produced and maintained if other powerful actors aren't to come and usurp a certain amount of that apparently established authority; this shifting of hegemonic discourse was something that Timothy Chawinga proved skilful at, but he had his work cut out if he was to effectively represent Katumbi as the senior authority. Due to the wider political aspirations of Tumbuka elites who wished to 'reinstall' Chikulamayembe into his supposed pre-Ngoni seat of authority, Hewe's own individual historical processes became a rather parochial consideration at this early stage of colonial administration. It was assumed that such 'local' political issues as headmanship and hierarchy within the chieftaincy could be addressed once the 'correct' and 'proper' structures of local native administration were set up; local chiefs could discuss these issues amongst themselves rather than deal with the colonial administration directly. What administrators didn't consider was that these 'local' issues might not be local at all but about politics and access to power at a much broader level, and that they could not be contained within one particular native authority, namely that of Chikulamayembe. The result of this was that the Hewe Valley and the chiefs who held authority throughout it were incorporated into the Henga-Nkamanga division; the assumption being that in pre-colonial history it had been incorporated within the authority of Chikulamayembe's Nkamanga Kingdom. In 1912 when the District Administration Native Ordinance was passed Katumbi was placed as a Village Headman under the authority of Principal Headman Chikulamayembe.

Whilst Young is the most powerful advocate of Chikulamayembe's pre-eminence, for the Katumbi dynasty the written text that is most often referred to when recounting history is that of the later Livingstonia publication, written in the vernacular, *Midauko Gha Wangoni*. Published in 1947 it was produced, unlike Young's monograph, by a number of local African elites, all mission educated.[108] *Midauko* plays a major role in defining Hewe's history, especially in distinction to other places around it and particularly in regard to the chieftaincy. As mentioned it reappears time and again in oral testimony as people use it as a reference point for 'their past'. It was to showcase the research, writing and more 'undisputable' local knowledge of African mission elites. People like the Hewe born the Reverend Isaac Khunga and teacher Levi Kaleya, as well as the ambitious and political the Reverend Edward Bote Manda, who was to become the advisor to John Hardy Gondwe (Chief Chikulamayembe XI) during the 1930s and 40s; all would play key roles in shaping the 'official', 'local' and 'authentic' production of the history of the north. These local voices represented some of the most influential of actors in the unfolding history of the northern region; their discursive starting point being the need to engage and

counter or confirm the earliest representations of their areas. These characters went on to play significant roles in the local politics of the region and, as will be illustrated later, often provided the backbone to the African provincial council meetings of the 1940s and 1950s.

As more native missionaries were trained and ordained the Mission's power to influence the landscape grew in local communities. Combined with these people's own interests they began to redefine areas powerfully; this was no more evident than in debates about chiefly succession. This issue of succession has been looked at most systematically by Vail who tries to understand more fully aspects of pre-colonial succession amongst the Tumbuka. For this argument it is important to consider the impact of the Mission on inheritance structures and how through local mission elites traditional options were subverted in order to establish leaders in these communities who were shaped themselves by mission values and education.

Using the past in the present: fighting with "unresolved & irresolvable histories"

In 1954 Timothy Chawinga, the fifteenth Themba Katumbi, initiated a ceremony in Hewe to celebrate his grandfather Mulindafwa. This was the first time that a public performance dramatizing the historical story was held; the first time that symbols of the chieftainship were circulated and celebrated at an occasion where representatives of government attended alongside local dignitaries from neighbouring Tumbuka communities across the border in Northern Rhodesia. It had political ambition and consequences which reflected both external and internal struggles, including the need for Katumbi to assert his authority over the northerly parts of Hewe that did not wholly support him at the time;[109] a 1970 interview with Group Village Headman Mwachibanda bears out this tension:

> *"All clans ruled themselves independently – there was no clan that exercised authority over others. Zolokere, for example, feared us (the Nthali), and we feared him and his powers. The same with Katumbi; he feared Zolokere and Zolokere feared him, and so on and on. This is the way things were in the past. There were no extensive chiefdoms as there are now".*[110]

These tensions will be elaborated upon in later chapters, for now it is simply necessary to place the "arrival and establishment" story told at this ceremony in the context of the knowledge production dynamics that have been described in the section above.

The only source that currently exists to investigate this production is a text written by Timothy and his advisers describing the "official" history that would be performed at the 1970 Mulindafwa ceremony. This version can only be used to reflect upon the contemporaneous situation, one in which Chawinga was well established as chief and was thought of in prestigious terms by the Malawi Congress Party government, despite the relative insignificance of his geographic area. However, it is a useful piece of public relations to analyse; instructive in its emphases, it displays a clear narrative of superiority. In 1970 Chawinga had all the political clout required to make such bold public declarations; after all it is one thing to have a clan history that asserts superiority but quite another to have the confidence to perform it publicly. Chapters three, four and five will all pay some attention to the other aspects of Chawinga's character and behaviour which enabled him to build his power and continually recreate his authority in different arenas but here, in the analysis of the story he tells, the major motifs of his chieftainship can be brought out.

The first motif in Timothy's narrative is a bold statement of superiority in relation to Chikulamayembe. He does this not only by suggesting that he was the more senior member of

the migration party but that it was he who had developed the trading activities in Rumphi. Here, he says:

> *"Katumbi [...] became a monopolist and his activities were soon known by the Tumbuka. While carrying his trade far and wide among the Tumbuka, he easily became an acquaintance of all the people in Tumbuka land. North of Rukuru region he married many wives, the daughters of Tumbuka. The children he bore are now the heads of many families in Tumbuka country".*[111]

Chawinga describes how it was only after some years that both Chikulamayembe and Katumbi agreed to explore the surrounding country, south of the Rukuru River, as Chipofya remained "at the centre", and goes on to say that eventually "Chikulamayembe asked to go back to the trading centre at Rumpi". There is no room in this narrative for Chikulamayembe to take any credit in having established himself without Katumbi's help.

