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

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CHAPTER 4

Eating the land: Agricultural resources and the accumulation of power

“Chief Katumbi, whose small area and population in the extreme north of the Mzimba District is worthy of reference in that he is a young man who catches the eye of successive District Commissioners by his progressive ideas, and a willingness to co-operate in measures designed by local Government Officers for soil conservation and improvement in peasant agricultural practices, and indeed in all matters of local government. In June he received a well merited award of the King’s Medal for Chiefs”.¹

Introduction

This chapter continues to track the relationship which was previously suggested between the exploitation of agricultural resources and the accumulation of chiefly authority. As chapter three made clear the huge investment in agriculture that came with the so-called “Second Colonial Occupation” increased the material base from which chiefs, and other African elites, could potentially draw authority. Native Authorities were positioned as the perfect people to enforce the new developmental agenda of the colonial state, with its emphasis on conservation and increased agricultural production. In fact agricultural policies and forums for the discussion of agrarian change formed the main agenda of interaction between the government and chiefs, as well as between the chiefs and their people from the 1930s onwards. These reforms and interactions, this chapter will argue, enabled Timothy Chawinga new ways of extracting and increasing his power in the local context.

Up until the 1930s the control over the productivity of individual gardens, techniques, crops to plant and where to plant them was something that the Katumbi Royal chiefs had never considered as a part of their responsibility. By the time Timothy Chawinga became Themba in 1942 the politics of colonial engagement put local leaders into a position as the enforcers of new “agricultural rules” presiding over activities where they had not been required to dominate or influence before. For some chiefs having to be the enforcer of these rules made them quite unpopular amongst their people, for whom the activities seemed harsh and unfair. For others, however, they provided new opportunities to control and exploit their environment and assert territoriality in an era where the value of land was beginning to steadily increase.

Much of the existing literature emphasises the decreasing possibilities for chiefs in this post-war setting. Some suggest that because this state intervention presented a major challenge to “peasant autonomy not just in the realm of cash crop production but also in food security”² the popularity of the African nationalists rather than the traditional leaders was bolstered. “By addressing these grievances” and linking them to their own political agendas, such as the fight against Federation, these nationalists were able to gain popularity amongst the grassroots.³ Mamdani concludes that this period was one in which nationalist movements were able to turn the people against “the unc customary powers of Native Authority chiefs” and as a result the policy of indirect rule across British Africa was finally “exhausted” by this time.⁴ However, such a perspective pays little attention to other changes which the increased focus upon agricultural

production wrought; the access which people had to resources – technical and material - and the changes which this effected within communities also had the potential to benefit local authorities in useful ways.

Timothy Chawinga's use of agricultural setting to extract a significant amount of power is impressive but only possible, as the previous chapter argued, at this particular period in colonial history. However, as well as the timing of his chieftaincy this chapter will argue that its geographic location and relatively small territorial size mattered a great deal too. Capturing new economic opportunities was of crucial importance to the survival of chiefs' legitimate authority at this time but this figured in a matrix of many other factors which contributed to their strength as leaders; each varied in significance and, as this chapter will argue, often depended upon where these chiefs were located.

The conditions faced by Native Authorities in the northern region of colonial Nyasaland for example were quite different to those of their southern counterparts who managed quite different patterns of residence, land scarcity, denser populations and a much larger European settler population. In the southern and central regions of the country, more chiefs presided over highly sought after land, had to negotiate the terms of *thangata*,⁵ and as a result dealt more often with a disgruntled and disaffected population. The relationship that people had with their chiefs in the northern region had been to a much lesser extent mediated by the imposition of colonial agricultural schemes and repressive administrative measures, but that is not to say that differences between the native authority territories within the northern region did not exist. Huge disparities in character were in evidence, even between neighbouring chieftaincies.

One of the reasons for Chawinga's success, this thesis argues, is that Katumbi's native authority was a very cohesive and concentrated political unit, especially when it is compared with his neighbour Chikulamayembe's sprawling and diversely populated land which was almost three times as large; this meant Chawinga was able to practice a more controlled form of territoriality, something that Cosmo Haskard duly noted when he travelled around the district in his capacity as D.C. He commented that with Chikulamayembe living up on the Nkamanga Plain near Rumphi whilst he might have presided over a larger area he was so far from the lakeside villages of his subordinate chiefs Mwamlowe and Chapinduka, that in these places "his authority [...] was I think one might say almost nominal".⁶ Chawinga's area contained some difficult to reach places, but quite a different picture of command and control was presented there. The chief's authority reached the farthest corners of his territory and the differences in the influence he had over his people was regularly observed by both Haskard and his assistant.

In addition to using the size of the territory to his advantage, a chief could maintain much more autonomy if his native authority was not valuable to the state in terms of production, or was not a threatening place in terms of political organisation. In the areas where more government attention was paid, either on account of the very obvious political elements they harboured, or due to their economic potential, native authority chiefs had less opportunity to pursue their personal ambitions. That is not to say they did not try; in Karonga rural elites had been enriching themselves through large scale rice schemes and successful Master Farming activities, and the development of a vigorous network of co-operatives in the region gave further opportunities for accumulation and politicisation. This meant that when the government tried to put marketing restrictions on them, increase taxation, or implement agricultural rules which these people thought to be detrimental to them they were well positioned and well disposed to protest against them; by the 1950s the northern lakeshore had become a hot bed of activism and as such was much more visible to the state and duly received more attention.⁷

In contrast with chiefs and nationalist leaders in Karonga, the leadership in Hewe was good at flying under the radar. Hewe was not only physically distant from state controlled markets and the main government Boma, it was also able to take advantage of the strong cross border regional connections over in Northern Rhodesia; this made the area more politically and economically independent. The research undertaken in Hewe has borne out Boone's thesis, drawn from contemporary examples across West Africa, that a peripheral area would often be less intensely governed on account of the limited threat and the limited value which it offered the state;⁸ places like this were often just left to their "own devices, granted extensive autonomy, or simply neglected and not incorporated into the national space".⁹ It is the argument of this chapter that Timothy Chawinga was able to capture more opportunities without raising the suspicions of either the local population or the state, which assumed a neither engage nor impose position in relation to Hewe. This chapter will continue by exploring how the colonial policies of the time, together with the limited incorporation into the state of Hewe's economy, enabled Chawinga to fashion a territory which he could exploit for his own benefit.

Part one. The opportunities of the "Second Colonial Occupation"

The Development Plan of 1945 and changes in the value of land

The post-war policies of the colonial office brought a new agenda to Nyasaland in the shape of the Development Plan of 1945. This plan outlined a broad ranging set of reforms which would see chiefs come to mediate agricultural production in a more significant way than ever before. The changes that it heralded restructured the way in which land was managed and began to alter the meaning of ownership and access to this increasingly important resource.

Prior to 1945 there was no sense that struggles over land formed any significant part of day-to-day life in the Mzimba District, or indeed in much of the Northern Province. No systematic collection of information about land rights and tenure had ever been undertaken in this part of the Protectorate, a fact which Thatcher, the district commissioner of Mzimba who was charged with surveying the land in his district, interpreted as meaning the "present absence of any problems due to land shortage".¹⁰ Following the results of this 1945 survey into "Native Land Rights and Tenure" Thatcher concluded that the general principles upon which land was assigned and held "hardly vary throughout the Ngoni-Tumbuka area of N.A. M'mbelwa and the Henga-Tumbuka areas of Native Authorities Chikulamaembe and Katumbi".¹¹

The chiefs throughout these areas were presumed to be vested with the rights to control land, though in practice this was almost always delegated to the village headmen except in cases where large numbers of new migrants sought land on which to settle. According to the survey membership of a village carried with it "the right to cultivate a portion of the village lands", and having once been allocated it became "vested in the individual and his family in perpetuity".¹² Even if the individual did not cultivate the plot of land he could maintain rights over it indefinitely unless the chief decided to evict him, examples of such eviction however were "almost unknown".¹³ Land was considered a good which could be freely exchanged but not sold, and whilst a man was entitled to hand his land to someone known to the community, he could not do the same with a stranger without consulting the chief first. Whilst the results of the survey indicated that there were structures which managed land transactions, in practical terms they represented terms which were rarely consulted. In these areas where land was plentiful a somewhat relaxed approach to rights and tenure operated; despite having been given the

opportunity to do so, up until 1945 “no rules, orders, circulars or other instructions [had] been issued by any of the Native Authorities of this district concerning land or rights in land”.¹⁴

There were some indications that things might be a little more complicated than they looked. Investigating the lake-shore villages in Mzimba, where some land disputes had reared up in the early 1940s, Thatcher flagged up an eminently important dynamic which would become more problematic across the Henga-Tumbuka and Hewe areas of Mzimba as time went by; “the original settler families, of which the existing territorial chiefs are not necessarily members, have always been regarded as “owners” of the particular areas over which they originally acquired the rights”.¹⁵ Whilst it was hoped that the establishment of Native Authorities with their ability to issue official orders regarding “Native Trust Land” would discourage such interpretations of ownership, it was obvious that these “original” rights still existed in people’s memories, especially in regard to rights over trees.

It is difficult, however, to know whether or not the tension between different historical authorities was widespread at that stage as few investigations had been made. The administration was keen to find out how prevalent these claims were but they were also reluctant to spend too much time digging about for evidence of it for fear of reviving forgotten disputes. What can be assumed is that because of the abundance of cultivable land no desire to contest these claims existed, and therefore the narratives of original ownership remained largely invisible and unspoken, certainly as far as the administration was concerned. Most conflicts that did arise could be easily resolved at this time by the giving of gifts – usually beer or a fowl – to the “owner” as a way of smoothing the way.¹⁶ However, claims to autochthony rarely die out over time; they remain embedded in the narratives of clans and chieftaincies, and get revived in times of austerity.

The area under Chief Katumbi’s jurisdiction followed almost identical patterns to its neighbouring native authorities in terms of land ownership and use. The longest claims to autochthony existed in the clan histories of Khunga (represented by the leadership of Councillor Zolokere) and Kachalie (through Headman Khutamaji);¹⁷ however, as Thatcher notes in the survey, with “no land hunger in this area [...] the question of what happens when all the cultivable land in a village is occupied is not applicable”¹⁸ and the extent to which orders or rules governed land rights was negligible. Each case was simply assessed “in accordance with the general trend of opinion”.¹⁹

Times were changing though; there may still have been plenty of land but from 1945 native authorities were becoming increasingly involved in the management of productive activities on it. Firstly colonial land reform policies designed to increase the value of land in order to improve productivity increasingly linked authority over land to chiefs as a way of controlling this market; so “while social relations continued to be important, who these were with underwent change”.²⁰ As Carswell has noted, whilst in some ways this shift “from a system whereby well-connected individuals could form relationships with in-migrants, act as their hosts, and benefit from their labour, to a system whereby colonial appointees – by virtue of their position could allocate land” was not as disrupting as it sounded – the well-connected individuals and the colonial appointees were often the same group of people – however, it set in motion a “formalisation of authority” over land which would have future implications.²¹ Secondly, this was a time in which chiefs were able to further extend their control over land through various colonial conservation policies.

The culmination of this move to further enable native authorities in these matters in Nyasaland came in 1947 when the Natural Resources Ordinance was introduced. This legislation was designed to “force people to look after and cultivate their land properly” at a

time when food production and soil conservation occupied the attention of local administrations and important decisions to make “revolutionary changes in peasant cultivation practices” were being made.²² The changes which this would provoke were pre-empted by the administration and the increasing economic value of this good in these most unprepared of places was of pressing concern: “The economic value of land is barely appreciated” the survey concluded about Katumbi’s area, “and the system at present in being would require considerable modification to cope with the problems posed by an enhanced land value produced by efficient methods of cultivation”.²³ The process of territorialisation which had been underway during the previous sixty years of European influence was entering a new phase; territorial spaces were becoming economically valuable.

Re-evaluating the ‘Dead North’

Geoffrey Colby’s ambitious post-war investment in production meant that substantial agricultural projects, experiments and schemes were devised and implemented throughout the Protectorate. The Northern Province had suffered from a lack of attention and a long-standing battle to rid itself of its reputation as the “Dead North”;²⁴ when Colby arrived in Nyasaland in 1946 the Province hosted “only one single European planter, in the Karonga District, no thriving industries, and [...] no permanent departmental officers, except for a European Agricultural Officer in the Karonga District. Communications are poor, and only now are they beginning to improve”.²⁵ Despite being the biggest district in the Protectorate Mzimba only welcomed its first agricultural officer in 1945 and the plans for further agricultural assistants and soil rangers for the Northern Province had still failed to materialise by the end of the decade. The northern districts suffered additional problems on account of the large numbers of able-bodied men migrating “to other countries for employment, leaving the village denuded of the very people required to take such an important part” in these development activities.²⁶ Even with a better retention of this labour the concern was still there that “apart from the arterial North Road running from Mzimba through Njakwa to Fort Hill, nothing very satisfactory has so far been done in opening up the hinterlands”,²⁷ and as such opportunities for wealth accumulation remained limited and unpromising.

