SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN SOUTHERN MALAWI: A STUDY OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SHIRE HIGHLANDS AND UPPER SHIRE VALLEY FROM THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY TO 1915

by

Megan Anne Vaughan

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in the
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ABSTRACT

This study of rural economic and social change in a small area of Southern Malawi begins by examining the nature of society and production there in the early nineteenth century and the changes wrought by immigration into the area and by increasing involvement in long-distance trading. It then goes on to examine the nature of the early colonial economy, the structural ambiguities of which affected the lives of Africans in different parts of the country in diverse ways. Two separate geographical areas are then dealt with in detail. The study traces the effects on societies in the Shire Highlands of the dislocations of the late nineteenth century, and the development of an estate economy in the early twentieth century. The demands of the latter for land and labour gave rise to a number of changes in the structure of African production in the area, including the adoption of new food crops and the intensification of female labour. In the Upper Shire Valley and on the Chilwa plain a wide

variety of economic structures emerged in the early twentieth century, some showing more continuity with the the nineteenth century than others. The effects of colonial economic policies were less clear-cut here, ranging from the establishment of a peasant cotton industry, to the development of a labour tenancy system similar to that found on the Highlands. The final chapter deals with these diverse changes thematically by examining changes in agricultural production within the African societies here, changes in kinship, family and 'tribal' structures, and finally the changing nature of economic and social stratification.

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Introduction

This thesis seeks to illuminate some of the processes at work which go to make up the rural history of an area of Southern Malawi in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It attempts to do this largely by looking at these processes 'from below', from the standpoint of the rural people themselves. At the same time it aims to place these developments within a perspective which will help to reintegrate the historiography of Malawi into that of the rest of Central and Southern Africa, as well as to simply fill in some of the gaps in the history of the people of this area. In this latter role it would be gratifying to think of it as a sequel, albeit an inadequate one, to the remarkable work of Shepperson and Price in the 1950s, which up to this date provides the only rural history of Malawi which we possess.[1]

Since the publication of Independent African very little has been written on the colonial history of Malawi. The volume, From Nyasaland to Malawi, edited by Roderick Macdonald,[2] demonstrates that there is an interest in this history, but also illuminates one of the major problems in studying it. A glance at the footnotes shows that much of the research which goes to make up that volume was conducted using sources available outside the country. Access to classified material in the National Archives of Malawi has, in the past five years or more, been very rarely granted to outside researchers, and the same applies to permission to undertake fieldwork. It is not surprising that by far the most valuable and stimulating research has been produced by those who have had

permission to use original sources in Malawi, including some foreign researchers who obtained this permission in the 1960s and early 1970s . Foremost amongst these is Leroy Vail who, in just one article on the development of the railway system in Nyasaland, made a great contribution to our understanding of the working of the colonial economy.[3] Martin Chanock also made a start in the study of social and agricultural history, and many of his assertions are borne out by the present study.[4] Hugh MacMillan wrote the early history of the African Lakes Corporation using missionary, company and Foreign Office sources.[5] Bridgal Pachai used the material in the National Archives extensively and produced a quantity of work, including the recently published Land and Politics in Malawi.[6] The latter work, however, does not add much to what had already been written on land and labour in the theses of B. Krishnamurthy[7] and S. Myambo.[8] A recent thesis by Robert Boeder adds the important dimension of labour emigration from Malawi.[9] However, as regards an understanding of the society and social history of the area, the works of the sociologist J. Clyde Mitchell in the 1940s,[10] and Shepperson and Price in the 1950s, remain unsurpassed. For the rest, the history of Malawi has been largely the province of the mission historian and the historian of pre-colonial political structures,[11] though the work of Edward Alpers in particular has helped to give an economic dimension to this.[12]

There would appear then, to be large gaps in the historiography of Malawi, particularly in the field of economic and social history, the recent trend towards the writing of agrarian history having seemingly passed Malawi by.[13] If any further justification

were needed for embarking on this work it would be that the vast majority of the people of Malawi remain rural people, and that many of the problems which they face today are similar to those which they faced in the past.

As I hope to show, the history of rural people in the early colonial period, which is the main focus of this study, is in fact just one episode in the total history of rural change in this area. This was not the first or the last time that peasant production was disturbed or distorted, nor the first or the last time that it has survived against the odds. Many of the processes visible here are still relevant today. Amongst these is the opposition between peasant production and large-scale agriculture, and the intervention of the state in favour of the latter. Connected with this are the efforts of rural people to resist proletarianisation, and the ways in which they become aware of inequitable marketing and pricing policies affecting their products. In the sphere of food production, the history of agricultural innovation from below is still relevant, though today it is more likely to take the form of rejection of inappropriate technologies. The whole question (unfortunately hardly broached here) of the interactions between economic change and social structures, is still relevant today. For instance, one is struck by how issues such as changes in the matrilineal system resulting from economic change, remain current today, and this brings to light the problem of trying to place a chronology on such developments. As for the wider perspective, Malawians no longer live within a direct colonial system, but Malawi operates within the Southern African economic system, and the problems faced by its government today,

such as whether or not to permit migration to the mines of South Africa, have a familiar ring about them, as does the whole issue of the inefficiency of large-scale agriculture and the dangers inherent in a mono-crop economy. Any critic of current economic policy in Malawi would do well to take an historical perspective. The tenancy schemes which operate in the Malawian tobacco industry today, for instance, have an ancestry dating to the turn of the century, and the rationale behind their use remains the same, as do many of the social consequences.

The time span adopted by this study is perhaps less easy to justify than the subject matter. As Martin Chanock has pointed out,[14] the rural history of this region, and in particular the history of 'peasantization', makes little sense without some reference to nineteenth century developments and the involvement of societies here in long-distance trading networks. Similarly, it seemed apparent to me that any attempt at writing the social history of this area in the early colonial period would have to be based on a knowledge of nineteenth century changes in social structure and the nature of stratification in that period. The rationale for going further back to the early nineteenth century was to attempt to reconstruct the pre-'disturbance' rural economy, as by doing so I hoped to gain some insight into how production was organised and labour allocated within households and communities, as the allocation of labour seemed central to the problem of understanding how these communities responded to new economic opportunities and constraints. A knowledge of the early nineteenth century also seemed one way of gaining a picture of the 'original' agricultural potential of this area and settlement patterns. It could be argued

that this is a rather remote baseline to take and that a more relevant one would be the late nineteenth century when agricultural production and settlement patterns had already been disturbed. I have decided to include the early nineteenth century material, however, because I think it does provide a useful picture of land use and labour allocation in this economy, and because in some places in the early colonial period it would appear that people were attempting to rebuild this economy by resettling the lands which they had been forced to vacate, and by re-integrating male labour into agricultural production.

Methodology

The bulk of this work is essentially descriptive. Given the current state of the historiography of Malawi, and of the colonial period in particular, there may be some justification for this descriptive emphasis because we know so little about the grass-roots organization of rural communities in this period. Until we understand more about the functioning of these communities at the most fundamental level, there is little possibility of writing a convincing history of social and economic change. We need to know how people were organized socially and economically from the household upwards. We need to know what pre-colonial formations existed, whether they persisted, and in what ways they may have influenced the various responses of different communities to new influences and, in particular, to the penetration of European capitalism into their areas. We need to look carefully at the different manifestations of this capitalist presence and how it operated in different contexts. This all involves a certain amount of simple description of what people did from day to day,

in order to illuminate to what degree and in what ways they participated in the colonial economy; how they organised the allocation of labour between subsistence and cash-raising activities, and within which social units this organisation took place. We need also, if possible, to take account of a certain amount of subjective description by the participants in all this for, as I hope to show, these perceptions could affect the objective reality of their economic position.

Having said this, it is clear that the concept of 'pure description' in history is an illusion and something of a trap. The historian inevitably approaches both written and oral evidence with certain preconceptions, and the questions asked of the data give rise to a 'description' which might be radically different from one arising from another set of questions. In the case of written sources, the historian is given a fairly 'immovable' set of evidence, but evidence which is already predicated on someone else's questions. The most he can do is to try and recognise the biases and preconceptions already present there and to take account of them. It is not easy to take account of the questions which were never posed. In the case of oral evidence the historian largely selects the questions himself, but the resulting 'evidence' may be so far removed from the historical event as to make even the concept of 'distortion' meaningless. As I hope to show, however, there are some forms of oral data which are more 'objective' than others, and which can provide a useful source, indeed sometimes the only source, for aspects of social and economic history.