Another crucial statement is that Katumbi had never paid any tribute to either Chikulamayembe or Kyungu. Mulindafwa had met with Kyungu in Chilumba after initially crossing the lake, and indeed Kyungu had pointed him in the direction of good places to hunt for ivory but it is made quite clear that he had not been bound into any hierarchical relationship with him on account of this. Mulindafwa is said to have remembered Kyungu's help later on when "he sent him gifts of goods. As his sons were acquainted with hunting, he had a big stock of ivory, rhinoceros and skins. That is why Chungu could get gifts regularly"; this statement crucially speaks of Katumbi's generosity rather than his subservience.

Other aspects of Mulindafwa's memorable personality are drawn out in Timothy's narrative: that he was a great hunter and a successful trader becoming rich in cloth, beads, salt and shells. Furthermore he had important spiritual legitimacy. After Mulindafwa died in Chipera and before the children left with their cousin, "Chipofya took a whip and he went to the grave with it. He whipped on the grave which traditionally meant that he was calling the spirit to accompany the family. When they reached Hewe Chipofya buried the whip at Vuvu Stream. This was the beginning of the chiefs' graveyard at Vuvu stream and a centre of worshipping the spirits of the Balowoka". He is keen to highlight also that he was the one who ordained Mlomboji the high priest of religion in Hewe and that it was his job to conduct special services at Mwanda mountain to ensure rain during droughts but his power was not all encompassing; "intercessional services during times when disease and deaths overtook the village […] were conducted by assistant priests, at the chiefs' graveyard at Vuvu stream", where Mulindafwa's spirit was buried. He ends his text with what seems a rather incongruous contemporary political point, which perhaps lets us in to his motives for the tone of the whole document. He describes how he wrote a letter to the colonial office "pleading that the boundary should be disbanded because it has lessened my authority and has broken the ties of relationship with the Tumbuka of Ruangwa Region". The Colonial Office, in reply, pointed out that it was difficult to break that boundary because a large sum of money was spent on making it. His pursuit of "justice" on this matter of boundaries would be a key aspect of his politics.

Chawinga's 1954 chiefly celebration was said to have been the inspiration for the establishment of a number of other annual ceremonies in the region, including the Gonapamuhanya ceremony of Chikulamayembe (1961) and Vinkakanimba Day for Chief Muyombe (1963). Whilst the reason behind these might well have been excuses for a good party, they are more likely to have been prompted by competitive motives. Swathed in legitimizing tradition these displays were ideal ways for chiefs to reassert their stake in the land, position themselves against one another and, as the threat of chiefly decline lay on the

horizon publicize themselves amongst their people, some of whom were looking to African nationalists to represent them instead. Perhaps one of the reasons why these ceremonies grew in popularity across the Tumbuka highlands was the greater opportunity contained within these chieftaincies for the flexible interpretation and adaptation of traditions and lineages. Unlike the more formally structured and centralized states such as those of the Chewa, *Balowoka* inheritance structures were open to interpretation; there was more opportunity for those wanting to contest legitimacy to do so and throughout the colonial period the number of royal lineages within families generally increased to accommodate "more appropriate" individuals. The apparent "order" of things was being reshaped by "new men" and their representatives. For separate reasons the ways in which the highly decentralized, clan based leadership of the Lakeside Tonga, for example, responded to the imposition of colonial administration was different again. Whilst the *Balowoka* chieftainships had the "historical raw materials" they needed in order to perform their pasts effectively through a central narrative of leadership, the Tonga, whose fractured and multiple historical narratives were based around clans rather than one dominant chief, did not have this same option for accessing power from either the local population or the colonial administration.[112]

The see-saw nature of the chiefs' hegemony – particularly in contests concerning Katumbi and Chikulamayembe's seniority, but also to some extent between Chikulamayembe and his "subordinate" chiefs Mwamlowe and Mwahenga – is reflected in the boldness with which the "facts" are told. This boldness, more often than not, has much to do with the strength of personality and experience of the chief proposing the version, their position in relation to the local population as well as the government. Alongside the copy of Chief Katumbi's version of events from 1970 there exists the history of Chikulamayembe, as constructed by the current chief not long after he first took up his position in 1969. It is a much more deferential account, depicting Katumbi in an honorable way; it sets quite a different tone to his successor's most recent displays of superiority within the region. These performances are political events and require the observance of diplomatic behaviour; an honourable and respectful language is used throughout. However, even in his position as a young newly installed chief his his rendition of events still attempts to subtly undermine Katumbi; the role of Chikulamayembe in enabling his establishment in Hewe runs throughout the narrative:

> *"So coming back to Rumphi, [Chikulamayembe] told Chipofya to go and settle in Hewe and also to look for Katumbi, who had strayed towards Karonga. So Chipofya began looking and eventually found Katumbi at Yembe. Coming from that village on the way to Hewe, Katumbi died. Chipofya came to Hewe with mother and son only. They came to Hewe and after a few years, Chipofya brought the son to Chikulamayembe. Rejoicing, Chikulamayembe gave them three bundles of cloth and told Chipofya to raise up the young Katumbi".*[113]

Evidently, these battles conform to a pattern found by Berry amongst contemporary Ghanaian chiefs; they have "learned the value of history for the pursuit of property and power in the present".[114] The battle to produce authority in the Hewe-Nkamanga region had become concentrated within a battle over authentic stories; whichever of the two chiefs – Chikulamayembe and Katumbi – had more influence at different times meant that the narratives were shaped accordingly.