Once Colby arrived things did begin to change; however, for reasons that will be expanded upon in the following section, investment in the north remained limited to certain areas and was delivered in extremely uneven ways. This unevenness can be explained partly by the diversity of ecological zones that can be found within the northern region. Following a detailed agricultural survey undertaken by Hornby in 1938 which formed the basis of Colby’s plans, each of these areas was marked out for their economic potential and treated accordingly. For example, in North Mzimba, the zone within which the Hewe Valley is found, five distinct areas were highlighted in Hornby’s survey: the Upper Henga Valley; the Lower Henga Valley; the Nkamanga Plain; the Hewe Valley; and the Upper Rukuru Valley – each roughly conforming to a different chiefly territory as well as an ecological one. The Upper Henga was described as an extremely fertile area, native coffee had already been doing well here by the time that Colby’s policy to invest in local industry came about. This part of the Henga Valley provided the Livingstonia Mission with most of its food requirements and had done for many years. According to Hornby owing to the “certain amount of permanency in agriculture” which existed here, new industries based on Tung and coffee had great potential to thrive. The Lower Henga Valley, like the Nkamanga Plain, had a good climate for maize cultivation. Both areas were also considered to have plenty of potential for the development of beans and groundnuts as cash

crops, as long as “the native can be offered sufficient inducement to cause him to plant up bigger acreages”.²⁸

To the north of Mzimba there lay North Nyasa District - present day Karonga and Chitipa Districts - here a wide variety of native food crops flourished in this fertile region. The Co-operative Department, set up in 1951 under the provincial direction of Bingham, was particularly active in these areas. In Karonga District three major co-operative organisations developed: the Kilapula Rice Growers Co-operative Union (KRGCU), the Misuku Coffee Growers Co-operative Union (MCGCU) and the Bulambya Ghee Producers Co-operative Union (BGPCU) “all of which played significant roles in the politicisation of their areas.”²⁹ Chief Kilapula, in whose area the rice growing co-operatives were thriving, became a particularly important figure. Not long after the rice growers union had been established in 1953 a small town grew up around the headquarters where electricity quickly became available. Chief Kilapula, or Joseph Mwanjasi as he was also known, benefitted significantly from the prestige which this new development provided him, especially as no other town in the region had any access to electricity. It was prestigious enough to be chief of such a ‘modern’ area but Mwanjasi had positioned himself well by becoming chairman of the Rice Co-operative Union; had he not done this he might have struggled to maintain his status while other rural elites began to accumulate wealth and power in this setting. By expanding his role into straightforward business activities he was able to augment his reputation as a successful man “who commanded much respect from his people, and who was one of the most progressive African rulers in the district”.³⁰

So there were some obvious opportunities for people particularly in the Henga Valley and at the Lakeshore where cotton and rice projects injected significant investment. This attention had the effect of increasing the wealth of local communities and creating rural elites that were determined to fight to retain their new position in society. In other areas, where the geographical landscape enabled a different kind of accumulation, the local economy had another dynamic. The mountainous Misuku uplands in the farthest northern reaches of the province offered ideal coffee producing terrain, the topography of which provided great competitive advantage for the local population given that “there were plots of only 50 acres or less suitable for coffee, scattered among the hills” and therefore was almost entirely unappealing to European settlers for whom establishing even a moderately sized estate was impossible here.³¹ On account of this, groups of African commercial farmers emerged in these areas and as early as “the mid-1920s there was as large a group of potential African estate owners as Europeans”.³² The relationship of these farmers to the chieftainship of Mwenemisuku is as yet unexplored in great detail but it is clear that, unlike Mwanjasi who had manoeuvred himself into a prestigious position in the rice industry, Mwenemisuku was unable to do the same in relation to the coffee industry which was being built up around him, and as such he was possibly less able to check and compete with the accumulation of these coffee estates. Moreover the proximity of these estate farmers to the Tanganyika border added further specificities such as the much lower labour costs which they benefitted from on account of the presence of Tanganyikan migrants in the area who moved there to avoid higher taxes and poorer soils.

Boone summarises such differences in her own work, giving them a political dimension. Her arguments can help make sense of the scope which different elites had to exploit their environment, and show that this had much to do with their relationship to the state. She argues that rural elites who do not appropriate their own share of the rural surplus directly – relying instead on state intermediation – are more likely to be interested in aligning with new regimes. Those who are able to appropriate their own share of rural surplus directly could position themselves as competitors to new regimes, in a fight over division of the rural surplus. In

Nyasaland, in areas where there were significant profitable cash-cropping opportunities, for example with the co-operative movement and Master Farmer Scheme, chiefs could manoeuvre themselves into a good position to exploit these new opportunities, using their traditional identities to mobilize land and labour for this end; elsewhere they tapped agricultural surpluses by investing in trading and transport. To remain successful elite, and to maintain authority, leaders had to exploit the material opportunities the environment in which they ruled gave them.

As has been laid out clearly in the introduction to this thesis, the environment is a critical arena through which people are able to manipulate, dominate, express decisions, empower and undermine.³³ But chiefs did not own and manage such resources indiscriminately. Some were monitored closely, or competed over, by the state and/or by more influential commoners. Extraction of wealth from the environment was mediated through an area's value to the state or on account of the presence of a particular resource within that area, and was dependent on local power relations. As Jacobs pertinently highlights: "relations with fellow humans shape the choices people make about how to use the environment, and everyone does not have the same freedom of choice".³⁴

Border areas could, for example, prove both advantageous and disadvantageous according to the wider context in which this border economy existed. For those living in the North Nyasa District, as Hornby's survey pointed out, a large amount of the produce farmed there had been 'lost' to Tanganyika "where a ready sale at attractive prices for ungraded products exists". Properly supervised it was believed that rice, loams, groundnuts and maize production could be significantly expanded, especially in the Karonga-Songwe Plain, but the uncontrolled marketing of these products, which in most cases was arranged by Indian traders in Tanganyika appeared "to exploit the North Nyasa produce growers to the full".³⁵ Yet for Timothy Chawinga the position which Hewe had on the border with Northern Rhodesia was hugely significant; the chief took advantage of this in order to – as Boone would have it – appropriate his share of the rural surplus directly, reinforcing his already peripheral economic position and ensuring that both he and his people were less reliant on the state.

The differences between those chiefs who were reliant upon the state structures and those who were less can be observed to some extent in the reactions of chiefs to Federation with the Rhodesias in 1953. When the non-cooperation campaigns began it was in the areas where the state was more involved, in the rigid enforcement of conservation rules for example, where protest was exacerbated. It was to these more visible areas that the historian's eye has been drawn and it has been easier to apply the resister/collaborator distinctions to the ruling chiefs who had to manage these areas. Chiefs Gomani, Mwase and Tengani are now more or less famed for their rejection or, in the case of Tengani in the Lower Shire Valley, wholehearted support of government schemes.³⁶ Chiefs in less incorporated areas perhaps had less pressure to act one way or the other.

Hewe: Fertile but faraway

As the previous section has highlighted, the areas which had more profitable opportunities were far more likely to have close attention paid to them; conservation rules and orders were more forcefully applied and farmers' behaviour was more keenly observed and monitored in such places where there was more for the government to lose if things went wrong. In the Misuku Hills and Henga Valley, where hopes had been set on coffee production, assessments were continually being made about how and why the world demand and high prices for the commodity was failing to have an impact on farmers' choices;³⁷ the expectations of these local

economies were generally much higher.³⁸ There was a much stronger enforcement of anti-erosion measures such as contour ridging on account of the high visibility of coffee plantations, which was quite different to lakeshore production which didn't require as strict conservation measures owing to the very different type of agriculture practiced there.³⁹ Not only were these places more visible in terms of their production methods, they relied more heavily on the state in terms of transport and marketing.

Areas which relied on less profitable, and less state-managed, crops – maize, beans, cassava, millet – for their wealth were more often able to maintain a good position in the local regional economy and were less reliant upon state marketing and assistance for maintenance of accumulation, especially if like Hewe their connection to communities and markets external to the Nyasaland protectorate, for example those just across the border in the Northern Rhodesian communities of Muyombe and Sitwe where ties were cultural and social as well as economic, offered the prospect of different sources of wealth and accumulation. Even the new permanent all weather road, which was cleared through Rumphu and into Northern Rhodesia onward to Tanganyika in 1933, could be seen to have assisted Hewe in retaining this strong regional and cross-border economic presence, new bus routes were even planned to connect the areas;⁴⁰ contrary to much of the literature on the impact of road and transport infrastructure on remote areas, the connections that the road made regionally were much more significant than any connection it was supposed to have made to the national economy. In one Northern Province annual report the benefits for “natives” travelling to Northern Rhodesia and Tanganyika “where goods could be easily obtained” and purchased was plain to see; “towards the end of the year” the 1946 report concludes, this activity had “developed into a remunerative business and purchasers on their return would hawk goods from village to village selling at fantastically high prices”.⁴¹ Carswell's study of a peripheral economy in Uganda shows that whilst the importance of such thriving regional trade in food became particularly visible during times where food shortage threatened surrounding areas, “at no time did they see this trade as something to be ‘harnessed’ for ‘agricultural development’”;⁴² here, perhaps, they missed a trick. These administrations failed to understand the local systems of agricultural exchange since their main focus had been on developing areas for cash cropping.⁴³

Save for the more universally applied natural resources rules and orders, very few state ‘interventions’ could be said to have taken place in Hewe,⁴⁴ and expectations of the area were far from grand. Although a variety of crops were considered to grow successfully there, beans and groundnuts in particular, the “long carry over the hills before even the Nkamanga Plain is reached” was a serious hindrance to the development of any significant scheme in the Valley.⁴⁵ Ecologically Hewe had much in common with the Nkamanga and South Rukuru Plains and the Henga Hill areas – places which participated variously in coffee schemes, large scale maize production and cotton experimentation – but except on the very smallest scale it was an area passed over by the colonial state. Hornby considered that the Hewe Valley certainly had some extremely fertile pockets of land but they were simply not substantial enough to define it as a “middle-zone of agricultural potential”,⁴⁶ a status which would have merited attention. Furthermore, the poor communications, lack of good road and price of transporting crops from there made it an even less attractive prospect to invest in.

Experimentations with various crops did begin there; cotton, coffee, and maize to be grown for the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) which had its headquarters at Mzuzu,⁴⁷ but even though there was some degree of success (the maize from Mwachibanda was sold in large quantities to the CDC for a year or two),⁴⁸ the distance from the lakeshore and viable markets meant that such initiatives were generally abandoned before they really got going. This

also made it much harder for the Master Farmer Scheme to have a significant take up in Hewe; only a couple of farmers profited from this initiative in Hewe.⁴⁹ The cultivation of Turkish tobacco raised some interest in the Valley by the end of the 1950s, but with it being such a political crop growers experienced difficulties; labelled “federal” on account of the provenance of the tobacco seed, their gardens were increasingly attacked by Congress sympathisers.⁵⁰ Understandably, tobacco did not become established as a cash crop in this area until the independence period dawned. In contrast to Karonga the co-operative department would supervise little more in Hewe than a couple of small co-operative stores and a maize mill. There certainly wasn’t the same level of politicisation amongst the ordinary farmers through co-operatives as there was in Old Karonga district throughout the 1950s⁵¹ boycotting of markets rarely happened under Timothy’s chieftainship and only during the State of Emergency in 1959 was any serious disruption experienced in the Valley.

The implications of Colby’s reforms in the Northern Province made some definitive changes; but not all of these changes can be understood in terms of successes with agricultural projects and levels of protest. The highly diverse landscapes and geographies of authority saw to it that this period of reform was received and dealt with in a whole variety of ways, furthermore the varied delivery of conservation rules and schemes are important to analyse since they were not simply delivered in a vacuum. It is not always clear, for example, why certain pieces of legislation worked in one place and not the other. Take the forestry rules in Mwenewenya of 1934; in the section relating to the control of hill slope cultivation it was written “no person shall open a garden on the slope of a steep hill without the permission of his chief and village headman”, it was a rule which was doomed to failure as requiring the chiefs permission to open a new garden was actually against native custom. No one would ask the headman which piece of land he should farm. Any attempts to manage this cultivation through legislation alone would have proved unsuccessful. Many factors influenced how they were received. Carswell’s detailed analysis of the *methods* of implementation serves as an example that we need to look at policies “in environmental, agricultural and technical terms”, seriously considering the nature of, and methods used to introduce, these measures plus the effects of such arrangements “on existing social and political relations”.⁵² She has suggested, for example, that in Kigezi the anti-erosion measures were not too dissimilar to the indigenous systems of cultivation; that the amount and type of labour required were not too disruptive; and the good relationship that local district officials had with the communities in this part of Uganda enabled a smoother application of policy.

This latter element was certainly a factor in the rolling out of policy in Hewe. Chawinga took advantage of the less formal colonial administration in the Northern Province and was able to benefit in less direct ways from the shift in policy which Colby brought in. Using the new forums brought in by the Development Plan to his advantage, he quickly realised that by working closely with colonial officials in the north and by convincing them of his work ethic then he could skim off other benefits. His successful performance would bring rewards and wider recognition; all of which fed back into his local authority.

Chief Katumbi and the Natural Resources Board

In his comprehensive survey of environmental policy in colonial Malawi, Mulwafu highlights that prior to 1946 nothing comprehensive existed which dealt with the conservation of natural resources in the Protectorate.⁵³ When the Natural Resources Board was set up in order to address this situation in 1946 it aspired to do much but was limited by “its small size and budget”,⁵⁴ and “compromised in its capacity to implement its rules and regulations “by

prevailing conditions and African resistance”.⁵⁵ Mulwafu explains that this led to situation in which most of the NRB’s directives were delivered through propaganda rather than with direct contact between state agents and the targets of these shifting policies, the peasants. In order to get their message across the Board was forced to turn to Native Authorities and honorary Conservation Officers to deliver it.⁵⁶

Remembering this post-war period, reflections from retired colonial officials confirm that in the northern regions “staff of all departments was thin on the ground and district officers did a lot of jobs for departments in the rural areas”.⁵⁷ Useful relationships therefore quickly developed between the officers and local authorities which were beneficial for both parties. Observing these relationships rather than focusing on colonial policy, which can have the effect of over-valuing “the directive power of “the state””,⁵⁸ brings to light how the special connection between the African people and the colonial agents in the Northern Province brought opportunities for both parties.

The officials genuinely enjoyed being in the Northern Province in particular where a “tremendous” team spirit is said to have existed. The closeness in their working lives, between the Europeans and their African colleagues, was clearly in evidence in Rumphu and Karonga, and is nostalgically celebrated.⁵⁹ Unlike other parts of the Protectorate, the province is described as having been maintained as “really a purely African area”.⁶⁰ Even well into the 1950s when a new district was created in the province staff members remained thin on the ground. When, after years of speculation and planning, the new district of Rumphu was created in 1952 to serve the administration of the native authorities Katumbi and Chikulamayembe, only three Europeans were in situ by the end of the decade: the District Commissioner, a Co-operative Society officer, and a Public Works Department (PWD) works supervisor.⁶¹ Plans to increase the number of staff were played down by Haskard who remembers of the time that such an idea was “nonsense in a little place like Rumpi”.⁶² In light of this, the first two D.C’s of Rumphu admitted that they “relished the isolation” and “position of unchallenged authority” that the position gave them,⁶³ whilst the Africans, if they knew how to earn the respect of these administrators, benefitted from the personal relationships which could be built in the context of this isolation. In fact respect appeared to be the currency on which the economy of colonial administration was built in these parts. Government was “by consent” in the Northern Province Haskard would later joke, “how else could a handful of Europeans run the show?”⁶⁴ Noel Harvey knew that what was important was not the number of people in the offices but that “Africans respected our standards and our decisions”;⁶⁵ until the latter part of the 1950s the closeness with which they all worked meant that respect for one another was easily established.

Hewe might not have been an area to invest in big projects but Chawinga grasped the fact that good relationships with officials could bring his area additional development opportunities for bridges, wells, improved roads, and school classrooms. The Native Welfare Development Fund (NWDF) was one way in which some of the development budget filtered down into the rural areas. The Fund’s primary objective was to finance agricultural development projects, especially around conservation and the restoration of the fertility of the soil, but also to facilitate parallel schemes of social and economic development; these included the restoration of old roads, the building of permanent bridges, and construction of water holes.⁶⁶ Such spending was not applied everywhere in the Province though, the limited funds and staff did not allow for this, so the small investment initiatives that the NWDF supported were most often found in those areas where good relationships with efficient chiefs, who kept villages clean and well ordered, existed. Noel Harvey’s reminiscences from his time as A.D.C. Karonga (1954-59) make this point very well:

"You could quickly gauge the flavour of a village by the condition of the houses and gardens. The size of the house measured the prosperity of the owner, but keeping its walls and thatch in good condition [...] terracing and ridging the gardens and rotating the crops, - all this cost nothing. But these were the differences between the run-down villages and those which conserved their topsoil against erosion and took pride in their house and the village school. It was in the good villages that you invested your tiny development funds – a water pump, a fish farm once they had dammed the stream, perhaps a health clinic or a road to join it with the main road".⁶⁷

It was generally thought that by 1949 some major alterations were needed to make the conservation policies, and specifically the work of the Natural Resources Board, more effective. The decision to decentralise the NRB by creating Provincial and District bodies was taken with the idea that these new locally oriented boards would "come up with more effective conservation measures by virtue of the specific and intimate knowledge supposedly possessed by their members in their areas of influence".⁶⁸ For the first time prominent Africans were to be included as members.