In the case of my own work, neither the geographical area studied, nor the methodology used, were freely chosen. I was not

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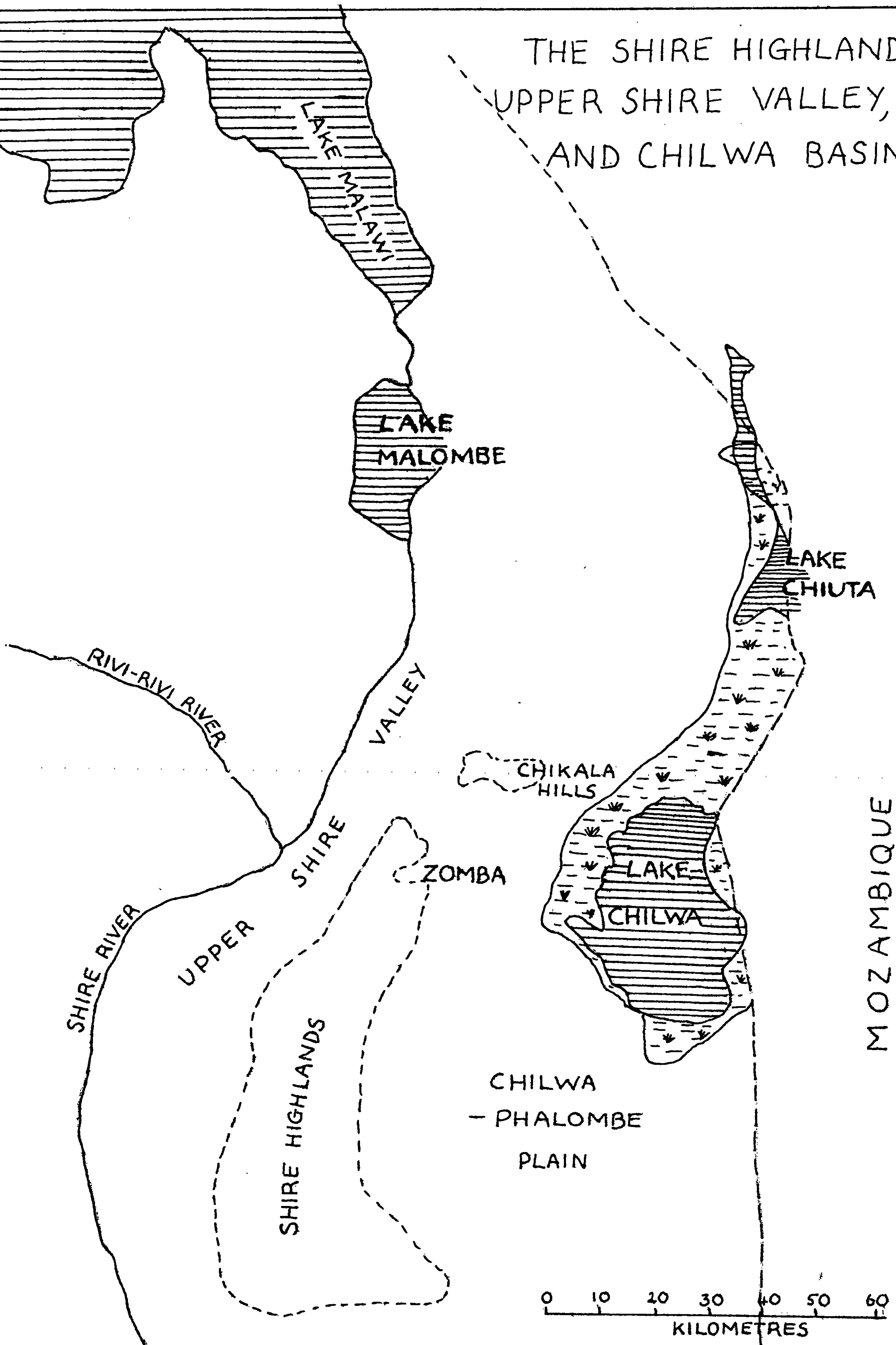

given permission to consult the classified material in the National Archives, but as a member of the Zomba History Project[15] I was granted permission to undertake fieldwork in the administrative districts of Zomba, Machinga (formerly Kasupe) and Chiradzulu. My own research was concentrated in Zomba district and the western portion of Machinga. Other members of the project covered eastern Machinga and Chiradzulu. Though by no means ideal, the geographical area studied did provide a number of interesting contrasts, and the oral material was supplemented by written material relating to a wider geographical area, including Blantyre and Mulanje districts.

The written sources used were mission records, newspapers and journals, private papers and the records of a number of independent organizations, Colonial Office records, and finally District Note-books.

The mission which had the most profound influence on the area under study was the Church of Scotland Mission based in Blantyre but with churches and schools throughout the Shire Highlands. The records of this mission are not fully sorted or classified and although I gained some information from them, I left a great many boxes untouched. However, the journal of the Church of Scotland, Life and Work in British Central Africa, was particularly useful for the 1890s and contained many unique observations of changes taking place in the area at that time. The records of the Universities Mission to Central Africa, which had stations along the Shire River, were in perfect order, but their content was rather less useful, much of the discussion revolving around internal mission disputes and academic doctrinal matters.

For a picture of the estate economy of the Shire Highlands I used much the same sources as Krishnamurthy and Myambo, that is, the Colonial Office 525 series, Life and Work and the planters' newspaper, the Central African Planter (later the Central African Times and the Nyasaland Times). For this purpose I also used the minutes of the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, the Nyasaland Planters' Association, The Nyasaland Convention of Associations, the Blantyre and Limbe Town Councils, and the Legislative and Executive Councils. None of these sources, however, provided much detail on African agriculture, though the Central African Times was a useful source for famines and outbreaks of disease on the Shire Highlands. For the 1890s the British Central Africa Gazette is a very valuable source on a large number of topics including African political events, the beginnings of district administration, and local economic changes and trends. For an idea of longer term trends in the economy as a whole from 1906 onwards, I used the Blue Books which, though rather frustrating to use, nevertheless provided information which was unobtainable elsewhere.

Probably the most valuable written source available to me was that of the District Notebooks, which appear to hold an anomalous position in the Archives of being neither classified nor definitely unclassified. These were very varied in their quality but from them I obtained a wealth of detail on economic and social change at a local level, using the tax records contained in them as well as registers of cotton growers, registers of licences granted, Police Character Records, and the observations of successive District Residents. It is this kind of detail which I assume is contained in the classified files which I was unable to consult, though a

great many of these files relating to the period under study were destroyed in a fire in 1919. I had hoped to consult judicial records, but these are also centralised and classified.

A search for company records proved fruitless, and it would appear that most of these have been destroyed. I did, however use a few collections of private papers, including the fascinating letters and diaries of Dr. Wordsworth Poole, a medical officer in Zomba in the 1890s, and Francis Poole, his brother.

It is clear that most of the more original work in this thesis is based on oral data, and this calls for an account of how this data was collected and what were the more obvious biases of its collection.

The oral data base is some 300 interviews, of which 160 were collected by other people, 80 were collected by an interviewing team including myself, and 60 were collected by myself with an interpreter.[16] Taken as a whole these interviews exhibit a strong bias towards male informants, and within that towards men with some traditional and/or administrative political status. In the case of my own interviews this bias is less pronounced as I made a conscious effort to interview both women and 'commoners'. Nevertheless, on the whole the view of history obtained here is a 'male' view. In part this seems to be the result of the political dominance of men in this society and the greater ease with which they relate to outsiders. In part it is due to the nature of the researcher's questions and the manner of their asking. To some extent there seem to be separate spheres of 'male' and 'female' knowledge, political knowledge, at least in public, being largely

the preserve of men.[17] As most 'history' is viewed in this society as having a political content, it is often not thought appropriate that women should express their views on this. In one case an old woman was interrupted in her highly colourful description of a political event by a man who presented a more publicly acceptable version of the same story.[18]

Fortunately a great deal of information on economic change is not regarded as being 'political', or indeed 'historical', and women were often deferred to on this, particularly when questions on agricultural change were raised. Furthermore, if women were interviewed alone rather than in the presence of male kin, they were usually forthcoming on all aspects of their people's history.

Re-reading the interviews I conducted on my own it is clear that there were certain biases and preconceptions which implictly or explicitly moulded the questions I asked and the 'description' which emerged. When dealing with the pre-colonial period my questions were largely asked within a tribalistic mould. This mould was partly imposed by the informants themselves and was thus attractive to an inexperienced researcher. Devising interview techniques to overcome this tribalistic approach is not easy, and in any case there seemed some justification for taking seriously the categories which people used to define themselves and each other, even if one did not accept the historical validity of these categories.