Conclusions

An understanding of the pre-colonial past is essential in rendering an accurate portrayal of any colonial chief, however much they might be considered to be an invention of empire. Most native authority chiefs worked within certain cultural and political parameters which were unique from place to place; some found more room to manoeuvre than others, and some were masters at manipulating history for their own benefit. The purpose of this chapter has been to present the historical problems and advantages that "big men" in the Tumbuka Highlands faced, as well as a sense of the socio-economic conditions that prevailed here in the run up to colonialism in order to better appreciate the historical context in which Timothy Chawinga acted. This chapter has illustrated the significant connections that existed between the area and peoples of what we now know as Hewe and the regional economy, especially in relation to communities and chieftaincies which were cartographically separated from them during the colonial period and are now in Zambia. The production and exchange of goods and people across this area played a significant role during the chieftainship of Timothy Chawinga.

Another aspect that has been worth reflecting on is that the *Balowoka* became chiefs in a region which had not known their type of political leadership prior to their arrival; it was one in which they gained ascendancy through economic prowess rather than religious or spiritual legitimacy. Since there was no tradition of dynastic kingship and no tradition or cult that went alongside it this meant that the *Balowoka* arrivals, the forefathers of Katumbi and Chikulamayembe, had room to construct their own history and traditions. The innovation of one such chief, if he had the personality to bring about its transformation, could easily become custom in the short matter of his lifetime.[115] The pliability of inherited historical narratives was put to good use by Timothy Chawinga, especially as he found new ways to exploit the "native authority" space he inherited in 1943. The colonial demarcation of borders was significant for chiefs such as Chawinga, "not as fixed or binding constraints on social action" but rather more importantly as "focal points for further debate".[116] According to Berry, the production of historical narratives about a given space became one of the most significant ways in which power was derived in the colonial period.

Within the framework of the colonial administration, whilst "chiefs enjoyed multiple opportunities", they were only able to "appropriate surplus if they could successfully argue their claims to land and subjects".[117] As such, historical "knowledge" and the tools to project this became one of the most crucial weapons in a chief's arsenal. Once representatives of chiefly interest were able to literately present their accounts of space they were quickly able to allot primacy to their versions of local history by linking it to the territorial model of colonial rule. Furthermore, those chiefly elites who were in a position to fashion the local "historical raw materials"[118] to suit their needs were able to produce an hegemonic discourse which had the effect of concealing alternative stories of authority *within* the said locality,[119] as well as in relation to neighbouring zones of influence. Highlighting the "purely dynastic basis of local history" which obviously gives precedence to those chiefly elements around which it is constructed, Mazarire shows how this has the effect of reducing to mere "imagined geographies" the political facts that these other places, and other authorities, once represented.[120]

Of course, it is hardly original to suggest that the colonial state and African elites colluded to produce new political geographies by demarcating and mapping spaces and ethnicities. What is much less explored is how this process silenced the histories of other authorities, subsuming them within the dominant landscape of chieftainship.[121] Trying to

excavate past "places" from these dynastic local histories when they had no territorial character but rather consisted of "a number of points in interaction with each other"[122] is not an easy task; it is made less easy as political histories of more definable and recognisable chieftainships are purposefully wielded by both the administration and the local political elites in the colonial setting. It should be noted that the ability of a chief to control and manipulate these potentially dangerous alternative local narratives and political geographies would have been vital to the success of whosoever is vying for control of a given place; as the thesis continues by exploring the case of Chawinga it will be illustrated that this was something he managed well.

The next chapter will focus upon the various historical materials available to both the colonial administration and local African leaders in northern Malawi as control over the land was being contested. The dialogue which emerged between textual and physical space that came with the arrival of Europeans at the start of the nineteenth century forged new political spaces; the stakes of chiefs "knowing their boundaries" in these spaces and the ways in which they began using them as a way of contesting legitimacy, will be brought in to focus.

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[1] H.L. Vail, 'Religion, Language, and the Tribal Myth: The Tumbuka and Chewa of Malawi', in J.M. Schoffeleers (ed.) *Guardians of the land : essays on Central African territorial cults* (Blantyre, 2000) , 212

[2] In this area the newcomers altered local patterns of culture by establishing small chiefdoms where only loose political units had existed previously. They are also credited with shifting the patterns of descent and inheritance from matrilineality to patrilineality. However, whilst some loose political formations had almost certainly emerged at this stage, before the arrival of the trading parties of the *Balowoka,* there existed some key differences with the Chewa to the south who ruled over large, defined areas and who "enjoyed considerable power and authority". Vail, 'Religion', 212-216.

[3] Leroy Vail, Shadreck Chirembo, Yizenge Chondoka and Frackson Bota, and Thomas Cullen Young all collected oral testimony on this region over different times, and their work will be referenced throughout this thesis. Whatever their many contradictions they do generally present a similar picture regarding trading patterns, the economic and political arrangements and activities of pre-Balowoka clans, the activities of the Bisa, the Bemba and the "Arabs" in Hewe.