Whilst Mulwafu provides the example of the Domasi District Natural Resources Board as one of the few examples of provincial and district Natural Resources Boards that worked effectively,⁶⁹ Cosmo Haskard remembers that when he worked as the first District Commissioner in Rumphu, it was the District Natural Resources Board which proved to be one of the most effective organs of change in the area. By his own admission, this he puts down to the fact that it was almost entirely run by Africans. The members of the Rumphu District Natural Resources Board were all African apart from the European Agricultural Assistant and the D.C., and it was "much more useful" than most of the official district and provincial council meetings in which nothing important could be talked about with the African members.

In a small district like Rumphu where membership of these councils was mixed European and African, and at a time when the province was just beginning to feel the effects of Federation, the difficulty of discussing certain aspects of government policies openly with Africans was creeping in, "to the extent that one was a bit inhibited" and the formal meeting of the district team was, in the opinion of Haskard "a bit of a sham".⁷⁰ The Natural Resources Board, on the contrary, dealt with extremely practical issues and was driven almost entirely by Africans; it was much less political and "a lot was achieved through it".⁷¹ This Board became an important platform for the performance of Timothy Chawinga's chieftainship. It had been set up to better enforce the rules and orders delivered under the Natural Resources Ordinance (1947), but had a defining impact on Timothy's ability to control the environmental and agrarian landscapes within his area, and extract from them in a number of ways.⁷²

Native Authorities in the Northern Province played a significant part in legislating change through the Natural Resources Board as it offered them more power to produce their own conservation rules and orders. This leverage was given partly on account of the limited number of agricultural officers in the north,⁷³ but it had also to do with the vastness and variability of the region in terms of ecological conditions.⁷⁴ The original plan had been that officials would consult Native Authorities about the conditions that existed in their areas and for an initial short-term period chiefs were to be given the right to make place specific rules and orders; it was an arrangement which was never intended to continue beyond the time when a broader set of Natural Resources Rules could be defined. However, due to the extremely diverse set of ecological challenges which existed in the North, and the fact that the Agricultural Department had been unable to survey the entire Province and assess the possible variations

needed, there was a substantial delay in their application. The initial Native Authority Orders, which were originally designed as only a stop-gap piece of legislation, came under increasing pressure in 1951 as the debate over the Natural Resource Rules heightened. The archive records that the delay “seriously retarded progress in the Northern Province as the Natural Resources Board has in consequence been forced to rely upon Native Authority Orders which are not being strictly enforced due to the erratic and half-hearted support of most of the Native Authorities concerned”.⁷⁵

Most Native Authority Chiefs were uncooperative and reluctant to enforce their Orders which they had been required by the Board to introduce, revealing that their assistance during the previous year had been a pretence and mainly down to the “prodding and persistence” of available Government officers.⁷⁶ It was noted that “Village Headmen have made no efforts to trace and prosecute offenders, and in some cases an aged and infirm individual or local simpleton is produced knowing that such individuals will not be severely punished; the only answer to this problem is collective punishment”, was the conclusion of the Provincial Commissioner about the situation.⁷⁷ The Native Authority Orders after all had only been intended as a temporary measure and, with these examples demonstrating their lack of cooperation, it was considered inadvisable to rely upon them; once this was realised there grew a rather “urgent necessity for the [Natural Resources] Board to have powers to enforce its own Orders and Rules”; as Acting P.C. Hodgson wrote to the Chief Secretary in 1951, “The Board has for the past twenty seven months been relying to a large extent on bluff, and the bluff has now been called”.⁷⁸

It was thought that the only hope in succeeding to effect the great changes in techniques of production so desperately sought after and outlined in the government’s plans would require the powers granted to the newly formed Natural Resources Board to be applied most strictly.⁷⁹ The reliance on this Board to bring about change in the north would work in the favour of Timothy Chawinga, who was able to use the Native Authority Orders effectively to construct a reliable system of prosecution and control. The current literature tends to concentrate on the rather more negative implications of the conservation policies which were enforced throughout British Africa at this time, how it led to disquiet and discontent and how in many places it was a tool for the African nationalist movements to garner grassroots support. In fact, the changes which came about with these new frameworks of control also provided a new space within them for local actors to gain new footholds within the rural economy, using the agricultural resources as a new material basis for their authority.

In the remote rural context of Hewe, access to new resources and new platforms to augment his individual power was important for Timothy Chawinga. He may have already had a personality to inspire a certain level of compliance in his people but under the Natural Resources Ordinance local boards were formed which could “issue instructions to any land-owner as to what to grow and how to maintain his land...when an order is to be issued to ant (sic) African landowner, the order will come from the Provincial Commissioner thro’ the District Commissioner, through the Native Authority to the African”.⁸⁰ Chiefs were seen as the perfect facilitators of local agrarian change. From the perspective of the colonial state several assumptions about ‘chiefs’ and their relationship with the environment register as being particularly relevant in the current discussion: that chiefs were the ‘natural’ managers of local natural resources; and that this relationship, which chiefs had with ‘their land’, put them in the best position to be the arbiters of agricultural justice which colonial administrators.

In his book *Conservation Song* Mulwafu is keen to demonstrate the important reality that the colonial state did not deliver a uniform policy around natural resource conservation, and

furthermore that colonial officials differed in their ideas on how such policy should be delivered. This lack of “united voice or homogenous approach” he argues “provided peasants with an opportunity to evade the effects of coercive state intervention programmes”.⁸¹ Observing how Timothy Chawinga used the NRB and the gaps which the government had engendered between policy and practice, it is possible to argue that chiefs had the opportunity to benefit in their own way from these decentralised decision making arenas. The “weaknesses in the system” which Mulwafu’s peasants exploited were turned on their head by Chawinga who used them to achieve quite different ends.

It is not unlikely that Chawinga’s vocal participation on the Natural Resources Board and his successful implementation of so many of the Board’s edicts in the local setting were important in raising his profile with the Government. In 1951 he was selected to represent the chiefs of Nyasaland at the Festival of Britain,⁸² something which could have only happened on account of his effectiveness and visibility as a chief. This was no mean feat. For Katumbi, a chief of this rather unpromising area, to be chosen as one of only three representatives of Nyasaland at this international event was clearly impressive and something which he evidently took in his stride. The Festival of Britain was an exhibition designed to inject development impetus into post-war Britain; there is every possibility that his exposure to the big modernisation plans of the British Government which were on show at the event, and the visits he made to farms and industry whilst in the country had an enormous influence upon Chawinga’s own way of thinking about and implementing development in his own context. As the first Katumbi chief to “go outside” of the continent and experience life in Europe, his own prestige in the local area increased dramatically.

Safeguarding everyone’s interests

However, Chawinga did not need to go overseas to gain the experience of “advanced technologies, and new forms of authoritative knowledge”.⁸³ As a part of the investments in production and conservation, demonstration and seed farms had been set up across the Protectorate as a way of imparting knowledge to chiefs and leading members of their communities. These were not only “suitable places for African farmers to meet and be shown improved methods of growing crops”⁸⁴ they were also places where they could learn new expertise and practical skills; knowledge which could be translated into a new source of authority.⁸⁵

Chawinga took advantage of various paths to knowledge transfer that were put in his path; he made sure that in the local setting it was he who was the one owning the ‘innovations’ and technologies which were passed on to him through the colonial ‘experts’. Few people remember the agricultural demonstration plots or cassava gardens as being a government initiative, “Kamangilira did this”, the resounding reply as discussions about past agricultural experiments were in progress. His success translating these innovations to his people and their take up of the new techniques can be seen to have earned him additional respect from Haskard who thought that for there to be effective government, chiefs needed to demonstrate real authority amongst their people. In his 1952 desk diary he writes that there was a great amount of conservation and agricultural activity in the province and that the “most successful agricultural show was held at Katowo, the headquarters of Chief Katumbi”.⁸⁶ The shows that were put on in Hewe instilled a sense of pride in Katumbi’s people. The Valley’s reputation for growing maize and beans, in particular, remains in people’s minds across the wider region even today. In this context of limited funds, isolation from Zomba headquarters, and the importance of personal relations, Chawinga thrived.

With its consistently high yields of staple crops such as maize and beans, the Valley was a regular safety net for the food security of the wider region. Throughout the period 1945-1956 it is notable that the shortages experienced in the northern part of M'belwa's Mzimba District and "sometimes even the requirements of the lakeshore communities of Chikulamayembe" were regularly covered by maize purchased from the areas of Hewe, Nkamanga and Henga.⁸⁷ Hewe played an extremely important role in the local and regional economy on account of the exceptionally high transport costs for imported maize from south and central provinces and this did give the people some power in the regional economy to manipulate prices and marketing rules. However, reliance on the distribution and sale of these crops - which had limited market value - ensured that very little economic differentiation occurred amongst the farmers of Hewe. With no cotton, coffee or tobacco industries of note to participate in there wasn't the same opportunities for farmers with money to invest in their land in a significant way. This was quite unlike in Henga Valley where big differences were notable between emerging cotton farmers and traditional millet cultivators,⁸⁸ and in the lakeshore areas or Misuku, where there existed more profitable opportunities for those with capital to invest. Those returning from South Africa or Rhodesia to Hewe tended to be limited in their entrepreneurial activities to small trading interests and cash cropping of the less valuable cash crops on a greater scale using, perhaps, hired labour.

Agriculture in Hewe revolved largely around individuals and small groups of farmers subsisting, surviving and trying to make any small profit they could which would be spent on household items, clothing, sugar, salt and soap. To pay taxes or fines there was a small amount of work available through the Public Works Department (PWD) which organised road clearing and bridge building in the area, but this was seasonal and not available to all.⁸⁹ To make 'serious' money the only option for the people of Hewe was to enter the labour migration market; and from the early 1930s this was an option that most men took up, whether it was for the reasons of accumulating money for marriage, to start a small business, or to invest in their land. Of course the reasons for participating in these processes were as varied as the types of labour contract and destination that were on offer. The decisions which men took - as it was almost entirely a male pursuit in this area - were based in familial and community obligations, as well as the different ambitions and aspirations of the migrants themselves.

It is beyond the scope of the chapter to discuss at great length the varied experiences of farmers in relation to the post-war changes which were taking place; they are perspectives which need to be considered at much greater length if the impact and unevenness of colonial policy is to be properly understood. After all it was not only the rural elite who had to adapt their behaviour in order to safeguard their access to resources at this time. Berry has noted how in Ghana, under similar circumstances, farmers began investing in many forms of patronage in order to maintain their position. Investing in the community through marriage payments, funeral ceremonies and loans, these choices "served to reinforce or advance people's standing in social networks, or helped strengthen their claims to productive resources which were under threat at this time. People were investing in the means of access to productive resources, including social identities or forms of status, as well as in the means of production *per se*".⁹⁰

It is necessary to make a comment on the discussion put forward by Chanock amongst others that customary law enabled traditional authorities to grow in stature and importance in areas where labour migration was high, specifically because they took on the role of safeguarding the domestic interests of the men who had left to look for work elsewhere. What is clear is that the arena of customary law emerged as an important space of negotiation in a rural context where migrant labour and the new demands of market agriculture placed strains upon

relationships, and in a setting where control over labour, wealth and land were hotly contested.⁹¹ Chanock has described court cases during this period as “new conflicts caused by new demands being made of old relationships”;⁹² migrant husbands looked to them, it is argued, to maintain their land rights, have their “adulterous” wives punished, and bridewealth returned to them. Empirical examples drawn from across the continent which look at the relationship between women and customary law do not concur, however, that this institution always worked in favour of the male elders.

Drawing on the work of Elizabeth Schmidt in colonial Zimbabwe and Judith Byfield in Nigeria, Spear marks limitations on Chanock’s way of looking at customary law and thus challenges the straightforward view that chiefs’ authority increased in this context. Women invoked customary law themselves “to force elders and colonial authorities to exercise their responsibilities to protect women’s rights”; in some cases they were “able to exploit the gap between law and practice to evade the new laws altogether”.⁹³ There is little doubt that women were generally subjected to more rigid controls in the colonial period, but as Schmidt demonstrates they were also sometimes able to use the “conflicting interests” within the African and European “male alliance” to their advantage.⁹⁴

The 1952 Moffat Report on Native Courts can give us some sense of why the records from Hewe Court were limited. Since colonial staff had been put under pressure to perform many duties, including agricultural development activities, the Report notes that “half the present administrative officers in Nyasaland have never seen a native court in session”.⁹⁵ For whatever reason that these records do not exist it leaves a gap in knowledge in terms of the type of conflict and shape of demand which were making their way into the Native Court in Hewe during Chawinga’s reign. It would have been especially interesting to see the prevalence of cases during his chieftainship in which women and young men contested control from elders, and the ways in which the court and councillors dealt with them.

One intriguing suggestion in the Moffat Report is made that on the whole “court members are said to be rather severe on young educated men and men who have been away at work for some time”.⁹⁶ This intergenerational tension between the young men and the village elders was an ever increasing dynamic, and the management of these relationships might well have brought an opportunity, as it had done in the intervention in domestic disputes between husband and wife, of increasing a chief’s authority. We can only speculate as to how Chawinga would have managed these inevitable domestic conflicts in terms of customary law; however what is known through oral accounts and other archival sources is that one of the strengths of his leadership was his ability to address the concerns of women in his area. He understood and responded to their economic vulnerabilities and social anxieties. The context of a labour migration economy in Hewe probably did increase Chawinga’s opportunity to increase his authority, but not through safeguarding the interests of the men in Hewe. It was rather by courting the support of women that he grew in stature.