Fortunately the contradictions inherent in tribal labels emerged early on and clearly, even when questions and answers

were framed with these categories in mind. Thus, whilst relating the proud history of his people, a 'Yao' chief readily revealed that his ancestors were 'Lomwe'. As the contradictions emerged it became easier to frame questions which took account of the complexities involved in the ways in which people label one another, and which avoided the worst over-simplification. Once again, this was easiest when asking 'apolitical' questions on economic change, when the smaller and more specific the unit of study, the more reliable the information obtained. For instance, when asking questions on pre-colonial iron production it was more profitable to relate these to a particular site, a particular group, or if possible, a particular craftsman, rather than to the 'Nyanja', 'Yao', or 'Lomwe', and people were generally very willing to discuss such activities without reference to the wider, less specific group. It was then possible to collate this specific information to construct a more general picture which might, or might not, conform to peoples' generalizations about themselves and each other.

Despite the misgivings I have about tribal labels, the major part of my description of pre-colonial change is written using these labels as short-hand, though I hope I have made sufficiently clear that these are not to be taken as rigid, self-defining categories. Having now obtained a certain amount of basic information on the pre-colonial period, it might be possible to identify groups according to their economic and non-tribal social status and to use these as the organizational units of any future research.

Information on the colonial period was approached with a somewhat crude picture of 'underdevelopment' in mind. Fortunately, here again informants maintained a high degree of individuality

and independence in their answers, and the contradictions and complexities of the colonial economic situation were thus able to emerge. For instance, despite being asked questions framed in a way which assumed colonial 'oppression', some informants claimed that they had been little affected by the colonial presence and had rarely paid taxes. I was thus repeatedly forced by the informants themselves to reappraise my view of the workings of the colonial economy, and it soon became apparent in many cases that I was dealing with very marginal areas of what was, in any case, a marginal area of the British Empire. In the area of the greatest concentration of European estates the replies conformed more closely to the pre-conceived image of life in a repressive colonial labour reserve, but here again informants readily distinguished (and indeed, insisted on distinguishing) between conditions on one estate and another, and it was clear that these differences were a very important aspect of the estate system in Nyasaland. Informants also drew my attention to the inefficiency and failures of European agricultural enterprises here, once again a very important part of the Protectorate's economic history. In some cases informants described life on colonial estates in a totally unexpected way, describing their landlords in terms seemingly more appropriate to a benevolent 'traditional' chief. Even once one had taken into account their possible desire to 'please' me, a European, and the perpetuation of a 'colonial mentality', it was still necessary to attempt to take this view seriously. In the case of Lomwe informants this view was a reflection of the still worse conditions prevailing in Mozambique at the time, and in other cases this view reflected on the extreme dislocation suffered by some groups in

the late nineteenth century. Thus, despite my own and my informants' preconceptions, the picture which emerged was an immensely varied and locally specific one which incidentally presented great problems to anyone attempting a neat analysis.

There is a certain amount of 'oral data', however, which by its nature is relatively free from distortion and which can be more easily collated into a general picture of change. Even a simple genealogy, for instance, can reveal information which is unobtainable elsewhere, and when combined with genealogically-related questions on the geographical movements of a group, can reveal patterns of mobility, marriage and kinship over time. When asked directly about marriage patterns, informants understandably found it difficult to generalize, but most insisted on the persistence, until very recent times, of the custom of clan exogamy. From the genealogies, however, a clear pattern of Nyanja clan endogamy emerged for the second half of the nineteenth century.[19] Furthermore, the depth of genealogies amongst different groups appeared to have some relation to the degree of dislocation and instability which they had experienced, and was also a useful guide to the social system and, indirectly, to their perspective on 'history'.

Some other kinds of information, such as that related to famines and changes in cropping patterns, seemed also to be relatively immune to the worst forms of distortion and, in the case of the changeover from indigenous cereals to maize, revealed an extremely important event in agricultural history which was not documented in any of the written sources available.

Village and clan histories written by the local educated

elite were valuable, not so much for their 'factual' content, but because they were usually more explicit than the direct oral information in relating historical events to recent local politics and land disputes. They could therefore act as a guide to the kinds of distortions one might expect to have affected the direct oral data as well. In some instances it was apparent that, if complicated local political intrigues could be unravelled and understood, these documents would provide the material with which to write local histories of land tenure and, in one case, a history of the Chilembwe Rising 'from below'.[20]

There remain, however, severe limitations to the uses of oral data, apart from the prevalence of the 'distortion' already discussed. The first, most obvious one is that it is virtually unmeasurable. It is conceivable that, if one collected enough testimonies in a systematic enough way, it would be possible to quantify some of the information gained. Or, by interviewing every household in a very small area, it would be possible to write a local history with a quantitative component. In general, however, we have to make do with a very impressionistic picture of change, and have to recognise that we may not be able to generalize from our conclusions except in the most cautious way.

Further, it seems unlikely that we will ever be able to write, from oral data, a 'total' history, or that we will attain for the past the ethnographer's 'thick description'[21] of the present. The most convincing information I obtained was highly specific, either to an individual, or an event, or a short-term development. This was the case with the interviews amongst cotton-growers in the Upper

Shire valley, and is the case with life-histories which offer 'thick', but ungeneralizable, description. There are whole areas of cultural history, in particular, which remain obscure and seemingly unattainable, while we must recognise the risks of trying to write pre-colonial economic and social history with only the vaguest notion of population trends.

Analysing the 'description'

Given the defects and the limitations of the 'description' attained, is there any hope of relating it to theoretical discussions of economic and social change, or even to similar work on other parts of East, Central and Southern Africa?

Ideally a theory should help to illuminate and enrich a body of historical evidence without moulding it or stretching it beyond its capacities. Some recent writers on the economic history of Central and Southern Africa have used as their conceptual framework the underdevelopment-dependency theory, derived from the original work of Frank on South America.[22] This theory seeks to illuminate the patterns of dependency existing between metropolitan countries and their satellites, and the phenomenon of 'underdevelopment' which results from this hierarchy of control. It stands as a corrective to an older theory of exogenously-induced change, the 'modernization' theory, which described how, as a result of external influences, 'traditional' social and economic structures were 'modernized', and which conceived of this process as 'development'.

It is clear that an understanding of 'political economy', in its widest sense, is relevant to the analysis of even the most

apparently local and particularistic data. Chapter Two describes the political economy of Nyasaland in the early colonial period. The poverty of the Nyasaland administration, its dependence on the African taxpayer, the structure of European enterprise in the country, and the inefficiency of European agriculture, all had direct implications for the lives of Africans in the Protectorate. Nyasaland was never a fully-fledged 'settler colony', nor was it entirely a peasant economy, nor can it be characterised as a mere labour reserve for Southern Africa, though all these were elements in its make-up. The result of this confusion of identity was that, at a local level, the colonial presence could be manifested in anything from the harshest forms of labour tenancy and exploitation to the most extreme form of 'laissez faire'.

This is all consistent with an 'underdevelopment' perspective on the economic history of Nyasaland. However, when we come to trying to understand and interpret events at a 'village level', it is clear that the nature of rural change is not as predictable as some users of this model have implied. Whilst underdevelopment theory remains valid at a high degree of generalization, and whilst it performs the useful function of illuminating the vertical hierarchy of economic control stretching from the metropolitan country to the peasant, the material in this thesis points towards the necessity of supplementing this overall 'vertical' analysis with a more 'horizontal' approach which can take into account such factors as stratification at the village level and initiatives at that level.[23] It is not the intention here to replace the underdevelopment approach with some notion of the supreme importance of 'African initiative'. On the other hand, the local

material makes it clear that these initiatives could, at the very least, affect the kind of 'underdevelopment' experienced, and sometimes had a dynamic of their own which cannot be accounted for in a rigidly 'vertical' model of change. Furthermore, if we are to use an 'underdevelopment' model to illuminate the economic history of Nyasaland, it must be a variation of the model which recognises the fact that the colonial system was not always an efficient handmaiden of 'international capitalism'.[24]

The economy of Nyasaland was undoubtedly closely linked to that of the 'white South', and one of the major functions of Nyasaland when seen in historical perspective was to provide labour for the development of the Rhodesian and South African mining industries, as well as for white farming in those areas. Yet this function was not immediately or easily performed through the agency of the colonial rulers of Nyasaland, and was often performed in spite of them. The thousands of Nyasalanders who continued to provide a labour pool for the capitalists of the south, did so because migrant labour was often the most rational economic choice open to them, and this fact reflects more than anything on the poverty of Nyasaland as a whole. Nyasaland was impoverished because it lacked minerals, and because the exploitation of its agricultural resources was carried on in the most inefficient manner. Ultimately one could say that Nyasaland remained poor in this period because there was not the will to develop it as a peasant economy, but neither was it sufficiently important or strategic to the metropolitan government to warrant the massive subsidies given to white agriculture and to efficient transport systems in other areas. It is not clear, however, whether the