[4] The *Balowoka* were the famed group of migrants who were skilled in trading. Their name originates from the oral history which states that they *'crossed over'* the lake (Malawi) from Tanzania at the end of the Eighteenth Century in search of ivory, skins and new places to settle. They probably came from Unyamwezi via Mwera, but it is likely that they were exposed to various trading influences along the way and furthermore that they didn't come together but in various groups. As Cullen Young pointed out, "It is […] doubtful whether or not the names by which individual members of the party have come down to us are those by which they were known on arrival. It is also far from certain that all of those whose families nowadays describe themselves as "*wamlowoka"* all came together in the first party. The chief man is only known as *Mlowoka*, that is to say, "the crosser" […] it is likely to have been applied to him or self-assumed on the successful issue of his lake venture". (Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples* (1932), 33)

[5] Vail, 'Religion', 213

[6] The area is said to have covered, at its greatest extent, 20,000 square miles, from Songwe in the north to Kasungu in the south, and from the lake in the east to the Luangwa River in the west. Chondoka and Bota make some very interesting assertions that ought to be followed up, especially as they provide limited information about the sources that they cite from. The discussion they have made around Tumbuka state building is particularly worth noting. Their suggestion is that "The Tumbuka kingdom was created through what we may accurately call a voluntaristic state building strategy […] where people or chiefs voluntarily leave their individual sovereignties to unite with other communities or chiefs to create a larger political unit". Y. Chondoka and F. Bota, *A history of the Tumbuka from 1400 to 1900: the Tumbuka under the M'nyanjagha, Chewa, Balowoka, Senga, and Ngoni chiefs* (Lusaka, 2007) 37.

However, for this polity to have legitimately been called a state the authorities would have had to have the power to receive tribute, mobilise men for war or work, and enforce laws. With the lack of primary or other secondary sources to suggest that this society had an established communication or trade network during the fifteenth century, this remains unlikely. The focus of this thesis, however, is rather limited to the colonial and post-colonial period and so a more rigorous study of these historical claims cannot be undertaken. For further discussion around "The Tumbuka Proper" see: K. Phiri, 'Traditions of Power and Politics in Early Malawi: a Case Study of the Kasungu District from about 1750 to 1933', in *The Society of Malawi Journal*, 35:2 (1982) 24-40; H. L. Vail, 'Suggestions towards a reinterpreted Tumbuka history' in B. Pachai (ed.) *The Early History of Malawi* (London, 1972); and S. B. Chirembo, *Chieftainship and accumulation of power: a case study of the Chikulamayembe and Katumbi dynasties in Rumphi District, Northern Malawi, from pre-colonial to colonial times*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Chancellor College Zomba, Malawi, 2007; D. Fraser, *Winning a primitive people: sixteen years' work among the warlike tribe of the Ngoni and the Senga and Tumbuka peoples of Central Africa* (London, 1914); and P. Banda, 'Some Reflections on the History of the Tumbuka Proper', *Chancellor College History Seminar*, 1970/71

[7] For the clan histories see interviews undertaken by Mary Davies [hereafter MD] with: Sub-TA Zolokere Khunga, Chatumbwa Village, 4 February 2009; G.V.H. Khutamaji Kachalie, Khutamaji Village, 5 February 2009; Edson Chilembo, Group Village Headman Nchuka, Nchuka Village, 19 February 2009 and 21 September 2009; P.G.V.H. Mowa Nyirenda, Mowa Village, 16 February 2009 and Bwanyonga Village, 12 May 2009

[8] The only reference to a unifying Tumbuka leader found in the oral sources collected in Hewe by myself, Shadreck Chilembo or Leroy Vail is to that of *Baza*. This information was gathered from an interview with Nthawathawa Zgambo which the anthropologist and linguist Vail recorded in 1970. In the interview notes he is described by Vail as the "official historian of Hewe", although it appears that he was also influenced heavily by the available written histories on the matter, in particular the missionary Thomas Cullen-Young's publications (see Interview Leroy Vail [hereafter LV] with Nthawathawa Zgambo, 17 October 1970). His reference to *Baza* is likely a reference to the Tumbuka leader *Baza Dokowe* who did emerge as a semi-heroic unifying figure leading a group of Tumbuka to rebel against the Ngoni. However, given that the rebellion did not take place until around 1880, this figure cannot be mistaken for a leader who may have lead the Tumbuka before the *Balowoka* arrived. See T. J. Thompson, *Christianity in northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's missionary methods and Ngoni culture* (Leiden, New York, Köln; 1995), 26.

[9] Chondoka asserts that whilst *Mlowoka* (in this case he refers specifically to Chikulamayembe) was accepted as the ruler of *some* local Tumbuka who belonged to the "chiefdom of Mutimbula", what most people today understand to be the leadership of the Luhanga clan, "it is very important to understand that many Tumbuka in Mutimbula's territory did not recognise the authority of [...] Mlowoka. They only recognised the authority of chief Mutimbula who was a sub-chief of the Tumbuka King, *M'nyanjagha" (*Chondoka and Bota, *A history of the Tumbuka,* 158). However, with scant evidence to prove this assertion it is difficult to use Chondoka's argument to demonstrate a different story. More convincing is the oral testimony of V.H. Mwachibanda Munthali taken by Vail in 1971 in which he is quite clear that in Hewe "all clans ruled themselves independently. There was no clan that exercised authority over others [...] there were no extensive chiefdoms as there are now", (Interview LV with V.H. Mwachibanda Munthali, 7 August 1971). This is clearly also the line of argument taken in Cullen-Young's 1932 version of *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, in which he employs a Portuguese reference from 1798 to paint a picture of the political landscape before the *Balowoka* arrived: "It was a state of matters involving the presence of many family divisions without any federating centre beyond the possession of a common type of language; a medley of names without that of any king or ruling superior [...] A certain number of 'locality names' also exist which suggest aggregations of clans or communities within clearly known districts. There was, however, no clan or aggregation of clans possessing any authority outside its own narrow bounds, and no chief of any sort wielding suzerain power over any federated groups" (Cullen-Young, *Notes on the History,* 27-28).