Women and labour: The management of local landscapes

These were times of great change, even before the State of Emergency in 1959. Investments in agricultural production and the introduction of “efficient methods of cultivation” were putting significant new pressures upon social and economic systems in the villages, and as a result also upon the structures of traditional authority. Emphasis upon commercial activity was leading to new demands on labour and putting an increasing value on land;⁹⁷ both of which encouraged Africans to renegotiate their position in society “in order to gain access to additional productive resources”.⁹⁸ Social transformation was both predicted and desired by the colonial office, but it

warned of this transformation bringing difficulties and disruptions at first.⁹⁹ In the northern and lakeshore districts, where from the early 1930s the economy relied to a great extent upon their populations migrating outside of the country, local agrarian institutions would also be affected by a 'shortage' of able-bodied men. This shortage would affect the shape of domestic spaces and agrarian practices and it would change the role and responsibilities of men, women and children, as established methods of social control were challenged. This was a great concern of the Nyasaland African Congress whose first President Levi Mumba stressed at one of the first meetings of the African Provincial Council meeting in 1944 some of the challenges that these ordinary farmers were facing. With the high prevalence of labour migration in the Northern Province a determining factor in his analysis, he urged the government to spend time thinking about the effects of this search for money outside on peoples' attitude:

"...while they are away they are developing a change in outlook which, if not guided, may create social difficulties when they return home. In village life they are accustomed to look with respect to the chief, village headman or clan head in all their actions; elsewhere they live as individuals responsible to themselves and therefore act without considering the effect of their actions on the others".¹⁰⁰

In the Hewe Valley, where a large number of men left their homes to join the multitude of other Northern Nyasalanders, few remember this time as being particularly difficult. Men generally admit that women got on just fine without them, and their wives agreed. "There was no change in agriculture when I went away. My wife continued farming very well" admitted Godwin Chawinga. Nyamnyirenda, his wife, said that the only thing that had been important when the men left was that she was given "land and hoes for farming" to ensure she could continue with all the activities that needed to be done.¹⁰¹ Women in Hewe might have complained to one another of their men's absence whilst they pounded their maize,¹⁰² but as long as their husbands provided for them they don't remember the time as being particularly difficult. Some even reminisced happily about the new experiences which this time brought them of building grain-stores and repairing tools, which were traditionally male occupations.¹⁰³ The more successful migrants were able to send money home so that their wives could employ casual labour, or even have a permanent farm hand live with them. It was easy, they said, to get people who would work for old clothes or shoes.¹⁰⁴

The fact that Hewe was an area not of cash cropping but domestic food production meant that women did the majority of the agricultural work anyway. In such a context, "where labour requirements for the production of foodstuffs were low, the absence of even 60 per cent of able-bodied young men was not an economic catastrophe".¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, in these areas the Natural Resources Board (NRB), with its rules and regulations, still presented an ominous threat to women, who would always represent the majority of attendants at any meeting about agricultural policy in the northern province; something noted by the Provincial Commissioner of Mzimba in 1948.¹⁰⁶ McCracken even poses the not unlikely notion that the NRB could have been more threatening to this group of people in the north than the idea of federation.¹⁰⁷ As such, even whilst people appeared to farm with little change during these years, the role of Timothy Chawinga in ensuring that communal labour and co-operation amongst farmers was undertaken,¹⁰⁸ and that women in particular were looked after at this time, must have played a huge role in the general sense of continuity and lack of disgruntlement.

Whilst on a tour of the district in 1950 just after the country had been ravaged by one of the worst famines for decades, the agricultural assistant Geoff Craske wrote that "during the last

four days I have particularly noticed that, in comparison with other areas, the people of N.A. Katumbi are much better informed of current events, rules and orders, etc..."; it was the chief himself who was praised for this "and credit is due to him for the fact that in every village very complete arrangements were made to receive myself and my carriers. Neat grass enclosures [...] had been built, and supplies of food were available everywhere".¹⁰⁹ At times of crisis Chawinga was quick to respond in order to secure the livelihoods of his people, whilst others across the region died of hunger. During times of heavy migration his attention turned towards the women in his area, to whom he provided opportunities for them to access communal and paid labour and offered social protection for their families:

*"Early in the year, when it was seen that maize crops would suffer from shortage of rain, Chief Katumbi called out his people to construct a dam and a long water channel to irrigate the drier parts of the Vwaza marsh. This effort was sufficiently successful to enable not only the saving of appreciable maize crops, but also enabled a second maize crop to be planted as soon as the first crop was reaped. The result was that a second crop was reaped before the onset of the rains late in the year, enabling yet a third crop to be planted before the year ended. Through this effort, the area of Chief Katumbi has had a surplus of maize for sale, which at the price of 1d per 1lb has brought a lot of money to the women of the area and to the chief himself. Moreover, it has enabled a lot of hungry people from other areas to find food"*¹¹⁰.

Timothy constructed himself as a husband to all the women; few have a bad word to say about him and most remember the chief mainly for the great provision he organised. Not only did he arrange group pest drives and communal labour parties, vital activities for women farming their land alone, he increased the opportunities for feasting, celebrating and singing whenever he could. It is said that absent men and those failing to take responsibility for their farms or their families were actively pursued and punished by Timothy.

Provision and protection

Rumphi District's reputation as "the traditional maize granary of the province"¹¹¹ was in no small part down to the fertility of Hewe. In 1946, there were serious shortages of maize across Rumphi and the northern parts of Mzimba District. Whilst chiefs Chikulamayembe and M'mbelwa had to petition the government for subsidized grain as famine relief, the people within Katumbi's area were satisfied. Certain areas within Hewe were particularly productive and regular government Ulendo's identified that Mwachibanda, in the northern most part of Katumbi's area, was extremely fertile; "[It is] remarkable", wrote the Agricultural Officer for Northern Province in 1950, "that there is a surplus for sale from so small an area";¹¹² and this at a time when famine was taking its toll on the Nyasaland population across the country.

Famine has not only to do with subsistence, but with the poor management of food supply. In order to establish a more useful picture of this food supply one has to examine "pricing policy, political manipulation of markets, government intervention" and embed the analysis of these variables in local factors of economic differentiation and social relations.¹¹³ That the strains of the 1949-50 famine were not so obviously felt in Hewe was also likely down to the fact that the exchange of the crop that was available was well managed. During a later time of crisis Chawinga's foresight was praised by Haskard: "Chief Katumbi, fearing a local shortage later in the year, has advised his people not to sell maize at the markets. Under the circumstances this is likely to prove a wise move".¹¹⁴ Prices were set by the Agricultural Production and Marketing Board in an effort to manage food security and make profits, but in a peripheral borderland area like Hewe it remained relatively easy for maize to be circulated

locally, across the border, and at different times to when the Board operated. “People in Rumpi district have not sold their maize to the Board because they can obtain higher prices from African traders”,¹¹⁵ a report in September 1958 commented; it was this flexibility which Chawinga made sure his people took advantage of.

As the previous chapter explored, the time at which these comments were being made was an uncertain one for the future of Native Authorities. Most were believed to have little real power and the job of developing the countryside in the context of the post-war economy was increasingly considered as a task beyond them. Chawinga, however, appeared to remain remarkably in control. Always to be seen leading by example, Chawinga was marked out as “an effective and progressive chief”.¹¹⁶ Though his area was small he was one of the few chiefs in the Mzimba District willing to redress deficiency in main crops by capitalising on the Hewe River to increase dry season cultivation in moist valley soils. Furthermore, his organisation of communal measures for dealing with baboon and wild pigs ensured that Hewe was rarely food insecure:

“Despite constant encouragement and no little compulsion, backed by the supply of about 100 tons of cassava and sweet potato cuttings and by bean seed for planting in Mzimba District, the response from chiefs and people was disappointing, with the notable exceptions of Native Katumbi’s area and most of the Karonga district”.¹¹⁷

He used the official conservation rules and orders to compel his people to participate in the development of the area, and the protection of their gardens and crops, but he never made anyone do anything that he was not prepared to do himself and he regularly headed up the pest drives and worked hard preparing and weeding his own garden. No one was in any confusion as to who was to be the one ultimately responsible for his people in a crisis.

Whilst on tour in March 1951, Haskard visited an area on the very edges of Katumbi’s territory – from Kalindamawe to Mykoloti – where he found much evidence that the people respected the leadership; the chief “is much respected and has real authority! All villagers and drum welcome at most”,¹¹⁸ Haskard wrote in his diary. In a comparison with work done in the gardens of Kalindamawe and those just across the border in the village of Mykoloti, under the adjacent sub-Native Authority of Mpherembe (who fell under the Native Authority M’mbelwa), Haskard noted that the “ridges and bunds were all done in Kalindamawe and not a single one in Mykoloti, where there is continued ‘njala’ (hunger) and none at Kalindamawe. Themba Katumbi makes latter plant in November and work hard in gardens, planting big ones. The type of soil and land is identical”.¹¹⁹

The compliance which Chawinga achieved from his people in agricultural activities can also be compared with Chikulamayembe’s performance in similar matters.¹²⁰ Why when both chiefs had the same access to the committees, boards and training which proliferated in the post-war period did one emerge more powerful in the context than the other? There is clear evidence which demonstrates Chawinga’s greater ability to command labour. At a time when people were hardly working for “just” beer anymore but were increasingly seeking “real wages”, he was still able not only to arrange volunteers to cut trees and prepare the land for an airstrip at Chiteshe, but to build Government buildings and school classrooms within his area:

“An excellent brick school building comprising three class rooms and an office was erected at Katowo School at a cost of only £25 thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of Themba Katumbi, who encouraged his people to undertake much voluntary work for the public good. Only artisans were paid, all unskilled labour being given free”.¹²¹

These efforts stood in stark contrast to Chikulamayembe who had very little success in recruiting voluntary labour to build even a teachers house in his area, which in the end cost the government £45 to erect. The fact that Katumbi had no subordinate chiefs in his area perhaps enabled greater progress to be made as it was down to the “petty jealousies” in Chikulamayembe’s area, between himself, the councillors and elders, which had been at the root of the problem in Nkamanga. They would, the D.C. concluded, “constantly frustrate progress in this as in many other directions”.¹²² Chikulamayembe might have had a much greater area to exploit – it was at least three times the size of Hewe – but the area contained several sub-Native Authorities who were able to wield their own localised authority. Hewe formed a relatively concentrated political unit, and Chief Katumbi could practice a more controlled form of territoriality there than Chikulamayembe ever could over the Nkamanga, Henga and lakeshore areas.¹²³ Personality also had something to do with it, as the previous chapter indicated, Chawinga’s interactions with his people and the officers who supervised the implementation of conservation measures were much more pacifying than John Hardy Gondwe, the Chikulamayembe of the time,¹²⁴ and he was keen to make sure his people did not appear too visibly political.

Whilst the Government concluded that the radical changes in peasant cultivation practices, which were essential to the success of food production and soil conservation policies, demanded that more able bodied men “stay at home”, Timothy’s focus was fixed upon the efficient organisation of the labour that he did have available. When boycotts of markets and natural resource rules were causing havoc in other parts of the country, and were having an impact even within the same district, no effects were reported in Hewe. In the month of July 1948, when maize markets were opened in Mzimba for producers to sell their surplus supplies, a boycott had been arranged by the producers of the district who were refusing to sell at the price set and were demanding a higher amount than had been approved for their maize. The boycott “engineered by men who were not themselves the producers with maize to sell, but local agitators”¹²⁵ took place throughout Chikulamayembe’s territory yet no such calls for disobedience were heeded in Hewe. The D.C was quick to identify Chawinga as the reason for this. He wrote of the district wide disruptions in his annual report but pointed out that “in fairness to Chief Katumbi there was no boycotting in his area and the markets there worked smoothly and harmoniously”.¹²⁶

Federation and political discontent: a change in atmosphere

These odd disruptions in the context of the politics of the 1940s were quite different in character, however, from the proliferating conflicts of the 1950s. The tide of dissent which came thick and fast after the introduction of Federation in 1953 would not be so easily contained. As the previous chapter highlighted this political change really shook up the negotiated status quo and seemed to force chiefs in particular to side definitively with either the nationalists or the government.

As soon as discussion about Federation began to take place Africans equated it with a betrayal of the trusteeship role that the British government had taken on when they had made Nyasaland a Protectorate. The nationalists complained that they were putting the interests of European settlers above the African population, and by doing so were threatening their hopes for self-determination and Independence.¹²⁷ For many chiefs this presented a tricky prospect, and they all negotiated their reactions to these plans, and the nationalist campaign off the back of them, in their own way. On the whole, however, since chiefs overwhelmingly feared that

Federation would lead to a diminishing of their control over their land very few of them came out in favour of the plans.¹²⁸

What ought to be noted, however, is that the impact which the threat of Federation created resonated differently throughout the Protectorate. Since in the southern highlands colonial policies had already left much of the population with diminished access to land and Africans had had to provide unpaid labour - or *thangata* - as a way of paying their taxes, it was greatly feared that Federation would exacerbate these hardships. It is understandable then that in places where the population were facing limited livelihood choices the protests against Federation were the most protracted and violent. In the north, the relationship between the majority of Africans and the land on which they cultivated their crops was not mediated by European interests in quite the same way as it was in the southern parts of the country. Here the social problems which the labour migration economy wrought were more likely to have formed the basis for discontent against the plans for Federation than a direct concern about access to land.

What was universal, however, was the way in which the proposal for Federation “came to dominate and symbolise the larger anti-colonial struggle in the post-war period”, so much so that the wide variety of grievances felt throughout the country - especially the implementation of conservation policies - “were conflated into the anti-Federation campaign”.¹²⁹ Once Federation arrived and when by 1956 the Natural Resources Ordinance was amended to make it easier to prosecute people for agricultural offences, the population at large became even more susceptible to the propaganda of the Nyasaland African Congress.¹³⁰ Congress had played upon local people’s fears that having a political federation with the racist regime of Southern Rhodesia would put a firm end to their ability to work freely on their own land; over this, the farmers of Hewe also expressed apprehension.¹³¹ The few with the enthusiasm and intellect to encourage others to protest against the colonial activities had to rather appeal to future insecurities - because serious grievances in Hewe were quite limited. The message propagated was that if Federal rule was allowed to continue the state would “make Hewe to be a big farm (with) no settlement, just commercial farming”.¹³²

The administration knew that these amendments would bring a change of atmosphere and they were “not carried out without some heart searching with regard to the possible effects that the new system might have on the district”;¹³³ there can be little doubt that they fed into the general discontent which resulted in the State of Emergency in 1959. It was not only the local people’s lives that were affected; the colonial district officials who themselves had always held serious reservations about the usefulness of Federation, and sympathised to some extent with the people’s fears of the Rhodesian influence, remember this time as being very different to the earlier years of administration in the north. Reminiscing with a former colleague about this era Haskard agreed that “in our Rumpi days [the early 1950s] there was little opposition [to soil conservation]. The emphasis was on the positive side of agriculture - coffee growing with the necessary terracing, diversification of crops, agricultural shows [...] Opposition to agricultural rules came with Federation and was a potent tool in the hands of the MCP”.¹³⁴ Things, he said, changed enormously for everyone after 1957, the “time that the Government must have decided to put pressure on the Native Authorities to enforce the rules”. This was something that Haskard had concluded was “a policy with scant hope for success”.¹³⁵

The reaction of peasants in Hewe, as elsewhere, to Federation and to conservation measures such as contour bunding - the most hated of all the policies on account of the hard physical labour involved in preparing these anti-erosion channels - were based not in deep ideological sentiments about freedom and human rights (though some amongst them did

develop political views to this end). It was the threat that these policies caused to them in terms of accessing productive resources and limiting their labouring capacity that actually moved them to action. The reactions to these measures therefore varied greatly throughout the country on account of the differences in local political economy and the varied impact that they had upon people's day-to-day activities. Contour bunding was a practice that the Nyasaland African Congress leapt upon as a way of encouraging a targeted rebellion against the colonial state. It was forced upon people in hot dry season when ground was hard and in areas where there was a serious lack of useful labour anyway.