'average' Nyasalander would have benefited much had European agriculture been more of a success there. Vail assumes that, had there been more money in the Nyasaland coffers, then Africans would have benefited from an injection of funds into educational and medical services.[25] Yet, if European agriculture had been that successful it could have just as easily led to greater land alienation, more political power in the hands of Europeans, and more actively discriminatory policies towards peasant agriculture. As it was, except on the Shire Highlands, control over the economic activities of Africans was extremely weak, and in some areas it is difficult to perceive the 'vertical hierarchy of control' at all. By the 1920s and 1930s the evident failure of much European capitalist agriculture in Nyasaland had brought the realisation that if the economy of Nyasaland were to prosper at all it would be through the agency of the many Africans who had luckily not been reduced to rural proletarians or labour migrants, and who remained viable peasant producers.[26]

This brings us to the question of underdevelopment and the peasantry of Southern Malawi. The history of the peasantry of this area does not begin with the imposition of colonial rule, nor does it end at my break-off point in 1915. Indeed, it could be argued that the post First World War period marked a new beginning in peasant history here. An overall trend in the position and welfare of the peasantry in Southern Malawi is difficult to detect. Only on the Shire Highlands does there appear to have been any clear progression towards the proletarianisation of independent cultivators, but even here it is necessary to distinguish between groups. In the course of the early colonial period the economic advantages

of the inhabitants of Crown Land as against tenants on private estates were gradually eroded, and the economic initiatives of independent peasants were stifled through a variety of 'official' and 'unofficial' means. And yet this is not the whole story, for the independent peasantry of the Shire Highlands, through a variety of agricultural innovations, and the deployment of extra labour, survived to continue producing surpluses into the 1920s.[27/] Furthermore, they exercised their right to mobility and when things became too oppressive on the Highlands they moved to the less agriculturally favourable, but more plentiful and less closely controlled land in the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa Plain. The fact that residence on Crown Land, no matter how crowded, was regarded as being preferable to becoming labour tenants on private estates is indicated by the population density in Chiradzulu district (an island of Crown Land in an area of estates) in the 1920s.[28/] By the 1920s the growth of the urban centre of Blantyre-Limbe meant that a number of these independent farming families of Chiradzulu and other similar areas gained at least part of their incomes from non-agricultural or agriculturally-related activities.[29/] They had not all been reduced to rural proletarians. In fact the further one goes in the history of the Shire Highlands peasantry the more obvious it becomes that the most crucial area of study is that of stratification amongst the inhabitants there. Thus, whilst we might postulate a decline in the living standards of the 'average' Shire Highlander, this is not of very much use in illuminating the processes at work. In the period under study here the most crucial fact is that the peasantry were not destroyed but survived to become more stratified in the 1920s and 1930s.

Away from the Shire Highlands the patchiness of the colonial administrative apparatus and the absence of European agricultural interests meant that in general people were able to exercise a greater freedom of choice in how they attained their subsistence. Whilst it can be argued that, even here, the peasant was controlled via the control exercised over the marketing of his products, the oral evidence seems to point to the fact that cash crop producers were very difficult to control, that they quickly abandoned crops when it was against their interests to grow them, that they were aware of the inequities of the pricing and marketing systems, and that within certain bounds they maintained an independence. Control over their production had never been achieved by the pre-colonial rulers here, and neither was it achieved by the early colonial state. The evidence from these areas also emphasises the point that there is little sense in attempting to label groups as wage-labourers, tenants, cash-crop producers or labour migrants. I have done so in a vague way in order to make the material comprehensible, but in fact, within a matrilineage, a household, or even in the life of an individual, some or all of these activities could take place, and there was no obvious progression from one to another. As Ranger has pointed out in his criticism of Roots,[30] the direction in which these societies moved is in no way predictable, and the concept of their occupying an intermediate and transitional position between peasant and proletarian is not very useful.

A true measurement of 'underdevelopment' must be one which makes no prior judgements as to how 'underdevelopment' is achieved. Ultimately, it must be a measure of living standards, and this is

very difficult to achieve for a rural population, even in the present day. Everywhere the picture is complicated by stratification. It might appear that the Shire Highlander was 'underdeveloped' in this period in the same way as his counterpart in Rhodesia and Kenya, through the appropriation of his land and labour. Those who suffered most from this process, however, were the Lomwe immigrants from Mozambique, and in their own terms, and with their own historical perspective, the oppressive labour tenancy of the Shire Highlands was preferable to the forced labour of the Portuguese.

Away from the Shire Highlands, some areas of labour migrancy 'prospered', if one measures prosperity in terms of the amount of cash flowing into these areas. But to arrive at a true picture of living standards here one would have to account for, not only the 'social costs' of migrancy and its long-term effects on health, but also for the position of those people who became labourers for the families of migrants. Similarly, if one looks closer at an area of 'peasant prosperity', one might find that this was achieved only through the expenditure of an intolerable degree of female labour, and possibly at the expense of nutritional standards.

The value of a thesis such as the 'underdevelopment' thesis is that it focuses our attention on long-term trends. The historian of rural change at the local level can get so carried away by evident peasant rationality and initiative, that the long-term effects of these short-term rational decisions can be obscured. Such a thesis also focuses our attention on poverty and should, but does not always, focus it on the development of class structures.

Having said this, the bulk of this thesis is concerned with those very examples of peasant rationality and innovativeness which may ultimately have done little to relieve the poverty of the rural population of Nyasaland. The history of the people of Nyasaland may be the history of dependency and underdevelopment, but their struggle against certain forms of this phenomenon deserves recording.

Footnotes

1/ G. Shepperson and T. Price, Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting, and Significance of the Nyasaland native rising of 1915. Edinburgh, 1958.

2/ R. MacDonald (ed), From Nyasaland to Malawi: Studies in Colonial History. Nairobi, 1975.

3/ L. Vail, 'The Making of an Imperial Slum: Nyasaland and her Railways, 1895-1935', Journal of African History (hereafter J.A.H.) 16, 1975, pp.89-112.

A somewhat different version of this article appears in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, London, 1977. pp.365-396, and is entitled, 'Railway Development and Colonial Underdevelopment: The Nyasaland Case'.

4/ M. Chanock, 'The Political Economy of Independent Agriculture in Colonial Malawi: The Great War to the Great Depression', Journal of Social Science, I, 1972, pp.113-129.

——— 'Notes for an Agricultural History of Malawi', Rural Africana, 20, 1973, pp.27-35.

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5/ H. MacMillan, 'The Origins and Development of the African Lakes Company, 1878-1908', Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1970.

6/ B. Pachai, Land and Politics in Malawi, 1875-1975, Ontario, 1978.

7/ B.S. Krishnamurthy, 'Land and Labour in Nyasaland, 1891-1914', Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1964.

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9/ R. Boeder, 'Malawians Abroad: The History of Labour Emigration from Malawi to its Neighbours, 1890 to the Present', Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1974.

10/ J.C. Mitchell, The Yao Village, Manchester, 1956.
——— 'An Outline of the Social Structure of Malemia Area', Nyasaland Journal (hereafter NJ), IV, 2, July 1951, pp.15-47.
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——— 'An Estimate of Fertility in some Yao Hamlets in Liwonde District of Southern Nyasaland', Africa, XIX, 4, October 1949, pp.293-308.

11/ A. Ross, 'Origins and Development of the Church of Scotland Mission, Blantyre, Nyasaland, 1875-1926', Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1968.

J. McCracken, Politics and Christianity in Malawi: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province, Cambridge, 1977.

I. Linden with J. Linden, Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland, 1889-1939, London, 1974.

R. Stuart, 'Christianity and the Chewa: The Anglican Case, 1885-1950', Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1974.

12/ E.A. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa, London, 1975.

13/ Martin Chanock's preliminary work in this field being the only examples. See footnote 4.

14/ Chanock, 'Agricultural Change', p.397.

15/ The Zomba History Project is an oral history project conducted by staff and students of the History Department of Chancellor College, University of Malawi. There are four volumes of fieldnotes from this project (and another two being processed) which are housed in the library of Chancellor College, and which comprise over 300 interviews.

16/ The interviews I have drawn on most heavily are those conducted by myself, though in Chapter 1 I have used the work of other members of the Project extensively. The comments here on methodology apply to my own interviews and cannot be seen as a reflection of the work of other researchers.