[10] Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka,* 83-85; see also O. J. M. Kalinga, *A History of the Ngonde Kingdom of Malawi*, (The Hague, 1985); O. J. M. Kalinga, 'Trade, the Kyungus, and the emergence of the Ngonde Kingdom of Malawi', in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 12:1 (1979), 17-39; H. W. Langworthy, 'Swahili influence in the area between Lake Malawi and the Luangwa River' in *African Historical Studies*, 4:3 (1971), 575-602; and M. Wright and P. Lary, 'Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi', in *African Historical Studies,* 4:3 (1971), 547-573

[11] The most common translation for the name Chikulamayembe is, after all, "bringer of hoes", and is cited in most clan histories from the area as the major reason why he was accepted so easily as leader of the people.

[12] The Phoka are amongst the earliest Tumbuka peoples found in the area and are famed for their iron smelting and working skills. Their furnaces can be found around the Nyika Plateau, in the mountainous areas where the Phoka settled. Hoes became an important way of paying bridewealth. See, S. Davison & P. N. Mosley, 'Iron-Smelting in the Upper North Rukuru Basin of Northern Malawi', in *Azania,* 23:1 (1988), 57-99; N. J. van der Merwe and D. H. Avery, 'Science and Magic in African Technology: Traditional Iron Smelting in Malawi', in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 57:2 (1987), 143-172; Interviews, LV with Nthawathawa Zgambo and Zolokere Khunga, 1971; For discussions around the value of these hoes see Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka,* 82-3.

[13] Interview LV with Nthawathawa Zgambo, 17 October 1970; see also Interview LV with Tadeyo Harawa, 10 August 1970; Vail with Nkhota Kachale, 12 August 1970; and Vail with G.V.H. Ntumbatumba Luhanga, 13 August 1970 who describes that "when Chikulamayembe came, he found the Luhanga sleeping on ivory. He told them that the ivory was great wealth in Mwela where he had come from. He asked them to give him all the ivory that was just lying about in their villages; he took these to Mwela where he came back with cloth, beads, mphande shells and wrings (ear-rings). He distributed these among the people who had helped him collect the ivory, and they were amazed at the amount of wealth which he brought back". The "official historian" of the Gondwe clan (the clan of the Chikulamayembe dynasty) was at this time, according to Vail, G.V.H. Mcinangub(w)o. He was interviewed by Vail on 3 August 1971 and said: "Kakalala came with a lot of wealth in the form of cloth and beads, coming here to look for ivory. He asked the people for ivory, which the people of Nkamanga regarded as merely bones. The ivory he took to Zanzibar where he used it for buying more cloth and beads. Back home, he distributed the cloth among the people, and for this reason they liked him […] In order to make him stay, they said, "Let us give him a wife!"; the same story has been recounted at the annual Mulindafwa Ceremony in recent years. Local people did have reputations as being expert elephant hunters though. "There was the Chembe family near Mwanda Hill. They were the ones who went as far as Mphasa and Moba through to Zambia to kill elephants" (Interview LV with V.H. Mwachibanda Munthali, n.d. 1971). There was Mfundi and Malikwata in Nkamanga (Interview LV with S.G. Gondwe, Village Headman Bongololo, Chipula Gondwe, J.L. Chilambo, 11 August 1970). These hunters only killed for meat though, which would "feed a village for many days [...] our ancestors were fools in not knowing that ivory was great wealth. In those days, there was no trade; people only exchanged what local products they had, one person had food, the other had a goat and the two could be exchanged". Interview LV with GVH Chicinde Luhanga, 12 August 1970.

[14] Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka,* 83

[15] Nthawathawa Zgambo describes how the head of the Zgambo clan in the past were distinguished themselves by wearing ""sambo" (bangles) around the arms and legs. These sambo were made by Bisa […] [they were] made from sisal and wire" (Interview LV with Nthawathawa Zgambo). The Bisa are reputed to have traded with Zolokere bringing these "wires which they sold for ivory and food (maize)" (Interview LV with Walutundu Luhanga, 5 August 1972); "Some of them came long before Katumbi […] They used to come in teams and made their settlements in locations west of this place. They had varied skills and made wires which they gave to village heads (*benemizi)*" (Interview LV with Sub-Chief Zolokere, 5 August 1971); Cullen-Young even records that it was the Bisa who brought the use of fire and hoes, "when Zolokere first came he did not understand the use of fire […] they had no hoes, and we understand that they were hoeing with bits of wood. When he had been there for several years he found a group of strangers coming from the west; they belonged to what we call the "Biza" tribe, and it was these strangers who introduced the use of fire. They begged permission to stay with him, and he agreed because they knew many things, including the manufacture of hoes. He admired them greatly as a wise people". Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland (2nd edition, London, 1970)*, 163-64.

[16] Interview LV with Nthawathawa Zgambo

[17] The Bisa are said to have taken over the "Kingdom" of Chamanyavyose in what is now Luangwa Valley.

[18] It has been posited that the Chikunda came to Hewe and also bought slaves. See interview LV with Chief Zolokere.

[19] E. A. Alpers, *Ivory and slaves in East Central Africa,* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 172-203

[20] Cullen Young rightly points out that in fact whilst only the names of leading men are mentioned they would have been accompanied by something of a caravan, no women are mentioned "but carriers must certainly have been there", *Notes on the History,* 1st edition, 36.