Grace Carswell's approach to understanding the varied responses of peasants to conservation measures in western Uganda is a helpful way of thinking about how Chawinga might have been able to persuade his people to conform to these measures. It is her suggestion that the manner in which the measures were enforced and the personalities that administered them had a lot to do with how they were received by the general population, and in turn how they were reacted to; as a result each place displayed a different dynamic in relation to the policies:

"In contrast to other areas, local level officials [in Kigezi] became concerned about threats to soil fertility, and formulated local-level policies to deal with the problems as they saw them. [...] a greater amount of attention was given to education, propaganda and the provision of incentives and the reasons behind the implementation was explained well [...] by working directly through chiefs and giving them power to judge and punish the administration was successful in getting the schemes carried out".¹³⁶

Further reasons for why conservation measures might have been easier to implement in some areas and not others were a lack of fear of losing their land to Europeans, a limited nationalist presence, and the type of crops and labour being used in each local setting. Women were the ones who generally undertook the "conservation task" of digging bunds in Hewe and other such areas of high labour migration. Chawinga maintained a good relationship with the women of his area and by the time the introduction of some of the more severe and disrupting measures were introduced he appeared to have secured their loyalty for the most part. Furthermore, as good as he was in presenting the successful agricultural measures as his own ideas, Chawinga seemed rather adept in distancing himself from the ones that were widely disliked; when it came to bunding no one blamed Chawinga for forcing them to undertake these tasks. Unfortunately there are no archival sources which demonstrate how successful or harsh Chawinga was in prosecuting his people over natural resource rule infringements, but there is also no evidence that he emerged from the period with a reputation for simply bowing to the word of the colonial administrators either, as others around him did.

Perhaps it was the relative economic autonomy which a border-zone area such as Hewe seemed to have which afforded Chawinga and his people greater opportunity to avoid state control. As was mentioned at the start of this chapter, the agricultural emphasis in the areas on either side of the Hewe/Muyombe border was on the rather less profitable and much less keenly observed food crops of maize and beans, therefore there was a much more flexible and open local exchange in these commodities. The populations in these border zones had a much greater control over the buying and selling of maize (especially in these pre-fertiliser days) than they would have over tobacco or cotton. The villages of Muyombe, Kanyerere, and Sitwe were also isolated from the Northern Rhodesian colonial state to which they "owed" allegiance, and had a much stronger connection with the western regions of Nyasaland than their Northern

Rhodesian hinterlands. In these less regulated areas alternative markets, additional sources of wealth and social connections all provided people with the opportunity to opt in and out state provision and protection.

It was impracticable to prevent these movements given the closeness which existed between these people and the ease with which they could travel across the border. Seeing how the communities interact in contemporary times, particularly with the trade in millet and cattle, it is not hard to imagine the importance and strength of connection which existed during the colonial period. Long distance road transportation to connect the north to other parts of the Protectorate did not sufficiently develop before the end of colonial rule. However, for some local traders this proved most beneficial. The 1946 annual report for the Northern Province pointed out that “many natives travelled to N. Rhodesia and Tanganyika where goods could be easily obtained and made their purchases there. Towards the end of the year this developed into a remunerative business and purchasers on their return would hawk goods from village to village selling at fantastically high prices”.¹³⁷ This was a difficult trade for the government to control, let alone try to manage; the border area was “so open at this point and means of evasion so numerous by a net work of paths leading across the border that effective control against Africans would be impracticable”.¹³⁸

The Great North Road, which had been cleared in 1933 with the express aim of opening these hinterlands up for more profitable trade by connecting them better to national markets, had, in fact, a much more significant effect on strengthening ties within the regional economy. Passing through Hewe before proceeding across the border into these areas of Northern Rhodesia and then back into Nyasaland again, the road made driving cattle and carrying goods much easier for local people. This was a road that remained difficult for motorised transportation but now provided an easier route for walking and moving livestock. Whilst more thorough research needs to be conducted into the impact of these connections in terms of economic and political autonomy, there is little doubt that this road served to further strengthen the bonds within this border-zone. Commodities, people, families, and disease all flowed to and fro across these areas; the fact that smallpox spread rapidly through these areas at one stage can be a useful marker of its interconnectedness.¹³⁹ The road, therefore, came to be much more useful in linking periphery to periphery than core to periphery, something that became particularly pertinent once Banda re-diverted the road so it would not pass through Hewe and Northern Rhodesian villages in the 1970s.

It wasn't only people and their goods that roamed freely to and fro across this border-zone area; this was a place with a reputation for plentiful game populations, something which had often been seen as a huge disadvantage to the people who lived there on account of their predation of crops and people. The next section will consider how Chawinga also used this to his benefit. In a period of time when having the means to access productive resources was an increasingly important source of authority, he exploited of game laws and pest control superbly to this end.

Part two. Techniques for territoriality

Controlling labour, chasing pests, and hunting game

A farmer cursing the presence of pests and game in their gardens was no uncommon thing in Hewe during the colonial period. Reports of the havoc that rogue animals were causing in the area were rife:

"The people in Chief Katumbi's area, to the north of the Mzimba district in the neighbourhood of the Vwaza Marsh, are exposed to marauding animals more than elsewhere in the province. The area of this chief adjoins that of Northern Rhodesia where organised game control operations are carried out all the year round, and there is a lot of coming and going across the border of elephant and buffalo. In addition to the damage they do to gardens, these particular beasts are feared by the peasants, and there have been reports of unprovoked attacks by both elephant and buffalo".¹⁴⁰

What was a huge inconvenience for farmers Chawinga turned into an advantage; successful pest control came to stand as a corner stone of his leadership and formed a symbolically important part of his chiefly identity. "Marauding animals" were considered to be a problem in many of the outlying districts of the country. Endless complaints from farmers, and chiefs, about the destruction of gardens and threats to human life, found their way to the local government agents or were presented in provincial council meetings, particularly in the Northern Province. Some areas experienced such serious depredation of crops that their food security was thought to have been seriously compromised; "life is barely supportable by reason of ravages of wild animals of every description", wrote the D.C. North Nyasa in 1944 about the lakeshore region of his district.¹⁴¹ It was similarly concluded by the D.C. Mzimba that "nothing but large scale destruction of these beasts can save the major losses suffered to crops".¹⁴²

Up until 1948 it had been the responsibility of each Native Authority to supervise crop guards in their areas to deal with these threats. They could complain, on behalf of their people, that game and vermin, particularly baboons and pigs, were causing irreparable damage in the food gardens, and would be granted a certain amount of shot gun ammunition for the "purpose of protection of the growing crops".¹⁴³ However success was predicated on the chiefs' ability to organise, and villagers' willingness to participate in, communal pest drives; in an area where demands on peoples labour in the village were already high on account of the migration of many of the young men, this extra activity, particularly amongst the main agricultural labourers women, was not popular. "Much of the manual effort required to prepare enough garden land for food is left to the women", it was reported in a 1948 annual report, that "there is doubt whether it is physically possible for enough ground to be prepared by the women with inadequate assistance at their disposal".¹⁴⁴

At the beginning of 1948 a European Cultivation Protector was appointed to the Northern Province, making his headquarters in Mzimba. With this came a new initiative whereby old hunters recruited by native authorities would be replaced by new hunters appointed locally but under the direction of the European staff and funded by the NWDF which would make available money to purchase rifles and pay hunters a better rate.¹⁴⁵ This move was prompted by a sense that crop protection under the native authorities supervision had not proved to be very successful.¹⁴⁶ For the most part chiefs seemed content to relinquish their responsibility for such matters; it became easier for them to redirect the disgruntled attitudes of their people and more directly hold the government to account for not protecting their gardens, for failing to provide them with the appropriate amount of game rangers with rifles, or indeed ammunition for their own shot guns. It also made them much more reluctant to collaborate with these government officers in inducing villagers to take part in pig and baboon drives.¹⁴⁷

By the late 1940s the effectiveness of the pest control teams had decreased considerably on account of "the general lethargy of the villagers who show little or no enthusiasm in joining in game drives or even in assisting with the feeding of the hunters when they are concentrating their efforts on baboon and wild pig rather than game meat, in the rural areas".¹⁴⁸ In fact, in the

areas where depredations of game were most severe, villagers actively began *complaining* about the work of the Game, Fish and Tsetse control hunters who, they had been promised, would be more active in diminishing these threats but were in fact poorly supervised from the outset with the European game control officer barely in situ throughout the first year of this apparent government take-over.¹⁴⁹ With a government happy to invest only very little in these serious local concerns, particularly in the north, and with most chiefs happy to rid themselves of one more responsibility which they saw as having little benefit to them, this area of village life lay quite neglected. Regardless of whether or not these aspects of control fell under his “official” set of responsibilities, Chawinga considered pest control absolutely integral to the success of his area, and the welfare of his people; contrary to the Government line of the issue, he not only retained the responsibility for game control in his area but managed to increase his jurisdiction slowly over the next ten years.

Chawinga considered that there was much value in attending to his peoples’ concerns about pests and game. He used the 1949 Natural Resources Ordinance to his advantage to legislate locally and effectively organise the labour in his area with an order making it “compulsory for all able-bodied men to turn out for baboon and wild pig hunts when called upon to do so”. He impressed agricultural and district officers again with his administration of these pressing tasks which had been made especially difficult as, like in many parts of the Mzimba and Chinteché Districts, there was a very short supply of healthy adult males in the villages;¹⁵⁰ “the results of these communal hunts are reported to be most encouraging, and Chief Katumbi intends to continue them in 1950” the DC recorded in his 1949 Annual Report.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, to his credit, in the local narratives of his chieftainship, these initiatives are like the experimentation plots and cassava gardens, very much remembered to have been of his own making; “There has never been such a good chief”, said Jomboli Nyirenda, “he really helped his people; when there were pests he would organise everyone to chase; he started Cassava garden demonstration plots to encourage its planting; when there was no water he made everyone dig a well [...] He paid my school fees one year”.¹⁵²

Hunting lions and elephants

Pest control demonstrated Chawinga’s command over local labour and augmented his authority in the eyes of the government and with the local population as a protector of their livelihoods. However, it was with his hunting of larger game animals that he really attained great prestige, both materially and symbolically. The desire to control these wild elements of the landscape was state sanctioned but it was also embedded in local narratives; hunting was a fundamental expression of leadership, and prowess in the skills it required was an eminently good portent for the community. With the *Balowoka* chieftaincies suffering from limited spiritual legitimacy and traditional authority in the land, the Katumbi leadership benefitted greatly from Timothy Chawinga’s passion for and excellence in hunting especially as the historical narratives of the chieftainship oriented around the foundational role that hunting had played in the establishment of the Katumbi royal clan.

The migration story read out at the annual Mulindafwa ceremony tells the tale of how Katumbi’s grandfather came looking for elephants from across the lake; Mulindafwa’s legacy is reflected in the surname of all the clans in line to inherit the title Themba Katumbi, Chawinga – derived from the Chitumbuka noun *Cabinga* (hunter), from the verb *Kubinga*, to hunt. Timothy Chawinga was certain to have pleased his ancestors with his hunting exploits, whilst also feeding into people’s imaginations the image of how a ‘real’ chief should act; strongly connecting to the past in order to establish his moral authority and historical legitimacy through these acts.

Importantly, his ability to control his environment, protect his people's cultivated land, "tame" wild nature and neutralise the danger which it posed meant that he was able to retain some autonomy in an atmosphere of tightening colonial control. This was shored up by the close association which the Katumbi chieftainship had developed with the rainmaker Mlomboji whose control of the untamed aspects of nature was long established in the landscape and in people's imaginations.

From Roman emperors to Persian, Assyrian and Egyptian rulers, all have depicted themselves and been depicted as "brave protectors of their people against the ferocious animals that beset them";¹⁵³ the image of the hunter has always brought with it strong associations of having great authority in the land. Unsurprisingly his performance as hunter is the major motif drawn upon when people talk about the power and success of Timothy Chawinga; "[He] was a hunter, but he didn't go to the bush, he would catch the lions in people's gardens. Once a man was killed by a lion and he went to kill it", remembers Peter Chawinga. When asked what Timothy achieved during his chieftaincy the most common response revolved around this particular element of his behaviour: "He was a man. Lions were finishing people here in Hewe but he killed them. He made traps for rats [...] He killed lions, elephants, and reduced the number of rats. I forgot about anything else he did".¹⁵⁴ Such reports of his bravery can also be confirmed by reports found in the colonial archive:

"A large man-eating lion, well advanced in years, recently broke into a house in Kalindamawe village in Chief Katumbi's area, and attacked and killed two women who were sleeping inside. The Chief was hastily called, and found the lion some distance away devouring one of the women. Angry at being disturbed, the lion charged at the people who were following the Chief but in doing so was shot dead from a distance of about 7 yards by the Chief, who was concealed behind a tree [...] This is the second time that Chief Katumbi has shot a lion in defence of human life".¹⁵⁵

His son Norman recalls that it was on account of this incident, when the game scout didn't appear and Timothy heroically arrived to kill the lion instead, that caused him to be given his praise name; "They started calling him Kamangilira after he killed this lion at Mowa. [It means] whatever he says he will do, he *will* do it".¹⁵⁶

By capitalising on the vast presence of game in his area and through his heroic hunting activities he took advantage of the colonial construction that the Valley was a 'dangerous wilderness', in need of control. Furthermore his assured performances ensured that colonial government machinery was kept at a distance; when the administration could rely on an effective native leader to do their job for them then it would. Mackenzie summarises the power of such performances as these in sustaining a leaders' authority by reminding his readers that "separating productive human settlement from areas demarcated for the use of animals and the pursuit of the hunt" was an ancient art of leadership. Through "this technique a ruling elite could draw its revenue and human following from the one while exhibiting its prestige, securing its recreation and symbolically establishing its authority over the natural world in the other".¹⁵⁷

Through his participation on the Natural Resources Board he made sure that the Vwaza Marsh area in the south of his territory, renowned for the vast presence of game which it supported, was much more closely monitored. A growing focus on game as a sport and tourist attraction had built pressure for the introduction of the Game Ordinance of 1953; it was this piece of legislation that enabled Timothy to gain an even greater control over the resources in the Hewe Valley. The remoteness of the place and its pressing crop predation problem, combined with the shortages of game department staff, saw the chief assuming the position of

Honorary Game Warden in his area; in this he attained a level of responsibility for game within his territory that no other native authority in the Protectorate could match and secured a channel for accessing both material wealth and traditional symbolism. These activities helped diversify his sources of authority, something which became increasingly necessary as decolonization loomed large on the horizon.