17/ E. Ardener, 'Belief and the Problem of Women', in S. Ardener (ed), Perceiving Women, London, 1975.

18/ ZHP/KMD/12, Phiri, Vaugham and Makuluni with G.V.H. Chiendausiku: Chiendausiku Village, T.A. Msamala, Machinga District: Female informant on the murder of Gomani by British forces:

> "Gomani offended them. There were white missionaries in this country who had a white woman. Now, Gomani asked these white missionaries to send the woman to him. On presenting herself to him, he undressed her saying, "I have often heard that you people have such transparent skins that one can see the bowels inside. I now want to prove this for myself!!". The white woman protested saying she had came into the country to teach people, but Gomani did not listen to what she said. Thereafter, the Bwana Mkubwa in Zomba sent for Gomani, but the latter did not go. As a result, the white men sent a war party into Gomani's territory, but by then some of us had fled southward into this area..."

(The rest of the interview was conducted with a male informant).

19/ Megan Vaughan, 'Kinship and Class: Stratification in the Zomba-Chilwa Area of Southern Malawi, c.1800-1914', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, History Staff Research Seminar Paper, 1978, p.9.

20/ Group Village Headman Chingondo's 'Book of My Clan' describes land disputes up to the present day with reference to nineteenth-century events, and in particular to the original 'slave' or 'free' status of the ancestors of the contestants. It also traces the local political implications of the Chilembwe Rising.

21/ C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, London, 1975, p.23.

22/ Palmer and Parsons (eds), Roots, pp.1-13.

23/ "Capitalism has modified the social structures of Africa, but the latter are still influenced by the peasant mode of production which continues to exist in a controversial relationship with capitalism. They constitute two contending modes of production. A study of Africa's political economy cannot start from the assumption that one has submerged the other. Instead the task must be to explain the structural anomalies that this situation gives rise to". Goran Hyden, Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry. London, 1980, p.23.

24/ Vail's model of the underdevelopment of Nyasaland (as elucidated in his article in JAH), pointed to the rather unfashionable conclusion that Imperial whims could sometimes override purely economic considerations.

25/ Vail, 'Railway Development', p.384.

26/ J. McCracken, 'Production and Control in British Central Africa, 1905-1940'. University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Seminar Paper, 1980. p.21.

27/ Blantyre District Notebook, Vol. IV, Minutes of Blantyre District Council.

28/ In 1925 population density in Chiradzulu district was 221 per square mile, compared with 75.63 in Blantyre, and 85.46 in Zomba. Nyasaland Protectorate, Blue Book, 1925.

29/ In West Shire District in 1917, the Labour Census showed that the majority of people described themselves as 'labourers'. There were, however, over two thousand cotton growers, and also blacksmiths, houseboys, askaris, garden boys, tailors, teachers, sawyers, cattleboys, builders, brickmakers, cooks, office-boys, watchmen, storekeepers and carpenters. (West Shire District Notebook, Vol. II, 1913-18, p.301).

30/ T.O. Ranger, 'Reflections on Peasant Research in Central and Southern Africa', Journal of Southern African Studies, V. I, October 1978, p.106.

CHAPTER 1

Nineteenth-Century Social and Economic Change in the Shire Highlands, Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa Plain

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe the organisation of production and exchange in this area in the early part of the nineteenth century, and to indicate some of the changes which occurred in this organisation in the second half of the century.

In the first section I describe the way in which the 'indigenous' inhabitants of this area, the Nyanja, exploited different ecological zones, and indicate the dynamic within this agricultural system which responded to population growth and to ecological change. This is not merely the 'pre-colonial background' but is of relevance to the later economic history of this area, as it demonstrates the nature of labour allocation in this society, and to some extent, the values of the society on which this labour allocation was predicated.

Next I describe the migration of new groups into this area, and briefly go back in time to describe the experiences of these groups in their homeland. This piece of 'remote' history is included because it shows how at this period different groups could allocate their labour in very different ways, and also because, in a rather vague way, it points to changes in social organisation which seem to have had a lasting impact on this area. Finally I describe the interaction between these two different economic and social systems, (the Nyanja and the immigrants), and how the initial peaceful nature of this interaction was, by the end of the nineteenth

century, transformed into warfare, with its inevitable disruptive effects on production.

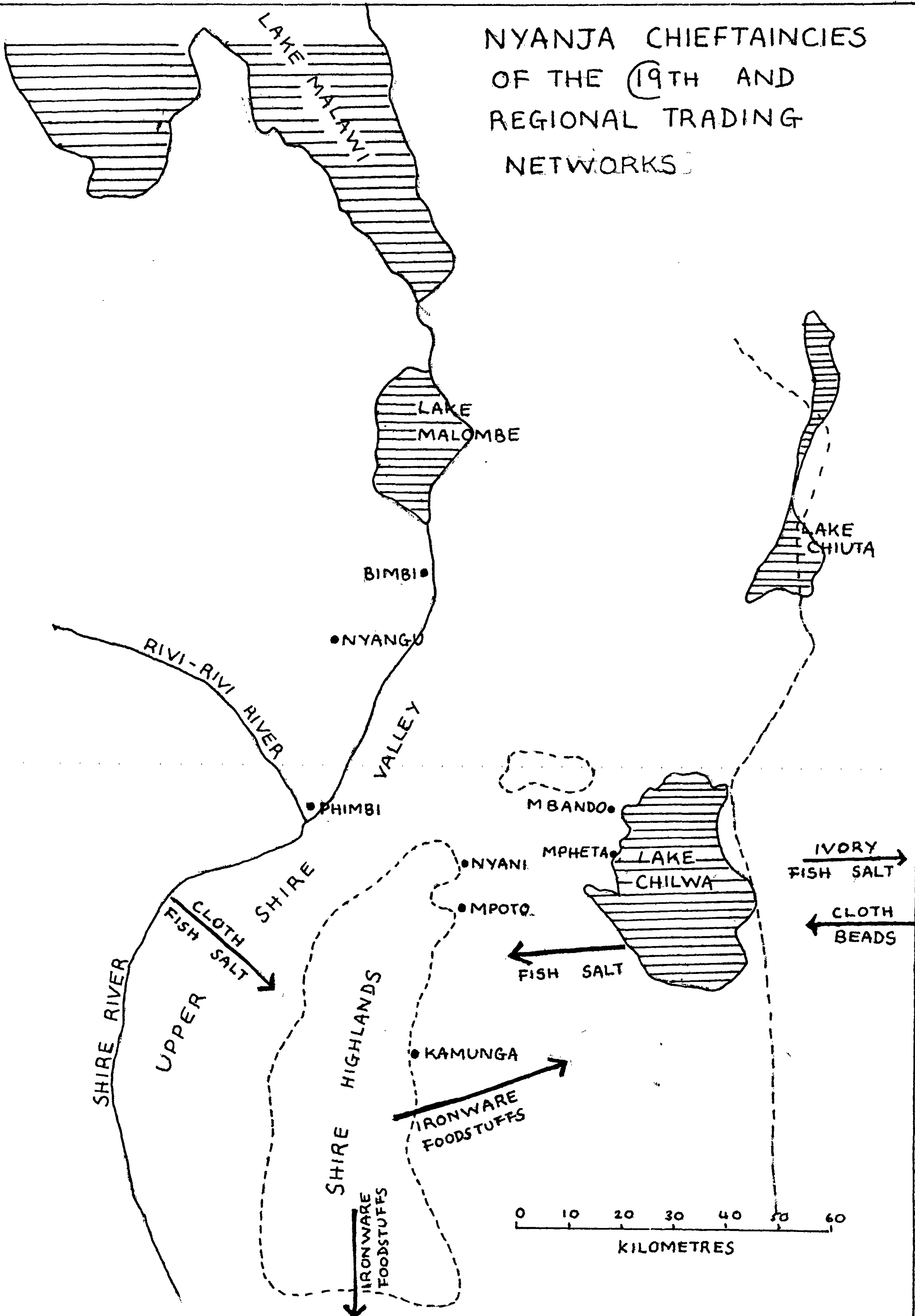
For most of the eighteenth century the Shire Highlands, Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa-Phalombe plain were occupied solely by Nyanja[1] people living on the margins of the declining Maravi state system, and organised into small, kinship-based political units.[2] These largely autonomous units were bound loosely together by a common political and cultural tradition expressed through a territorial religious cult,[3] as well as by the economic exchange encouraged by ecological diversity. Beginning in the last few years of the eighteenth century, and extending well into the twentieth century, this region was subject to immigration from the East, and for a more limited period, from the South. Yao, Lomwe and related groups migrated into the region from Mozambique in a series of waves which cover the whole of this period.[4] These peoples shared a similar socio-economic structure with the Nyanja, though in the case of the Yao recent historical experiences had led to significant differences in language, diet, clothing and religious practices. From the south in the mid-nineteenth century came the culturally and economically distinct Ngoni,[5] who settled just to the north of the area under study here. By the end of the nineteenth century the ethnic composition of this region was extremely varied, and the ethnic identification of any individual was the result of a complex interaction of kinship and religious, linguistic and economic factors.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the 'traditional' mechanisms for the assimilation of immigrant groups, in particular the use of real or fictive kinship ties, came under great strain