[21] Tradition varies widely on this. Whilst Zgambo concludes that "the first chief was Katumbi in this area, before him this area had no chiefs […] Katumbi was one of the Balowoka because he crossed the lake. Originally, he came from Uganda and stopped in Mwela in the area of now chief Mapunda" […] [they were not traders] they were just looking for country where to settle. They also had dogs, because these helped

them secure meat through hunting. As a result, they were given the surname "Chawinga" because they hunted with dogs. From the verb Kubinga – which means to hunt, especially used in connection with dogs which roam through the bush looking for animals" (Interview LV with Nthawathawa Zgambo); Cullen Young, however, seems convinced that they were "traders with a coast connection" (*Notes on the History*, 1st edition, 32), "and probably elephant hunters" who found themselves in "an El Dorado, a cheap buying market for what they most desired. It was not surprising, therefore, that the travelers decided to settle down and to make the most of a golden opportunity" (*Ibid*., 36).

[22] Cullen-Young, *Notes on the History*, 1st Edition, 31-32. Whilst Young's notion, that a historical tradition begins only once there is a centralized chieftainship, is perhaps questionable his collection of oral histories do certainly demonstrate that a significant change did take place once the *Balowoka* arrived. He goes on to predict that "the traditions of other tribes will bear out the statement that centralised chieftainship was inaugurated either by some adventurous coast man or by some ambitious local individual after contact with the riches and enterprise of the coast"; and indeed he was right on this.

[23] Interview LV with V.H. Mwachibanda Munthali, 7 August 1971

[24] *Ibid.*, 41.

[25] *Ibid.*, 37

[26] *Ibid.,* 37. In his 1975 book *Ivory and Slaves,* Alpers argues that around 1785 there was a "revival" of the Kilwa route; this seems to reflect this interest which Cullen Young speaks of.

[27] Interview Vail with Nthawathawa Zgambo

[28] *Ibid..* This is also described to Vail by Sub-Chief Zolokere who says that Katumbi never went to Mwela to sell the ivory himself, rather "the Arabs were the ones who came to buy the ivory. We called them Baloli, they visited one chief after another looking for ivory" (Interview LV with Zolokere). When asked if commoners might be able to sell ivory as these Arabs passed through the village, Zolokere replied by suggesting that "they could if they had some but most common people didn't so the Baloli men went to the chiefs" (*Ibid*). It is worth noting that whilst he is convinced of the fact that "Katumbi" never left his area to trade this probably reflects the fact that the first generation of these *Balowoka* from whom Katumbi came was never known to be called "Katumbi" and had never been settled in Hewe in the first place.

[29] Interview LV with Kabazamawe Cilambo, n.d. 1970. He also said that "the first Chikulamayembe – who was Mlowoka – [he] was the person who had been trading".

[30] The classic narrative of: they came, they crowned, and they conquered. This process will be explored in a little more detail later as the politics of history writing is examined.

[31] O. J. M. Kalinga, 'The Balowoka and the establishment of states west of Lake Malawi', in A. I. Salim (ed.) *State formation in eastern Africa,* (Nairobi, 1984), 49

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Chirembo, *Chieftainship and accumulation,* 50-51, in this thesis Chirembo argues using oral sources that Katumbi never did establish political control as Kalinga alleges. He bases this, however, on only one informant who says that "all clans ruled themselves independently – there was no clan that exercised authority over others. Zolokere, for example, feared us (the Nthali), and we feared him and his powers. The same with Katumbi; he feared Zolokere and Zolokere feared him, and so on and on. This is the way things were in the past. There were no extensive chiefdoms as there are now", c.f. Vail's interview with GVH Mwachibanda; see also Chondoka and Bota, *A History,* 162-3.

[34] For example that of the Mutimbula (or Luhanga) clan; as discussed in, Chondoka and Bota, *A History,* 59

[35] Interview LV with S.G. Gondwe, V.H. Bongololo, Chipula Gondwe, J.L. Chilambo, 11 August 1970

[36] Interview LV with G.V.H. Chicinde Luhanga

[37] Interview LV with Gondwe, Bongololo, Gondwe, and Chilambo

[38] As described by Roland Oliver, *Africa since 1800*, (Cambridge, 1981), 96. These warrior bands are known to have been called Maviti and Magwangwara elsewhere.

[39] Interview LV with Mwachibanda Munthali

[40] Mlozi, the Arab King at Karonga did not come into the area himself "but his boys did…the ruga-ruga about whom you have been asking, Mlozi was a chief and he had people at Mpata. He only sent his people. There was Kopa-Kopa (he was well known in this area) some say he was a brother of Mlozi, some say a son". Interview LV with Zolokere.

[41] Mlozi's representatives would go straight to house of Katumbi "that was where the hunters who had ivory went to sell it". These people brought their own slaves with them to help carry the ivory.

[42] Interview LV with Mwachibanda Munthali

[43] *Ibid*.