His suggestions to close the area in which the Marsh lies are recorded in the 1955 Annual Report of the Northern Province Natural Resources Board, on which he sat as a non-official member. By June 1956 the Director of Game, Fish and Tsetse Control, H.J.H. Borly, after several discussions on the matter, decided that it should be given a trial, and on the 25th of July 1956, under section 6 of the Game Ordinance 1953, the Vwaza Marsh was officially declared a controlled area:

"The proposal to place Vwaza Marsh area, suggested by me in 1954, has recently been very forcefully raised by Chief Katumbi under whose jurisdiction it lies. He points out that the area has been very much shot over by Europeans from the Copper Belt over the last few years and that game in it is, for the moment, much depleted. Once again however, the area is not thickly populated and he considers that given an element of protection over the next two years or so the game will recover and that with careful control of shooting after recovery it should provide good sport for many years. I agree with his contentions in principle though I have some doubts whether the law could be well enforced here, as I have no officer in the Northern Province to look after it. Chief Katumbi himself, however, is a forceful and efficient Chief and is also an Honorary Game Warden so that he has enforcement power not normally enjoyed by a Chief. Both he and the Northern Province Administration are confident that the law can be adequately enforced. I certainly think it is worth a trial".¹⁵⁸

He held the image of a chief embedded in traditional relations and responsibilities to his people, but he had a very contemporary grasp of his position. His negotiation of the controlled shooting area was demonstrative of this; with his authority over Hewe under an increasing amount of pressure as non-chiefly elements increased their participation in local decision making processes, he was able to use the Game Ordinance to put himself in a great position to exploit the plentiful presence of game that his area was blessed with.¹⁵⁹ When discussions arose in 1957 about the possibility of a share of the revenue from Game Licences going to local authorities it became clear that this controlled area represented rather more than conservational sentiment for Katumbi, the evidence of his entrepreneurial enterprise was revealed.¹⁶⁰ The subject of the revenue from licenses cropped up in Provincial Council meetings from 1956, where wrangles can be seen between the Game/Natural Resources Departments, who appear to be highly appreciative of Katumbi's role in the management of his area, and the Provincial Administration who, whilst clearly impressed with the actions of Chawinga in these areas under his supervision are equally aware of his manipulation of such activities for his own means. The case appeared closed as the Government answer to the renewed campaigning for giving shares of licences to local authorities came back. Whilst the "interest shown by the Chiefs was appreciated [...] Government was no longer in favour of the principle of giving shares of licences to local Authorities which was financially complicated", preferring rather that these local bodies be financed from locally levied rates and from block grants from Government funds when a case for them was made.¹⁶¹

The issue of distributing suitable rewards for the services carried out, however, would re-enter public debate in 1961, just four years before Independence. Borly, still the Director of the Game, Fish and Tsetse Control Department, was evidently delighted with what he upheld as

Chawinga's almost single-handed efforts in re-populating the Vwaza Marsh area. He credited the chief with bringing the number of animals in the controlled area up to a level where "it may be justifiable to award one or two hunting permits during this coming dry season".¹⁶² His efforts in "making certain that his own people neither hunt themselves nor assist visitors from outside to do so" should be rewarded he argued. "My officer in the north has given what support he could but owing to staff shortages this has been more moral than physical and without Chief Katumbi's efforts some hunting would undoubtedly have gone on".¹⁶³ Of course much hunting did still go on, contrary to Borly's suggestion; from the local accounts of this time it is Katumbi himself who is the major benefactor of this controlled zone, hunting irreproachably within its boundaries:

"When this Ordinance was drafted I pointed out that the success of these Controlled Areas must depend a great deal on the active support of local chiefs and that it seemed to me quite equitable that their Treasuries should have a share of the revenue from them, as they do in the case of land rents [...] This suggestion was rejected at the time but it was intimated that in the event of any individual Chief actually taking a positive part in helping to control unauthorised shooting the matter could be raised again. Accordingly I now raise it and strongly recommend that consideration be given to providing for the local treasury to receive a share of fees for permits in the Vwaza Marsh Controlled Area. I should suggest a fifty percent share. The actual addition to local Treasury funds – or loss to Government – will, of course, be very small but the principle of paying it seems important".¹⁶⁴

Perhaps this somewhat naive understanding of who was taking advantage of who reflects the comparatively little interaction that this Game Department had had with local authorities in remote areas such as Hewe. Graham-Jolly, the Acting Provincial Commissioner at this time, was more aware of Chawinga's exploitation of his area than anyone else, and was no doubt influenced in this opinion by his predecessor Haskard's notes, the long standing Provincial Commissioner by this stage who was on leave when this discussion took place; Haskard's experience of administering Katumbi's area as D.C Rumphu and P.C Northern Province had given him an insight into the local context. Graham-Jolly points out that Timothy ought not to get a salary increase to reflect his responsibility as this in fact already represented a rather lucrative position for him, given that he could make rather a substantial annual income from ivory sales alone:

"I am not in favour of any adjustment being made to Chief Katumbi's salary to reflect his endeavours in the ordered preservation of game. If Chief Katumbi deserves some special recognition for his game preservation activities I suggest it should take the form of an award such as the B.E.M. or the Queen's Medal for Chiefs in silver gilt. To pay him an increased salary as a direct return for his game service might well establish a precedent. Chiefs and Headmen in other protected areas might demand similar treatment. In any case I am convinced that Chief Katumbi's efforts have been directed at improving his own position, and the sale of ivory can bring him in as much as £200 in one year. I am, however, fully prepared to support an increase in the Chief's salary to reflect his general efficiency; tax collection in his area has been good".¹⁶⁵

The money from ivory sales alone enabled Kamangilira to build an impressive house complete with iron sheets from Mbeya in Tanganyika, purchase two land rovers, establish a small store, construct a maize mill for community use, as well as personally pay for many local children to attend secondary school at Livingstonia.¹⁶⁶ "Hunting is how he became rich. [...] He would go to

Vwaza to kill elephants and share the meat [...] He would drive elephant from Chisimuka to Zolokere [and] even other hunters would kill elephants and bring ivory to him and he would sell it. Hunting helped him much; he did this before Vwaza became a game reserve. He was very rich from ivory”.¹⁶⁷ Aside from the obviously material things which Chawinga was able to build and establish with the revenue from ivory, the extra income was increasingly important for establishing an independent source of income at a time when there was a growing presence of ‘new men’ who could potentially threaten his authority, something which will be explored further in chapter five.

A local alliance: Themba Kamangilira and Village Headman Khutamaji

As much as Timothy relied on government initiatives, he also leant on tactical relationships with specific people within the Valley to ensure that he could maximise his advantage. His close relationship with Khutamaji Kachalie, a village headman in the swampy southern most part of the valley, where game was plentiful, demonstrates this most succinctly. Khutamaji in fact had jurisdiction over the area immediately bordering the controlled shooting area. From early on in his chieftainship Timothy courted his friendship, seeking to gain the advantage in his hunting activities by asking him to inform the chief about the movement of game, relying on him to police poaching activity and, as some local residents testified, occasionally even staying at his house overnight so that he could set off easily on early morning game hunts¹⁶⁸

Even though the dense rainy-season bush and swollen water channels of the Vwaza Marsh gives way to a much more negotiable landscape in the dry season when big game hunting was undertaken, it still took a certain local knowledge to monitor and navigate the changing landscape. Whilst Timothy was a good tracker and an experienced hunter the presence of skilled surveyors of the landscape from Khutamaji’s villages were invaluable both before and during his hunts. The first game report pertaining to the newly demarcated controlled area, which he delivers to the District Commissioner in 1957, hints at the close tactical relationships which he was establishing: “I told the Village Headmen who live in the Vwaza, to report to me, what kind of game they see, the keenest Village Headman on this report has been V.H. Khutamaji”.¹⁶⁹ After detailing in his letter all the types of game found in the area, including large herds of zebra for first time in four years, he continued with his high praise of Khutamaji, who he described in his report as “very much interested in game animals, and he likes these rules, and order better than any body in this area. And I very much appreciate with him (sic)”.¹⁷⁰ It is possible that this high praise was aimed at securing Khutamaji some financial reward, a nice return on his assistance in making the Themba a rich man. Whatever the purpose of this acknowledgement it can be said with some assertion that handing out praise to subordinates in this way was not something Timothy was in the practice of doing.

This strong relationship with Khutamaji was maintained throughout the rest of his chieftainship. When in 1966 the native authority area of Katumbi was divided so that a sub-traditional authority area could be carved out, with Councillor Zolokere¹⁷¹ assuming responsibility for the headmen, land, tax collection and management of resources in the southern part of the Valley, Chawinga insisted upon retaining authority for Khutamaji ensuring that the Vwaza Marsh was directly still under his authority. Practically and geographically it was patently ridiculous that Khutamaji did not report directly to Zolokere who was based very close to his village; he was now so much further away from ‘his’ chief than anyone else in the area, but the decision enabled Timothy to maintain controlling the areas rich in game, through Khutamaji his hunting activities continued unabated.¹⁷² It was only after Independence once the controlled area became an official National Park that Chawinga was forced to reorient himself within the

new spaces being constructed within his territory by the Malawi Congress Party; this is something that chapter six will address at length.

“He was kind to people, but he was self-centred”: the limits to dictatorship

His command over the landscape did not go completely unchecked however during the colonial period either. Increasingly, and particularly so once a new political landscape began emerging after the State of Emergency, people became bold enough to complain that Timothy’s exclusive rights over hunting and pest control, and in particular his monopoly over fire power in the area, was detrimental to their livelihoods. In the far south west edges of Katumbi’s territory, not too far from Khutamaji’s village, in an area where game was plentiful and destructive, people grew annoyed that they were neither permitted nor equipped to control garden pests themselves. The people from Mowa complained to the Agricultural Assistant Geoff Craske in 1962 that they were having trouble in effectively scaring animals away from their gardens; “they complained bitterly of elephants, bushbucks and pigs eating up their crops. It is true that no one in this village owns a gun. The Village Headman told me that Themba Katumbi would not allow anyone with a gun in that area because he did not wish to see anyone shooting in the whole of Hewe even for the sake of scaring the animals that were eating crops except himself. The people have looked on their chief as a selfish chief”.¹⁷³ The same was true in the northern parts of his territory, around Mwanda where game also moved very freely. Joseph Munthali remembers that he wanted to control everyone, “he was jealous such that he did not want someone to be better off than himself. For example, opportunities to kill game only himself. He was too much of himself. He was kind to people but he was self-centred”.¹⁷⁴ Whilst some, like Master Farmer Foresize Nyirenda and Donald Mwangonde, tried to get around Chawinga’s monopolisation of shotgun ownership by applying to the government directly for a license; the channels to get one could hardly circumnavigate his watchful eye. Mwangonde’s license money, for example, got lost sometime after he left it at the chiefs’ office to be sent to the D.C.¹⁷⁵ It was evidently not easy to wrestle any sort of autonomy from Chawinga’s almost dictatorial grip on the territory.

In response to a question about the “important things” that Timothy Chawinga had done during his chieftaincy, Roosevelt Mwangonde believed that he was successful because “he made Vwaza to be the Game Reserve, he influenced so that we could have an airport, he made people to dig ridges so that pigs could not enter in the garden [...] He was staying with the people very well and he was even encouraging people to grow many crops so that they could have surplus. He was also monitoring gardens and people who were lazy were being threatened that their land would be taken away from them, that is why people loved Kamangilira”.¹⁷⁶ In Chitumbuka the word used to express these feelings *kutemwa* indeed means ‘to love’. However, Timothy Chawinga was not an endearing leader; this ‘love’ of their chief was no doubt more of a reverent love, akin to the ways in which people ‘love’ political leaders of whom they are in fact afraid. In the context of ‘Big Man’ theories which were outlined in the introduction, Chawinga developed many of the characteristics. There was no shortage of adulation for him but like so many other dictatorial leaders it was the fear he evoked in people which had a lot to do with this.¹⁷⁷

Efram Chawinga recalled, “[he] was a clever chief and he didn’t like stubborn people [...] He was a person who liked development, he didn’t like lazy people in his community”.¹⁷⁸ Chipofya Nundwe highlighted that he was not the only person that the villagers were accountable to, since there were headmen who presided over different parts of the territory; however “in those days [...] they would all be called to the chief’s headquarters at Katowo and when they had finished all the weeding and bunding they would then go and clear roads at Mowa. So there was punishment if people under VH Chipofya did not complete their work, they

would have to give the *Themba* a goat. Everybody was ready for that”.¹⁷⁹ Others remember muddying their legs up to their knees if they wished to move around to do anything beside their garden duties in the mornings during the season of cultivation.¹⁸⁰ On encountering someone whom he suspected had not first been to the garden, before they embarked to do anything else in the day, Timothy Chawinga was said to have severely reprimand the person in question, and would often meet out a heavy fine.¹⁸¹ By dirtying themselves as though they had been hard at work in their gardens people invented new ways of circumventing his restrictions; that they bothered to do this, however, is another indicator of Timothy’s authority.¹⁸²

Chawinga was not ignorant of this tension. To maintain a level of loyalty among his people he would have to act in the manner that all Big Men were accustomed: the redistribution of his wealth was important. As much as he is remembered for his stern warnings and monopolisation of guns, he is praised for having paid children’s school fees, building a community maize mill, organising social and sporting events at the community hall which he also helped construct, and making sure that in hard times there were opportunities to celebrate and have a good time. The most memorable of these celebrations was the Mulindafwa ceremony which was held during September every year. Perhaps it is no coincidence that September was one of the dreaded ‘suicide months’ just before the rainy season when food supplies were very low and times were always tough. The Mulindafwa ceremony would customarily conclude with a huge celebration, the entire community feasting upon an elephant which Timothy was given permission to hunt and kill especially for the event. This provision, coming at the end of the dry season, lives on vividly in people’s memories, especially the women. When the celebration was first enacted in 1954 the impact of labour migration was at its height and the population still had to think about preparing their gardens and digging conservation bunds in expectation of the rainy season which began in November. The celebration was a timely boost for a seasonally hungry population.

Conclusion

Having strong territorial control over a place, its resources and its people can put one in a good bargaining position in relation to organisations or individuals who wish to have some influence within an area. It is the assertion of this thesis that the period 1943 to 1953, when neither the state nor the emerging African nationalists were particularly concerned to engage with the leadership or economy of Hewe, Timothy Chawinga was able to gain a significant moral and economic grip upon his territory. This was significant enough that by the time chiefs were being drawn more prominently into the politics of the time after Federation, he was in a position where he could exploit his guardianship over Hewe to his advantage. Both nationalists and colonial officials could not dismiss his control over this political space and as such Chawinga could not be ignored; he was someone with whom they needed to bargain rather than present an ultimatum.