from the pressures which accompanied an increasing involvement in external trade. Involvement in this wider economic system led to increased specialisation and economic differentiation, both within and between ethnic groups. The development of a military tradition amongst the Mbewe Yao and the evolution of larger political units were largely built on differential access to firearms and other trade goods. Kinship ties, whilst still important as a cultural frame of reference, had changed considerably by the late nineteenth century when 'brother' sold 'brother' to traders in exchange for exotic goods, and when women found increasingly less security in marriage ties. The increasing importance of the slave trade over the ivory trade, combined with warfare and famine had led, by the 1870s, to an extreme geographical mobility of population in the region, and in places to the artificial concentration of populations for security. Whilst the immigration of new peoples, and involvement in external trade had brought new crops, technologies and ideas into the region, they had also entailed a period of economic and social disruption, and ecological unbalance. It was onto this scene that the first European concession hunters arrived in the 1880s.

Nyanja economy and society

Those people in the region who today identify themselves as Nyanja[6] are the survivors of a period of Nyanja cultural obscurity which had begun by the 1860s and which continued into the twentieth century. They can be divided into at least four distinct groups. Each of these groups is linked to the others in a common tradition of migration from Kaphirintiwa, a migration which probably occurred in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.


NYANJA CHIEFTAINCIES OF THE 19TH C AND REGIONAL TRADING NETWORKS
LAKE MALAWI
LAKE MALOMBE
LAKE CHIUTA
BIMBI
NYANGU
RIVI-RIVI RIVER
VALLEY
PHIMBI
MBANDO
MPHETA
LAKE CHILWA
NYANI
MPOTO
IVORY
FISH SALT
CLOTH
BEADS
CLOTH
FISH SALT
SHIRE
FISH SALT
UPPER
SHIRE RIVER
SHIRE HIGHLANDS
KAMUNGA
IRONWARE
FOODSTUFFS
SHIRE
IRONWARE
FOODSTUFFS
0 10 20 30 40 50 60
KILOMETRES

The first of these groups is represented by such headmen as Nyani, Bimbi (of Kuntumanje), Mpoto, Nambaikho, Nazinomwe and Saima. Also connected with this group were the Nyanja of the Phiri clan, represented by Phimbi in the Upper Shire Valley and Chikanda in Zomba. In the early nineteenth century this group inhabited the foothills of Zomba mountain, the Chilwa-Phalombe plain, and the banks of the Upper Shire.[7/]

The second group is represented by headmen Mpheta, Mbando, and Kapichi amongst others. The history of these people diverged from that of the first group when, probably at the height of Maravi power in the seventeenth century, they had migrated eastwards into present day Mozambique. They moved from there into the Chilwa-Zomba region in the last years of the eighteenth century, simultaneously with the first Yao immigrants, and reputedly because of famine and warfare in the East.[8/]

The third group comprises those Nyanja headmen and their people who, in the 1870s, were sent from the Lower Shire Valley by the Kololo chief, Kasisi, to guard the Upper Shire Valley against Ngoni raiders. They are represented by headmen Chigaru, Gwaza and Makombe in the Upper Shire Valley, and also by such headmen as Machirika in Zomba.[9/]

Finally, there is that group of twentieth century Nyanja immigrants from Mozambique who share a similar recent history with the Lomwe. They are represented by such headmen as Chingondo, Nambesa, and Mbatata, and have mostly settled on the Chilwa-Phalombe plain.[10/]

Formally all these groups recognise one another as 'cousins'. The first group claims that absorption of immigrant Nyanja groups was no problem because of this close relationship.

The description which follows of Nyanja social, political and economic organisation cannot be located specifically in time. It can best be called 'pre-Yao' in that it refers to that period between the decline of the Maravi state system and the coming of permanent Yao immigrants. Unfortunately, neither of these historical processes took place uniformly over the area under study, and neither did Nyanja society change at a uniform pace. The crucial fact is that this description refers to a period prior to the major impact of Yao economic and political domination in the area, and probably approximates to the situation there in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The sources for this description are mostly oral, and this increases the problem of locating it specifically in time.

The Nyanja of the early nineteenth century were a matrilineal people whose social organisation on general lines was similar to that of neighbouring tribes - the Yao, Lomwe and Makua.[11] They were organised into matrilineal clans, some of which they shared with the Yao,[12] and these clans were exogamous.[13] The basic unit of social organisation however was the matrilineal kin group - mbumba. Within the matrilineage each male member acted as guardian to his female matrikin, comprising sisters and nieces. The village and the matrilineage were usually co-extensive, though constantly changing in composition as members married, and as groups hived off to form independent villages. Nyanja marriage was generally

matrilocal, though cross-cousin marriage was common and helped maintain the geographical unity of a matrilineage. Patrilocal marriage took place in the case of men who held particularly important guardian positions, and in the case of slave marriage. The latter was almost certainly a significant feature of Nyanja society, allowing men to build up independent lineages, and possibly helping to resolve the tensions of a matrilineal society in which men had limited rights over their own offspring.[14/]

By the late eighteenth century political authority was largely coterminous with kinship. The Nyanja village had once possibly been a small administrative unit in the Maravi state system. In the Maravi hierarchy the village headman came under the territorial chief, and the chief under the paramount. According to accounts of Chewa political organisation under the Maravi state system, the territorial chief was distinguished by a number of powers and privileges - the economic power to exact tribute from his headmen; ritual powers as the mediator between the ancestors and his people; power over the allocation of land in his chiefdom; and judicial power, especially over the mwabvi ordeal.[15/] Although some traditions amongst the Nyanja mention a former allegiance to the paramount Lundu,[16/] most do not, and there are no well-developed traditions of tribute giving to Nyanja leaders.[17/] Either the period of the Maravi confederacy has been obliterated from historical memory, or the Nyanja of this area were very peripheral to the state system. In any case, by the late eighteenth century 'chiefs' were in essence lineage heads, though some were made more powerful than others through access to scarce resources such as ivory and good-quality iron ore. In general, however, political stratification

was seen in terms of ritual power rather than material wealth. Fission was inherent in the Nyanja social system and the measure of a lineage leader's power was his ability to build up and maintain a large 'following' of dependants. Slave marriage was employed to this end, but ritual powers, particularly the power to hold initiation ceremonies, were also important, and created some kind of territorial unity in this highly decentralised system. Initiation ceremonies were clan-based and could involve up to forty initiates.[18] The right to hold them was a sign of significant power and prestige. In the course of these rites, respect for the 'elders of the clan' was emphasised, and the initiates were familiarised with their clan-based kinship links over a fairly wide geographical area. Lineage leaders were responsible for appealing to direct ancestors, and each village had a shrine for this purpose.[19] However, all the Nyanja groups in this area seem to have looked for further ritual leadership to the rain-caller Bimbi, in the Upper Shire Valley.[20] The Bimbi cult was originally only part of a complex Maravi religious system, uniting the Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja peoples.[21] How the Bimbi cult fitted into this system is not clear in its details, but it seems that the importance of this subordinate rain shrine increased in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the Maravi state system progressively disintegrated.[22] Bimbi was a 'dreamer'[23] and responsible for rain-calling for the whole region. At least once a year Nyanja leaders would come together at Bimbi's shrine and would be required to solve any differences between them in order to ensure a successful appeal for rain.[24]

The region inhabited by the Nyanja in the early nineteenth

century was ecologically diverse, and this encouraged local trade, another mechanism for maintaining links between the various Nyanja groupings. Agricultural production was household-based and mainly for subsistence, but some industries called for the economic co-operation of a wider group, and the division of labour varied somewhat with the specialisms of different groups. Whilst land was in general plentiful, this was a relatively densely populated region, and good agricultural land was probably associated with a defined sense of group ownership.[25] There was little marked economic stratification either between or within groups, although some economic rights and privileges accrued to the 'elders' who were sometimes the political leaders.[26] The wide distribution of valuable resources such as ivory, iron and salt helped maintain this general egalitarianism.