[44] *Basambazi* can be translated to mean wealthy, or privileged; see Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 172
[45] Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 172
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] Interview LV with Kabazamawe Cilambo
[48] See also Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 150-152. Very little has been written on the selling of slaves by the *Balowoka.* The oral evidence suggests opinion is divided over whether or not Katumbi would have allowed the trade to take place within his area but it is likely that he was involved in some way given that "in those days the lives of people were not as important as they are today". Furthermore "one only had to be suspected of doing evil in a village and that was enough for others to sell him away to the Ruga-Ruga", Interviews, Vail with V.H. Mwachibanda Munthali, 7 August 1971. Munthali went on to tell Vail that the Arabs [Mlozi, Kopa-Kopa, and Msalemu] came to Utumbuka to buy slaves for which they would give cloth, guns and gunpowder.
[49] It was the chief who had "a lot of ivory derived from the taxes he collected from his people" so they would mostly interact with Chikulamayembe, Katumbi and other "big chiefs". Interview LV with Kabazamawe Cilambo
[50] G. Pourtier, *Le Gabon, Tome 2: Etat et developpement* (Paris, 1989), 307-308 cited in C. Gray, 'The Disappearing district? Territorial transformation in southern Gabon 1850-1950' in, A. M. Howard and R. M. Shain (eds.) *The spatial factor in African history: the relationship of the social, material, and perceptual* (Leiden, 2005), 240
[51] Gray, 'The disappearing', 231-32
[52] Kalinga, 'The Balowoka'
[53] Gray, 'The disappearing', 231-32
[54] The Livingstonia Mission was established in the Tumbuka Highlands at Khondowe in 1891 after having to relocate away from the lakeshore. Their former mission had proved somewhat of an unhealthy place to live and the high death rate from malaria and other tropical diseases prompted this move. For more on the history of the mission see J. J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province* (2nd edition, Blantyre, 2000)
[55] Chondoka and Bota, *A History,* 161
[56] A. Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society,* (Chicago and London, 1992), 89
[57] Kalinga, 'The Balowoka', 36. This is corroborated by many oral sources collected from across Nkamanga and Hewe.
[58] They also benefitted by seeing their maternal relations rise from being situated in leading families in insignificant polities to become branches of the royal families in states of size, importance and wealth
[59] Kalinga, 'The Balowoka', 49
[60] Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka,* 169
[61] *Ibid*.
[62] The various priests are noted as: Mwakhaka at Nkamanga; Mwandandambi at Luviri [chikang'ombe]; Mlomboji at Hewe; and Tunduru in Henga. Interview LV with Gondwe, Bongololo, Gondwe, Chilambo
[63] Interview LV with Walutundu Luhanga
[64] A second difference commented upon by Vail between the Chewa and Tumbuka "was that most Chewa chiefdoms possessed the *nyau* closed society, an institution which is interpreted by Schoffeleers as being aligned with local interests in balance against the interests of the central authorities". H.L. Vail, 'Religion, Language, and the Tribal Myth: The Tumbuka and Chewa of Malawi', in J.M. Schoffeleers (ed.) *Guardians of the land: essays on Central African territorial cults* (Blantyre, 2nd edition, 1999), 216.
[65] For example the Chikang'ombe cult in Nkamanga.
[66] Vail, 'Religion', 224
[67] Kalinga, 'The Balowoka', 49
[68] J. Tosh, *Clan leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society c.1800-1939,* (Oxford, 1978), 68
[69] Vail, 'Religion', 224
[70] Vail, 'Religion', 226
[71] Controlling the productivity of individual gardens, farming techniques, and advising on the type and variety of crops to plant and when to plant them were responsibilities which were only assumed by Katumbi chiefs from the 1930s onwards.
[72] S. Berry, 'Debating the land question in Africa', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 44:4 (2002), 638-668, 659

[73] G. C. Bond, *The politics of change in a Zambian community* (Chicago, 1976), 14
[74] G. Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*. No. 3. Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1968. Cited in Bond, *The politics*, 14-15
[75] This is translated as: I Kumwenda who gave the pieces of elephant tusks to Kyungu and Muyombe. Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka,* 61
[76] In fact a document produced by Chief Katumbi (Timothy Chawinga) in 1970 acknowledges that after they had crossed the lake to Chilumba, Kyungu, whom they found there, "told [his grandfather] that the source of wealth was on the hills and on the other side of the hills", in other words the Henga and Nkamanga-Hewe areas. See Interviews, Vail with Chief Katumbi Timothy Chawinga - "History of Katumbi Mulowoka", November 1970
[77] Bond, *The politics*, 15-16
[78] There are several interpretations of the name Mulindafwa each of which suggests slightly different origin and migration stories of Katumbi's ancestor. Chondoka suggests that it means "the watchman is dead". In Hewe itself no one I came across was certain of its meaning, nor was any consistent interpretation given to me. Indeed it is not even explained during the Mulindafwa ceremony itself.
[79] Interview LV with Chief Katumbi Timothy Chawinga, 1970
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] Vail, 'Religion', 221
[82] *Ibid.,* 223-224
[83] Interview LV with Timothy Chawinga
[84] *Ibid*.
[85] Bond, *The Politics,* 15
[86] Another Katumbi chieftainship can be found there today dating from that time.
[87] Chirembo, *Chieftainship*, 67
[88] Vail, 'Religion', 211
[89] *Chivwalenkwende* translates as meaning "to put on barkcloth", this relates to the fact that whilst he was being given protection from the Bemba by the priest Mlomboji at Mwanda Mountain it was cold for him high in the hills and so he was forced to start wearing barkcloth. The Katumbi called Chimgayu had a suffix of "ku Khata" to his name, meaning "of the swamp". It was in the Vwaza marshes that he hid from the Ngoni.
[90] McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 338
[91] T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the Speech and History of the Tumbuka Henga Peoples,* (Livingstonia, 1923); T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the Speech and History of the Tumbuka Henga Peoples,* (London, 1932); T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Henga-Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*, (London, 1932)
[92] Apter, *Black Critics,* 94
[93] T. Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism', 26
[94] C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Imagination,* (Cambridge MA, London, 1998), 30
[95] His version of history was not, however, the first written account. Cullen Young had been famously influenced by a manuscript given to him by Saulos Nyirenda, who had gone to Livingstonia in 1897 for teacher training. Cullen Young translated and published the manuscript some decades later as, S. Nyirenda and T. Cullen Young, 'History of the Tumbuka-Henga people' in *Bantu Studies,* 5:1 (1931). Another article of some importance to the written tradition of Tumbuka history is, A. Nkhonjera, 'History of the Kamanga Tribe of Lake Nyasa. A Native Account', in the *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 10:39, (1911). See P. G. Forster, *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist* (2nd edition, Blantyre, 2003) 72-75
[96] W. A. Elmslie, *Among the wild Ngoni: Being some chapters in the history of the Livingstonia Mission in British Central Africa* (Edinburgh, 1899); A. Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People: sixteen years' work among the warlike tribe of the Ngoni and the Senga and Tumbuka peoples of Central Africa* (London, 1914); T. J. Thompson, *Christianity in northern Malaŵi: Donald Fraser's missionary methods and Ngoni culture* (Leiden, New York, Köln; 1995)
[97] Forster, *T. Cullen Young,* 82
[98] Cullen Young, cited in *Ibid.,* 91
[99] Vail, cited in *Ibid.,* 97
[100] *Ibid.*, 101
[101] Vail made it clear that more historical research ought to be done on the history of communities further to the west of Nkamanga, the areas in which he himself concentrated. The areas of Hewe, Muyombe and