As the next chapter will show more empirically the priority for the colonial government was to maintain *sovereignty* over its borders, rather than achieve an ultimate control over every person and every resource and Chawinga enabled this to happen. He did what all progressive and efficient indirect rule chiefs were supposed to do: ensure that the projection of colonial state power reached the furthest corners of its territory with the least possible cost to the regime. However, as the thesis has been arguing thus far, this did not mean that he was reliant upon state given authority, he had progressed beyond that. His sources of authority were

manifold, and they had to be in order for him to survive the changes that were afoot. The relationship he had developed with his people ensured that he could not be ignored by nationalists either. For them to influence the political space, they needed to gain access to it through him. The autonomy he developed in this regard put him in a unique position after Federation took place.

The opening of this chapter began with a discussion about how prior to the 1940s land had not been an issue worth talking about in the northern part of the Protectorate. In Hewe no rules or orders were made about tenure and very few conflicts over land were noted by any of the previous district commissioners. By the late 1950s much had changed. The territorial spaces that had been constructed and/or reinforced by the policy of indirect rule were becoming exploitable economically and agricultural sources of wealth (as a material basis of authority) were becoming a great deal more important to traditional ruling elites in the countryside.¹⁸³ However, the extent to which people had access to land, labour and agricultural surplus within these territories depended on their “economic autonomy (or dependency) vis-à-vis the state”.¹⁸⁴ Chawinga effectively used the resources available in a space which the state did not wish to compete with him over. His freedom to extract wealth, control labour and exert strong territorial claim over Hewe, as well as its borderland position and regional relationships, are the most important reasons why his area was agriculturally productive and furthermore how he was able to become so regionally powerful. By 1957 he had successfully translated this into a territorial victory over Chikulamayembe when in January the dispute over the ownership of the villages of Chelanya and Kapemba was settled in his favour.¹⁸⁵

As Mandala highlights in his PhD thesis about the Mang'anja chieftaincy in the Lower Tchiri Valley, colonial intervention into peasant economies “remained restrained to the market”, and since the “dynamics of the economy were rooted in the pre-capitalist social relations and the underlying ecosystem”¹⁸⁶ in certain instances where the market did not shift these dynamics too much, these underlying relations provided alternative channels of exploitation. The meaning, use and value of land were in a constant state of transformation however and as the late 1950s brought about a more significant move towards commodification, with a shift towards progressive farmers and commercial plots, the market made more of an impact on these local relations. As the commodification of land shifted people's relationship to it, as alternative authorities emerged to claim autochthony, as increasing pressure upon it forced new divisions and, eventually, as the new African government redefined how it would project state power, Chawinga's unrivalled territorial control would be challenged.

¹ MNA, NN 4/1/9: *Northern Province Native Affairs Annual Report*, 1948

² J. Power, *Political Culture*, 94

³ *Ibid.*, 94

⁴ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 103

⁵ Thangata can be roughly translated to mean working for no compensation. It had been used in the past as a form of tribute labour but was adopted as a concept by the British estate owners who used it to make Africans supply agricultural labour in exchange for the use of a plot of land. See, J.A.K. Kandaŵire, “Thangata in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Systems of Land Tenure in Southern Malaŵi with Special Reference to Chingale.” *Africa* 47:2 (1977), 185-191.

⁶ Oxford University Rhodes House, Oxford Colonial Records Project (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, *Papers of Sir Cosmo Haskard, 1951-63*, Letter from Haskard to Professor Kirk-Greene, 11th February 1982.

⁷ Karonga district had three major co-operative organisations: Kilapula Rice Growers Co-operative Union (KRGCU), the Misuku Coffee Growers Co-operative Union (MCGCU) and the Bulambya Ghee Producers Co-operative Union (BGPCU), they all played significant roles in the politicisation of their areas and “in

turning this part of Nyasaland into one of the 'hot spots' immediately before and during the State of Emergency" (O. J. M. Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland State of Emergency', *the Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36:4 (2010), 743-763)

⁸ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 37

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8

¹⁰ MNA, NNM 1/10/7: *Native Land Rights and Tenure*, Thatcher, D.C. Mzimba to Barker, P.C. Northern Province, 28th December 1945

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Panku Chiwulukutu crossed Lake Malawi from Tanzania. He eventually settled on the northern banks of the Lwangwa River looking for ivory, lion and leopard skins. Eventually he went to Malambo. He was a great hunter and was attracted to the abundance of game in the Hewe area. When he arrived in Hewe he found Khutamaji who was living very deep into the marsh, and upon asking what he was eating there Khutamaji replied "nkhukhuta maji", I am satisfied with water. See Interview LV with Councillor Zolokere, 5 August 1971; also interview MD with Moses Khunga; MD with Panku Khunga, Jomboli Village, 15 May 2009; MD with Khutamaji Kachalie, Khutamaji Village, 5 February 2009

¹⁸ MNA, NNM 1/10/7, Thatcher to Barker, 28 December 1945

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 129

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² MNA, NN 4/1/8: *Northern Province Annual Report*, 1947.

²³ MNA, NNM 1/10/7: *Native Land Rights and Tenure*, Thatcher to Barker, 28 December 1945

²⁴ It was identified as the "Dead North" in the first instance by Hornby in his survey of the Five Most Northerly Districts of Nyasaland. However, as an image it has probably been more strongly emphasised by academics than colonial officials; see H. L. Vail, 'The Making of the "Dead North": A Study of the Ngoni Rule in Northern Malawi, c. 1855-1907', in J.B. Peires (ed.) *Before and After Shaka: Papers in Nguni History* (Grahamstown, 1981)

²⁵ MNA, NN 1/20/3: *African Provincial Council, Northern Province 1947-1949*. Opening address by President of the Council, H.C.J. Barker, Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, to the 8th Session of the Council, 4 May 1948

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ MNA, NNM 1/3/2: *Postwar Development 1943-44*. Denis Smalley, Agricultural Assistant Karonga to D.C. Mzimba, Re: Schemes financed by native treasuries, 29 December 1943

²⁸ MNA, 47/LIM/1/5/2: *Nyasaland Government, 1928-1947*, Folio regarding Hornby's Agricultural Survey, n.d.

²⁹ The people of Misuku, all of whom sold their coffee through the MCGCU had to deal with conservation measures and the union provided means to express grievances "through the Northern Co-operative Union, a Rumpi-based umbrella body of some of the co-operative organisations in the Northern Province of Nyasaland" provided marketing and was a political link (O.J.M. Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland State of Emergency', *the Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36:4 (2010), 743-763, 748).

³⁰ Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland', 747

³¹ O.J.M. Kalinga, 'European Settlers, African Apprehensions, and Colonial Economic Policy: The North Nyasa Native Reserves Commission of 1929', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 17:4 (1984), 648

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Jacobs, *Environment*, 31

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ MNA, 47/LIM/1/5/2, Folio regarding Hornby's Agricultural Survey, n.d.

³⁶ J. Power and O. Kalinga, 'Chiefs and Politics in Malawi: 1897 to 1973', unpublished paper presented at African Studies Association Conference, San Francisco, 20 November 2010. In the paper Power and Kalinga reference the work of Mandala who has suggested that "Chief Molen Tengani of Port Herald District had earned the reputation of being a "progressive" chief for his support of Christian values and agrarian reform. Through the skilful navigation of indirect rule politics, he and his son, Edwin, managed to acquire control of most of the district. This and their energetic prosecution of farmers for breaches of

agricultural rules won them a number of enemies locally (including Mbona cult priests) and, within Congress, more generally" (9-10).

³⁷ "Growers plant their bushes and then, realising that they will not bear for another three years, emigrate in search of wealth leaving their coffee to take its chance with grass fires and a pre-occupied wife" and even when some interest is sustained there is still the difficulty that "money earned locally is frittered away amongst clamouring relatives and it is difficult to accumulate the wherewithal to acquire a wife and other possessions" (MNA, NN4/1/10: *Northern Province Native Affairs Annual Report*, 1949).

³⁸ MNA, NN 4/1/9: *Northern Province Native Affairs Annual Report*, 1948. The small coffee industry in Nchenachena was reported as disappointing with the main reason being the habit of local men to emigrate and the unwillingness of women to tend the coffee beyond harvesting. "The urge for emigration is not likely to dwindle if, as it is said, the current 'cost' of a wife is anything up to £30 in the area in question". It is for the same reason that Tung was also considered to have been a failure in the Henga Valley.

³⁹ MNA, 47/LIM/1/5/2, Folio regarding Hornby's Agricultural Survey, n.d.

⁴⁰ MNA, NN 1/20/3, Address by Barker (D.C Mzimba), President of the Northern Province African Protectorate Council, 4 May 1948

⁴¹ MNA, NN 4/1/7: *Northern Province Annual Report*, 1946

⁴² Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 27-28

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30

⁴⁴ Measures were taken to "explore the possibilities of large scale production in the lower end of the Kasitu River Valley, and in the swamp areas along the South Rukuru River, to the west of the district and in the Vwaza Marsh", but the plans for the Vwaza Marsh never came to anything during the Colonial period (MNA, NN 4/1/6: *Northern Province Annual Report*, 1945).

⁴⁵ MNA, 47/LIM/1/5/2, comments made in reference to Hornby's *Agricultural Survey of Five Northern Districts of Nyasaland*, 1938

⁴⁶ A. J. W. Horby, *Agricultural Survey of Five Northern Districts of Nyasaland*, (Zomba, 1938)

⁴⁷ MNA, NN 4/1/6: *Northern Province Annual Report*, 1946. The scheme for Tung Development was ambitious, the feeding of a large labour requirement "will be an enormous task", which expanded the opportunity for agricultural production in the region.

⁴⁸ MNA, Transmittal files, 3-12-4F, box 9564: *Ulendo West Rumpi*, 6 March 1960

⁴⁹ Amongst them was Jim Ngwira who would later become the court magistrate as well as Timothy Chawinga.

⁵⁰ Tobacco had been identified as a suitable crop for most of Mzimba and Rumpi districts by 1956 but it was known that yields directly corresponded to the amount of supervision growers could be given. "Mr Kazan [a tobacco buyer visiting Mzimba] was of the opinion that growers should be visited once a week, and this was impossible in the less accessible areas...every hope that the yields in subsequent years will be substantially higher. Many people are interested in growing tobacco for next year". However prior to the general unrest in 1959, and for a while afterwards, as part of Congress' campaign tobacco was targeted heavily as a federal crop; "Politicians and agitators are dampening enthusiasm in the Kapando/Malidade/Kazuni area by preaching that the (tobacco) seed is Federal and that growers therefore accept Federation." (MNA, NN 4/2/2: *Northern Province General Monthly Report 1955-1961*, November 1960)

⁵¹ The people of Misuku, all of whom sold their coffee through the MCGCU had to deal with conservation measures and the union provided means to express grievances "through the Northern Co-operative Union, a Rumpi-based umbrella body of some of the co-operative organisations in the Northern Province of Nyasaland – marketing and a political link". (O. J. M. Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland State of Emergency', *the Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36:4 (2010), 743-763)

⁵² Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 70

⁵³ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 85

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 86

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 82

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-91

⁵⁷ Oxford University Rhodes House, Oxford Colonial Records Project (OCRP), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, *Papers of Sir Cosmo Haskard, 1951-63*, Letter from Haskard to Professor Kirk-Greene, 11 February 1982.

⁵⁸ J. Springer, 'State power and agricultural transformation in Tamil Nadu' in A. Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan (eds.) *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representations, and Rule in India*, (Durham, N.C., 2000), 87

⁵⁹ Cosmo Haskard to John Brock, correspondence from Cosmo Haskard's personal collection, 18 September 2009; he wrote that they were lucky because there "were no insuperable areas of disagreement and that we has the backing of good Boma staff, including the up and coming younger generation of bright intelligent men such as Kenwood Munthali (clerk at Karonga) and George Banda. Halcyon days... the change came rapidly and completely but the Nyasaland of yesteryear did exist and it was very good".

⁶⁰ (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, *Papers of Sir Cosmo Haskard, 1951-63*

⁶¹ Even after 5 years, once Brock took over the position as D.C. in 1956 "there were few European government officers in the district. With me [Brock] in Rumpi were Geoff Craske, the District Agricultural Officer, Harry Jones promoting the formation and overseeing the operation of co-operatives amongst African farmers, and a Public Works Department (PWD) buildings inspector, Frank Campion. Nearby and to the east of the Njakwa Gorge, but just within Mzimba district, were two PWD roads supervisors". John Brock to Cosmo Haskard, 11th Sept 2009

⁶² (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, interview transcript of Haskard's reflections on colonial service, February 1982

⁶³ Haskard to Brock, 18th September 2009

⁶⁴ (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, interview transcript

⁶⁵ N. Harvey, *Ten Years to Freedom: A Memoir of Karonga, Nyasaland, 1954-59*, Unpublished manuscript, Oxford University Development Records Project, 1980

⁶⁶ MNA, 47/LIM/1/5/7, *DC Mzimba 1928-47*, details some of the N.W.D.F. funded schemes; MNA, Transmittal files, 2.2.5R, box 3666, provided an assortment of information about soil rangers, game rangers and changes to extension schemes.

⁶⁷ Harvey, *Ten Years*

⁶⁸ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 93

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 94

⁷⁰ (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, interview transcript

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² MNA, NN 4/1/8, The Natural Resources Ordinance represented the culmination of discussions about agricultural development that the post-war Development Plan of 1945 had set in motion. This law was designed to "force people to look after and cultivate their land properly" at a time when food production and soil conservation occupied the attention of local administrations and important decisions were being made to "for revolutionary changes in peasant cultivation practices".

⁷³ MNA, NN 1/20/3, Opening address by President of the Council, H.C.J. Barker, Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, to the 8th Session of the Council, 4 May 1948. The vacancies for European officers that had existed as a result of the war effort would be filled, the PC proclaimed. These vacancies, he promised, would include five additional Public Works Department employees for the Northern Province, five additional officers to Provincial and District Administration, a game control and crop protection officer, an additional agricultural officer and a largely increased staff of African Agricultural demonstrators. Then a Provincial medical officer would come to the north, a police officer, a provincial agricultural officer, a European postmaster for Karonga and Mzimba, a forest officer, a veterinary officer, an additional PWD engineer and an education officer.

⁷⁴ MNA, 47/LIM/1/5/2: "The five most northerly districts contain a great variety of soils and climate. Weather too from season to season varies greatly – much more so that (sic) in Central and Southern Nyasaland". Some large stretches of land were written off in the survey as "unlikely to produce economic or food crops in any quantity for some decades", with two-thirds of the province at high altitude and covered with grassland downs or areas of low fertility they were of little value. Others, identified as "medium sized agricultural zones", were highlighted for the potential they had. These ten 'zones' within the Northern Province had different ecologies, settlement patterns and crop potential: the Karonga-Songwe Plain, the Vua-Ngara Litoral, AHenga hill areas, the Akamanga-South Rukuru Plains, the south-east slopes of the Vipya range, the highlands of south Mzimba, the highlands of Central Nkotakota, the lowlands of North Nkotakota, the south Nkotakota belt and the main central Kasungu plain. To these places it was recommended that an experienced agricultural officer be posted and demonstration plots and experiments would be conducted to investigate fully all aspects of crops which may be able to be grown.