The description which follows will give a more detailed picture of the economy of the pre-colonial Nyanja. Once again, it is of necessity somewhat ill-defined in time, but generally refers to the early nineteenth century, though some sources from a later period are used. The details of agricultural and craft production in this period are important in understanding both the nature of Nyanja society, and also in providing a reference point when later changes are discussed.

The Nyanja under Phimbi, Bimbi and Nyangu occupied the Upper Shire Valley, which is a wide, flat valley running the course of the river from the southern end of Lake Malawi as far as the cataracts near Matope. The climate here is hot and dry, the area lying in a partial rain shadow.[27] Despite the relatively low

rainfall, the Upper Shire was to some extent agriculturally favoured by the fertile alluvial soils found there in patches, as well as by the valuable marshland or dambos. In general, however, agriculture here was a risky business, being subject to periodic drought and flooding. The gradient of the valley is extremely flat (roughly three inches per mile)[28/] and this is of considerable historical significance for, during any period of low water level in Lake Malawi, the upper section of the river is liable to become completely blocked by sand bars and vegetation.[29/] This fact in itself may have helped shape an adaptable economy in the upper valley.

In the early nineteenth century the Nyanja inhabitants of the Upper Shire Valley were growing finger-millet (maere)[30/] as their staple food crop, supplemented by sorghum (mapira).[31/] Both of these crops were well-suited to conditions there, due to their relatively low moisture requirements, their ability to withstand drought, and their wide range of temperature tolerance.[32/] The natural vegetation of the Upper Shire Valley is grass and shrub, interspersed with patches of mopane woodland, and this would imply the early use of the hoe in this area and a variant on a 'bush-fallow' system of agriculture in which the grass needs to be cleared with a hoe before planting can take place.[33/] This was certainly the kind of agriculture practised in the mid-nineteenth century when Livingstone observed Nyanja husbandry and contrasted their 'woodland' and 'grassland' agricultural systems. In the latter the grass was stacked, the ground hoed, and the stacks burnt before the land was planted with a variety of crops - sorghum, millet, groundnuts, yams, rice, pumpkins, cucumbers, sweet potatotes,

cassava and hemp.[34] Maize is also mentioned by Livingstone and, though not the staple crop, had probably been known to the Nyanja of the Upper Shire for some time. They grew it in small quantities all year round, exploiting the riverside dambos for this purpose. River sand was placed on top of the waterlogged dambo mud, and maize planted in it, allowing the roots to take what moisture the plant required from the clay below, without becoming saturated.[35] In addition Livingstone describes how in the dry season maize was grown by making holes in a sandy depression through which a perennial stream flowed, and sowing the maize in the bottom of these holes.[36]

As well as growing a wide variety of food crops, the people here also cultivated patches of cotton, the product of which they wove as cloth.[37] By the mid-nineteenth century there were two distinct varieties to be found, one an indigenous plant, tonje cadja with a short staple, and the other an exotic perennial variety, tonje manga.[38] Livingstone claimed that in 'two days' march through the Upper Shire Valley he counted twenty-four cotton patches, each at least a quarter of an acre in extent.[39]

What evidence we possess leads towards a picture of comparatively intensive agricultural exploitation in the Upper Shire Valley, capable of giving rise to a surplus and exhibiting a resilience to drought and famine through its utilisation of dry-season gardens and of hardy cereal crops. The pre-colonial cultivators here used a combination of bush-fallow cultivation [40] and intensive dry season agriculture. Investment in dry-season gardens, combined with the hardiness of biennial sorghums and

millets as staples, as well as the patchiness of alluvial soil distribution, would imply that although still 'shifting cultivators', the Nyanja of the Upper Shire Valley were possibly more static than their relatives in upland woodland areas,[41] and that they invested a substantial amount of labour in agricultural production.[42] Indeed, the Nyanja of the Upper Shire had, amongst later immigrant groups, a reputation as hard-working agriculturalists, and we have no reason to doubt the general correctness of Livingstone's picture of energetic agricultural production here.

The Upper Shire was tsetse-infested and unsuited to cattle keeping.[43] The Nyanja kept a few domestic animals such as goats, hens and possibly sheep, but far more important to the domestic economy of the valley dwellers was fishing. Nyanja men in this area invested a great deal of time in fishing. Most nineteenth-century immigrants into the valley say that they were taught to fish by the Nyanja, and the Nyanja themselves claim that their men spent so much time in this occupation that the bulk of the agricultural work fell on the women.[44]

Phimbi's was a particularly favoured fishing area, though informants say that there was plenty of fish up and down the river and that there was no significant degree of chiefly control over this activity.[45]

Another male occupation in this area was the weaving of cloth. Locally-made Mang'anja cloth was mentioned by Gamitto in 1831; with great enthusiasm by Livingstone in 1859; and later by John Kirk, Lovell J. Proctor, Henry Rowley and J.T. Last.[46] Livingstone undoubtedly exaggerated the extent of this activity

and of cotton growing, but nevertheless oral sources lead us to believe that the manufacture of cloth was an important component of the Upper Shire Valley economy. This locally-made cloth was a thick tough product called likambambo,[47] made painstakingly on handlooms from the indigenous wool-like cotton. Yao and Ngoni informants claim that when they moved into the area they found the Nyanja employed in cotton-weaving and that this supplemented the more widely known skill of bark cloth manufacture.[48] Like cotton-growing itself, cotton-weaving, whilst not unknown in the highland areas, was more common in the valley, and the product was thus a potential article for exchange.

All along the Shire River salt was made by Nyanja women. The most common salt was that called chidulo which was made from a grass, mnjedza[49] which grew along the river banks.[50] The grass was burnt, water filtered through the ashes, and the distillate used as salt. In the dry season, as the river subsided, another kind of salt was made from the saline soil of the river bed. The soil was mixed with water and boiled until crystals of salt were obtained. Salt-making was restricted more by ritual sanction than by any overt political control. Because of the danger of contracting the disease, ndaka, from a sexually active person who had had contact with the salt, salt-making was usually confined to widowed elderly women, and when salt was being made a prohibition on sexual intercourse operated in the village.[51]

Although we have no written evidence for this period, the Upper Shire Valley was almost certainly well populated with game in the early nineteenth century. The Nyanja have no great

traditions of hunting, but they dug game pits and caught elephants in this way.[52] Game was probably an important supplement to their diet and traditions maintain that even in the pre-Yao period some political control was exerted over this activity through the giving of the ground tusk to the chief in whose area the elephant fell.[53] By the early nineteenth century Nyanja chiefs must have been aware of the commercial value of ivory, and were in all probability attempting to impose or re-impose control over hunting.[54]

The Nyanja of the highland areas pursued similar economic activities to those in the valley - they were agriculturalists and fishermen, part-time hunters and salt-makers. However, the very different environment in which they lived gave rise to some divergences. Most importantly, their agricultural techniques had evolved differently, and they were involved in iron-making on a fairly large scale.

The Shire Highlands is a ridge lying at between 2,000 and 4,000 feet, topped by the massifs of Mulanje (10,000 feet) and Zomba (6,500 feet) and acting as a watershed between streams draining west towards the Shire Valley, and east towards the Chilwa plain and Mozambique. The climate here is cooler and the rainfall both higher and more reliable than in the valley.[55] The soils, however, are predominantly the poor red and yellow-red soils common to this part of Africa, and marked by brachystegia woodland. There are patches of more fertile yellow sandy clays, and colluvial soils occurring at the heads of dambos, but in general the Shire Highland Nyanja were cultivating on poor soils covered with dense woodland.[56] Given this natural environment it seems likely that

at one time the Nyanja here had practised 'shifting cultivation' to a much greater degree than their relatives in the Shire Valley. Natural grass-cover is very limited in brachystegia woodland, unlike in the river valley where it is widespread. Assuming no population pressure, it would seem likely that a system of forest-fallow cultivation would once have been practised here to ensure high yields in infertile soils. This system of cultivation entails an initial heavy labour input as large trees need to be felled with an axe or burnt, but subsequently requires much less labour than a bush-fallow system as seeds are planted directly into the ashes without further land preparation and without the need for any tool except possibly a digging stick. It also implies a relatively high degree of mobility as, if high yields are to be maintained, new plots should be prepared each year.[57/]

That this system of cultivation was once employed can only be hypothetical since all oral and written records on agricultural techniques refer to some period in the nineteenth century when more intensive land use had already become common. Although it is difficult to say anything conclusive about pre-colonial population densities, there is some evidence to suppose that, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, population density on the Shire Highlands was such as to have forced cultivators into a more labour-intensive system of bush-fallow agriculture, requiring the use of the hoe and the cultivation of dry-season gardens.