beyond further into Zambia would bring new perspectives which would have a significant effect on the history of the Tumbuka.

[102] In line with the argument that was outlined in the introduction to this thesis, as land becomes scarcer and its value increases the benefits of claiming autochthony and indigeneity not only in relation to headmanships but also as individual clan members have increased. Various clans throughout Hewe are drawing upon these historical texts as ways of legitimising their access to certain resources over other people.

[103] It has been a powerful narrative which is still included in a similarly triumphant form in school history books in Malawi. The annual celebration of this chieftainship, the Gonapamuhanya ceremony, is also often broadcast to the nation.

[104] Mlowoka is one of the ancestral names of Chikulamayembe's "grandfather"; the first *settled* chief was known as Gonapamuhanya. Cullen Young, *History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga People's*, (1st ed..), 41

[105] Cullen Young, *History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga People's*, (1st ed.), 35

[106] *Ibid.,* 37

[107] G.V.H Mcinanguwo for example when interviewed by Vail on 3 August 1971 said that indeed the missionaries had helped a little in reviving the Chikulamayembe chieftainship but that really the credit should go to the people of Nkamanga themselves. In particular, Chitupila the nephew of Bwati Chikulamayembe, Mhangala Nyirongo, an adviser (nduna) to the Chikulamayembe's, and also Mwachilwa (then Kabazamawe) who originally pacified the country using mwavi. All of these people pressed for the installation of Chikulamayembe in 1907. He said that whilst Master Brooke [a.k.a. D.C North Nyasa, Arthur Dove Eastbrook] and Dr Laws came to supervise the installation, they were not the initiators of it.

[108] There was a repeated use of 'Midauko' within the oral testimony collected from Tumbuka informants, not only in the interviews undertaken during fieldwork when people would wave photocopied sections, or dog-eared parts of it as though it offered definitive proof of their claims, but it's influence is also often mentioned on the cover sheet of Vail's interviews from 1970-1971.

[109] Chondoka and Bota suggest that Themba Katumbi Mulindafwa introduced the Mulindafwa Ceremony in order to legitimise and strengthen his political power in the area, "especially after he did not receive much support from the Tumbuka in Hebe (Hewe) area, north of his palace". It was also a way, they suggest, of making the younger generations of Tumbuka believe that his family was indigenous by origin. The ceremony was said to have attracted thousands of people, including many from his brother Limilazamba Katumbi's kingdom, in the northern part of Chief Chamanyavyose's territory (*A History of the Tumbuka,* 172). These suggestions are somewhat confusing. As the other oral evidence has shown, Mulindafwa had not settled at any time in Hewe. It was only once his children were brought by Chipofya that they tried to establish a chieftainship there. Their argument does give some indication that there was tension between the northern areas of Hewe and the indigenous peoples, and this is borne out by evidence from Hewe. However these tensions, as well as the Mulindafwa Ceremony itself, emerged at a much later date than Chondoka and Bota suggest. More research needs to be undertaken on the Katumbi chieftainship in Sitwe, Chama, in order to get a better picture of the interconnections between the two.

[110] Interview LV with Mwachibanda Munthali

[111] Interview LV with Timothy Chawinga

[112] Vail and White, 'Tribalism', 157

[113] Interview LV with Mcinangubo

[114] S. Berry, 'Debating the land question', 660

[115] J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest*: *towards a history of political tradition in Equatorial Africa* (London, 1990) 195

[116] S. Berry, *Chiefs Know their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power, and the Past in Asante, 1896-1996* (Portsmouth, Oxford, Cape Town, 2001), 7-8

[117] *Ibid.,* 26-27

[118] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism', 26

[119] G.C. Mazarire, 'Changing Landscape and Oral Memory in South-Central Zimbabwe: Towards a Historical Geography of Chishanga, c. 1850-1990', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29:3 (2003), 701-715

[120] *Ibid.,* 704

[121] C. Vijfhuizen and L. Makora, 'More than one paramount chief in one chieftaincy? The gender of maintaining worlds', in *Zambezia,* 25:1 (1998). Alongside chiefly landscapes of authority there were hunting landscapes, landscapes of danger and refuge, trading landscapes and migratory landscapes, all of these have their own narratives and history but are less often remembered in oral tradition or asked about by historians.

[122] Mazarire, 'Changing Landscape', 704