⁷⁵ MNA, Transmittal files, 4.13.8F, box 3091, *Application of Natural Resources Rules northern province 1951-55*, Acting Provincial Commissioner G.C.D. Hodgson to Chief Secretary, Zomba, 18th July 1951

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, D.C. Mzimba to P.C. Northern Province, 31st May 1947 in discussion about the Colonial Office despatch of 22 February 1947

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 98

⁸² The Festival of Britain was an exhibition designed to inject development impetus into post-war Britain.

⁸³ Springer, 'State power', 91

⁸⁴ (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 2057, interview transcript

⁸⁵ J. Springer, 'State power', 91; A forerunner to these agricultural training courses for chiefs can be seen in the opportunity which the Jeanes school gave to chiefs to not only learn new skills but to share their problems with other chiefs. First set up to provide training for teachers and civil servants and not chiefs the school started to be used to deliver courses for Native Authorities from 1934 with the clear aim of raising their educational level. Prevented from meeting officially together, these courses became places where chiefs could unofficially discuss their position within the colonial administration; "even during the first course (in 1934), complaints were made by the participants about the level of allowances paid to them. In addition they were able to compare their experiences of their home area, and such comparisons led to their formulating questions about [...] why licence fees for dogs, beer-brewing, or marriage varied from one area to another. An official addressing the 1941 course members was 'hard put it to explain the reasons for actions by other District Commissioners which have come to the notice of the chiefs'" (Barbara Morrow, "...It is not easy to be a chief...": Training for Native Authorities in the 1930s in Nyasaland, Colonial Ideals and Grass-roots Realities", Chancellor College History Seminar paper, 1986/87, 4). The influence on chiefs of the informal interactions that took place at these forums should not be underestimated.

⁸⁶ Cosmo Haskard, Desk Diary, 1952, entry for 16 August, from Haskard personal collection.

⁸⁷ MNA, transmittal files 4.12.9R (3628), *Food Shortage in Northern Province*, Native Authority Warrant, 26 July 1945

⁸⁸ See R. Gregson, *Work, Exchange and Leadership: The Mobilization of Agricultural Labor Among the Tumbuka of the Henga Valley*, unpublished PhD Thesis, Michigan, 1968 (pp39-40). In 1967-68 the members of Chimwemwe's cotton-growing households were relatively well-educated, some of the men having completed ten years of school. They spoke English comfortably. They were quite distinct from the millet farmers who were described as ignorant, lazy, drunken, conservative traditionalists. Cotton farmers were able to invest in maize mills and shops but the millet farmers used their small income for school fees and taxes.

⁸⁹ Interview MD with Samson Mumba, Chipofya Village, 27 January 2009

⁹⁰ Berry, 'Hegemony', 337

⁹¹ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 14

⁹² Chanock, *Law, Custom*, 34 c.f. Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 14

⁹³ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 14

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ PRO, CO 1015/639: *Moffat Report on Native Courts in Nyasaland*, 1952

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ MNA, NNM 1/10/7, Thatcher to Barker, 28 December 1945

⁹⁸ Berry, 'Hegemony', 337

⁹⁹ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Colonial Office despatch No 43: Creech Jones to Sir Edmund Richards Governor of Nyasaland, 22 February 1947

¹⁰⁰ MNA, NN 1/3/2: *Agriculture - Coffee 1934-1939*

¹⁰¹ Interview MD with Godwin Chawinga and Nyamnyirenda, Thanila Village, 16 January 2009

¹⁰² Interview MD with Nyachawinga and others, Bwanyonga Village, 27 August 2009; Interview MD with Nyanyasulu and others, Thanila village, 18 September 2009

¹⁰³ Interview MD with Nyanyasulu and others

¹⁰⁴ Interview MD with John Nyirenda, Jomboli Village, 18 January 2009. In the past his father was at home with his two wives, all the sons were "out" working. The sons would send money back to help their parents employ casual labour, even a permanent farm hand who would live with them. These labourers would come from within the village, or nearby. In those days you could easily get someone to work for old clothes or shoes. Nowadays around this time such labour is very common but people are looking rather for tins of maize – it is a difficult time of the year. Even they have their own land but they first do ganyu in the morning and then go to their farm in afternoon hours.

¹⁰⁵ McCracken, *A Political History*, 185

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 324

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸ He encouraged people to farm together in groups of ten to twenty. Interview MD with Jomboli Nyirenda, Village Headman, Jomboli Village, 6 January 2009

¹⁰⁹ MNA: Transmittal Files: 3-12-4F (9564), *Ulendo West Rumpi*, G. Craske, August 1950 Ulendo notes

¹¹⁰ MNA, NN4/1/10: *Mzimba District Annual Report*, 1949

¹¹¹ MNA, NN 4/2/2: *Northern Province General Monthly Report 1955-1961*, December 1957

¹¹² MNA, Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F, box 9564, Craske, August 1950 Ulendo notes

¹¹³ M. Vaughan, *The Story of an African Famine: Gender and Famine in Twentieth Century Malawi* (Cambridge, 1987), 155

¹¹⁴ MNA, NN 4/2/2: *Northern Province General Monthly Report 1955-1961*, June 1957

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ MNA, NN4/1/10: *Mzimba District Annual Report*, 1949

¹¹⁷ MNA, NN 4/1/9: *Mzimba District Annual Report*, 1948

¹¹⁸ MNA: Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (9564), *Ulendo West Rumpi*, Ulendo Book, 12th March 1951

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Interview MD with Robert Peter Bongololo Chawinga, Bongololo Village, 13 January 2009; Interview MD with Jomboli Nyirenda.

¹²¹ MNA, NN 4/1/21: *District Annual Reports, Rumpi District 1951*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ As was demonstrated in chapter one and two, the history of religious leadership and settlement in Hewe was one where centralised political authority was more possible, this was different to that of Chikulamayembe's area.

¹²⁴ Increasingly nuanced accounts of reactions to these agriculturally focused policies have emerged in the last few years and they have tried to break these early arguments down further by presenting very particular case studies in order to better understand the specific responses. These different responses are commonly articulated through the different types of cultivation that groups undertook and how differently certain types of relationship (colonial/native) were played out on these stages.

¹²⁵ MNA, NN 4/1/9, Native Affairs 1948. The agreement was that marketing would take place in accordance with the fixed price of 3 pounds per penny. The producers, instigated by the very same "agitators", made it very clear however that they would demand a better price in future years.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 145

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 146

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 144

¹³⁰ The Moffat report to look into the effectiveness of Native Courts was undertaken in 1952. When it came to prosecuting criminal cases against Native Authority orders and the Natural Resources Ordinance it showed that very few had been carried out. The reasons given being that no courts had actually been given copies of the appropriate ordinances, and that offenders were most often ordered to court by agricultural department employees, but since they rarely if ever attended the court to give evidence cases had been hard to judge fairly (PRO, CO 1015/639: *The Moffat Report on Native Courts in Nyasaland*, 1952). Once this was amended and more people were prosecuted there was a lot more disgruntlement in the Province.

¹³¹ Interview MD with Nyachawinga and Austin Khunga, Chatumbwa Village, 5 February 2009

¹³² Interview MD with Kawonga, 29 January 2009. Kawonga recounted how one of the aims of federation "was to make Hewe to be a big farm – no settlement but farming only. There were two rivers and they wanted to dam it there. That is one reason why people were angry here. The party had rallies and would send message in advance to chief who would tell everyone that the party was coming. The politicians spoke in these meetings of chisazga; if we have our own government there will be more employment and better salaries". Interview MD with PGVH Chembe, Austin Mfune, 29th January 2009. Chembe remembers how "the NAC was telling us that the federal government would take our farms. Leaders from this area used to go from here to listen to Kanyama and then come back and bring message here".

¹³³ MNA, NN 4/2/2, October 1956

¹³⁴ Haskard to Brock, personal correspondence, 18 September 2009.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* Interestingly enough he also went on to say that once Banda was in power he actually adopted many of the same agricultural practices as the then Agricultural Director, Dick Kettlewell, had put in place during the 1950s.

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- ¹³⁶ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 76-77
- ¹³⁷ MNA, NN4/1/7: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1946*
- ¹³⁸ MNA, NN4/1/9: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1949*
- ¹³⁹ Smallpox was transmitted easily to Hewe in 1955 "the source being the Muyombe area of Isoka District in Northern Rhodesia" (MNA, NN 4/2/2, Report from October 1955)
- ¹⁴⁰ MNA, NN 4/1/6: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1945*
- ¹⁴¹ PRO, CO 525/198/9: *District Commissioner Reports Northern Nyasa, Northern Province Annual Report, 1944, Game Department summary.*
- ¹⁴² MNA, NN 4/1/10: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1949*
- ¹⁴³ PRO, CO 525/198/9, *Game Department summary.*
- ¹⁴⁴ MNA, NN 4/1/9: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1948, Native Affairs.*
- ¹⁴⁵ MNA, NN 4/1/10: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1949.* For a lively description of these hunters activities see Noel Harvey reminiscences from his time as A.D.C. Karonga from 1954 to 59, (Harvey, *Ten Years*). He remembers the relief of villagers when men with rifles turned up; "one day I was quietly working at my desk when three men in khaki uniform and ten-gallon hats, armed to the teeth, strode into my office, saluted and solemnly laid before me on my desk twenty baboons' and monkeys' tails. It transpired that these were the Boma hunters, issued with .303 rifles and twenty rounds of ammunition each month and told to go to particular villages which were being marauded by wild animals. They were enormously popular among the villagers since only they had rifles. Villagers had shot guns and could kill smallish game, but for the big animals which could supply a village with meat for several days, a rifle was necessary".
- ¹⁴⁶ MNA, NN 4/1/9: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1948*
- ¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴⁸ MNA, NN 4/1/10: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1949*
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵⁰ Chawinga always made sure that there was at least one able bodied man in each family at all times.
- ¹⁵¹ MNA, NN 4/1/10: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1949*
- ¹⁵² Interview MD with Jomboli Nyirenda
- ¹⁵³ J. M. Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: hunting, conservation, and British imperialism*, (Manchester, 1988), 13
- ¹⁵⁴ Interview MD with Karua, 23 January 2009.
- ¹⁵⁵ MNA, NN 4/2/19, *General District Monthly Reports, Rumpi District 1956-63*, Report of June 1957
- ¹⁵⁶ Interview MD with Norman Chawinga
- ¹⁵⁷ Mackenzie, *The Empire*, 20
- ¹⁵⁸ MNA, Transmittal files, 18-7-8F, box 7063: *Vwaza Marsh, Rumpi District, controlled area, 1956-61.* From H. J. H. Borly, the Director of Game, Fish and Tsetse Control to Chief Secretary Zomba, 13 June 1956.
- ¹⁵⁹ MNA, NN 4/2/2, *August 1956.* "The area of Vwaza Marsh was declared a controlled area during the month, and NA Katumbi has made a No-shooting Order which will be applicable to residents living within the defined boundaries. Prior to the publication of the relevant Government Notice several hunting parties from Northern Rhodesia had been arriving at Rumpi desirous of purchasing game licenses for the Vwaza area. The appearance of the Government Notice was therefore most welcome".
- ¹⁶⁰ In the same way as he had searched for extra money for his treasury by licensing other things. In some ways this behaviour could be seen to have been encouraged by the administration which wanted the native authorities to stand on their own two feet
- ¹⁶¹ MNA, Transmittal files, 18-7-8F, box 7063, Record of 28th Session of Northern Province Provincial Council, held at Mzimba, 25-27 April 1957. Re: Share of Revenue from Game Licences for Local Authorities
- ¹⁶² MNA, Transmittal files, 18-7-8F, box 7063, Borly to the Secretary of Natural Resources, 30 May 1961. Re: Allocation of fees for permits to hunt in Vwaza Marsh controlled area
- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Graham-Jolly, Acting Provincial Commissioner Northern Province to Secretary for Natural Resources Zomba, 31 July 1961
- ¹⁶⁶ Interview MD with Jomboli Nyirenda
- ¹⁶⁷ Discussion with NyaGondwe and Noel Gondwe Yiteta Village, 12 January 2009; Interview MD with Thompson Nundwe. He said that Kamangilira used to get anything he wanted here in Hewe; if he wanted skins or ivory he could just go to Vwaza.

¹⁶⁸ Interview MD with PGVH Chembe, Austin Mfunne; MD with Julius Zgambe, Village Headman Chondoka, Chondoka Village, 31 August 2009

¹⁶⁹ MNA, Transmittal files, 18-7-8F, box 7063, N.A. Katumbi to Cosmo Haskard, D.C. Rumpi, 4 January 1957

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Zolokere had always been known as the Councillor, it was a way of elevating him above other 'chiefs' in the valley. He was supposed to have been found with Khutamaji when Katumbi first arrived in the Valley; as a result he is recognised with some seniority.

¹⁷² Khutamaji would be amongst seven others who were arrested with Kamangilira by Kamuzu in 1974; this will be explored further in chapter six.

¹⁷³ MNA, 3-12-4F box 9564, Tour notes taken by Craske, 12 June 1962. He took a lorry to Mowa village at the western end of Katumbi's area.

¹⁷⁴ Interview MD with Joseph Munthali, Mwachibanda Village, 23 September 2009

¹⁷⁵ MNA, 3-12-4F box 9564, Tour notes taken by Craske, 7 June 1960

¹⁷⁶ Interview MD with Roosevelt Mwangonde, Katowo Trading Centre, 22 January 2009

¹⁷⁷ Kamangilira did this not only in agricultural spaces, which he controlled with relative ease; his ability to control rumour, control social mobility and to control historical production within his area were key tools through which he dominated.

¹⁷⁸ Interview MD with Efram Chawinga (PGVH Chilikunthazi) and Nyamfunne, Chilikunthazi Village, 23 January 2009

¹⁷⁹ Interview MD with Thompson Nundwe

¹⁸⁰ Interview MD with Lyton Karua

¹⁸¹ Interview MD with Ephram Chawinga and Nyamfunne

¹⁸² Lyton Karua and Nyachawinga separately confirmed that if you didn't dig bunds you would go to court and be imprisoned or fined.

¹⁸³ Leading social actors in rural Africa became more dependent upon agricultural sources of wealth than African rulers had been in eighteenth and nineteenth century and they were of course more reliant upon colonial state for their wealth. Often chiefs found themselves in the same position of an ordinary farmer, eeking out a living from subsistence farming and cash cropping.

¹⁸⁴ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 28

¹⁸⁵ MNA, NN 4/2/2, September 1956

¹⁸⁶ Mandala, *'Capitalism'*, 263