Comments on population density by nineteenth-century travellers are extremely impressionistic, but it may be worth recording that a number of them remark on the density of population in this region.[58/]

Ester Boserup contends that peasant cultivators do not employ bush-fallow systems of agriculture unless forced to do so by the unavailability of forest. This is because they are aware that the labour input required to produce the same output is much greater for bush-fallow cultivation than for forest-fallow.[59] Assuming this to be the case, the fact that the Maravi were exporting hoes and other iron-ware by the beginning of the nineteenth century[60] is of some significance, as it implies that the cultivators of the highlands (where the iron ore is found) had been using the hoe for some time.

The only descriptions we have of Nyanja highland agriculture date from after the beginning of immigration into the area and cannot therefore be taken as direct evidence for earlier Nyanja practices. However, in all probability they approximate to what had been happening for some decades. Livingstone describes a hoe-less agriculture in 'woodland' areas for the mid-nineteenth century:

> "the trees are cut down with their little axes of soft native iron, trunks and branches are piled up and burnt, and the ashes spread on the soil. The corn is planted among the standing stumps which are left to rot."[61]

He goes on, however, to describis planted among thation, for which are left to rot."[61] the hoe was vital and in which land preparation was more lengthy.[62] Livingstone does not indicate which of these agricultural systems was predominant, but by the 1870s it would appear that some kind of bush-fallow system involving the clearing of grass was common to the Shire Highlands. John Buchanan describes it in detail, and his description accords with oral testimonies. Early in the dry season the men marked out the ground they intended to cultivate, and with axes cut down any standing trees to about three feet from

the ground. The branches were lopped off, piled into heaps and burnt. Then the women hoed the grass, piling it also into heaps and setting fire to it. These heaps were then covered with vegetation and soil and left to smoulder slowly into ashes. Planting began once the first rains had fallen and maize, sorghum or millet were planted in these mounds, together with pumpkins and beans. In the case of maize cultivation, the field was hoed when the maize plants were about six inches high, and again when they were about three feet high.63/

Maize, though not the main cereal crop until the early twentieth century, was more common in the wetter highland areas than in the valley, and this method of planting maize in mounds (matuto), with beans and other crops, was an attempt to maintain soil fertility and minimise erosion.

If this description of nineteenth-century Nyanja agricultural practices is correct, then it would lend weight to Livingstone's fond description of Mang'anja or Nyanja agriculture as a pursuit involving all members of the 'extended family':

> "All the people of a village turn out to labour in the fields. It is no uncommon thing to see men, women and children hard at work, with the baby lying close by beneath a shady bush."64/

Nyanja agriculture was indeed relatively labour-intensive and would have required a substantial work input from all members of the household, over a considerable part of the year, particularly as dry-season gardens were also cultivated on the highland dambos. By all accounts it was a highly productive agriculture, rarely subject to drought, and frequently producing a surplus for barter.

Traditional methods of grain storage, including smoking, were highly efficient, and provided another insurance against famine.[65]

In the dry season male labour, and some female labour, were involved in the manufacture of iron goods. By the early nineteenth century Maravi ironware was famous for its high quality and was exported widely, thus involving the people of this region in long-distance trading networks.[66] Small deposits of relatively poor quality ore are found all over the Shire Highlands, with isolated concentrations of higher-grade ores.[67] The fact that ore was not found in the valley was the basis for a flourishing local trade between the cotton producers there and the iron producers on the hills. On the other hand, iron ore was so widely distributed in the highlands, and the skill of smelting so widely known, that there was no identifiable 'class' of iron smelters as was found elsewhere in Africa. In some places, where the ore was of a high grade, the industry was probably pursued on a large scale and involved the labour of a great many people over a short period.[68] In these cases a degree of organization was required above the usual household or matrilineage-based activities. In most cases, however, oral testimony supports Livingstone's description of iron-making as a small-scale industry common to every village. According to Livingstone, each village had its smelting house, charcoal burners and blacksmiths, manufacturing axes, spears, hoes, needles, arrow-heads, bracelets, and anklets, all of which were sold at what he regarded as low rates, in exchange for calico.[69] Informants describe the activity as a 'family enterprise' rarely employing outsiders. The hoes could be exchanged for chickens, but as almost every village had its smelter this exchange was limited.[70] It appears

then that there were a few areas of high grade ore where smelting was carried on on a large scale, and the products of these locations were widely traded. Elsewhere on the Shire Highlands iron-making was very much a domestic industry, periodically involving labour beyond the resources of the household, but rarely beyond the village or matrilineage.

The Nyanja of the highlands obtained cotton cloth from the Shire Valley in exchange for hoes and foodstuffs,[71] and by the nineteenth century they were also obtaining calico from the coast.[72] These articles, however, were still relatively exotic in mid-century, and the majority of people were clothed in bark-cloth.[73] Bark-cloth was made from the bark of the widely distributed mombo tree,[74] and was a male activity. The process of its manufacture took a couple of weeks to complete. Men would go and camp for days in the bush, would cut down a number of trees and chop them into six-foot lengths. They would then beat and peel off a length of bark, discarding the outer layer and retaining the inner part, which was carried home and steeped in water for a couple of days. Over the next few days the bark would be hammered and stretched, and then the resulting pieces would be sewn together to make clothing and blankets, which were distributed amongst the matrilineage.[75]

The people of the Shire Highlands obtained their salt from Lake Chilwa, or from the banks of the rivers draining into it, either by going there and manufacturing it themselves, or by obtaining it in exchange for food.[76] The same applied to fishing, which was sometimes undertaken by those on the highlands, but was the specialism of the Nyanja living near the lake, and to some

extent controlled by them. The kinship and economic ties between the Nyanja of the Shire Highlands and those of the Chilwa-Phalombe plain were very close.[77]

The Chilwa-Phalombe area, whilst less agriculturally favoured than the highlands, was the centre of important salt and fishing industries, as well as lying in the path of a number of long-distance trade routes (see map III). It is a low-lying plain, half of its area being taken up by Lakes Chilwa and Chiuta and their swamps. The ecology and economy of the area were and are influenced by the annual and long-term variations in the water level of Lake Chilwa. The long-term fluctuations have sometimes necessitated large-scale movements of population, as well as requiring a general economic adaptability in the inhabitants of the lake's environs. People living near the shores of the lake have had to cope with periodic flooding, as well as the occasional 'drying-up' of the lake itself.[78] Annually, the lake level fluctuates over a few feet. It is an enclosed lake and its waters are saline, becoming increasingly so in the dry season, when deposits of salty sand are left around its shores, thus providing the basis for the Chilwa salt industry.

The pre-colonial cultivators of Lake Chilwa grew millet and sorghum as their staples, and some rice as a wet-garden crop. The soils and vegetation here are varied.[79] There is an area of swamp around the lake, beyond which the land was originally wooded, but by the late nineteenth century the woodland was already less than virgin, due to shifting cultivation. The dambos and floodplains were areas of original grassland where game was plentiful, including large mammals.[80] Agriculture here was vulnerable to both

drought and flooding, and a local economy evolved which was diversified and provided insurance against natural disaster. The salt and fishing industries were particularly important in this role.

Lake Chilwa salt was highly prized in the nineteenth century. It was used as a barter good by Yao and Bisa traders, and was described in 1861 as being "equal to good table salt in England".[81] The salt-making season ran from May to October, and the industry was the province of older women. Salt-makers usually went down to the lakeshore, collected the saline soil, and took it back to their villages for manufacture. Sometimes, however, they would build temporary houses near the lake and make the salt on the spot, staying there for weeks at a time. In this case some of the product would be given as 'tribute' to the headman on whose land they were operating. The technology was very simple, requiring only an earthenware pot with holes in the bottom of it which would contain the soil and allow the saline solution to percolate through.[82] The senior woman of each matrilineage was responsible for salt-making, and distributed the product amongst her relatives.[83] Any surplus was bartered for goods from the highlanders. Maize in particular was a product which was not grown on the plain and could be obtained in this way.[84] Because of its high quality there was a market for Chilwa salt even in areas where salt could be obtained from reeds and grasses, such as the Upper Shire Valley, and there was a large market for it amongst Yao and Lomwe peoples living to the east of the lake. Given the value attached to this product it is notable that there are no traditions in the area of the industry having been organised on a large scale or significantly controlled by any political authority. It seems that the right of any individual to

make salt for herself and her family was widely acknowledged.

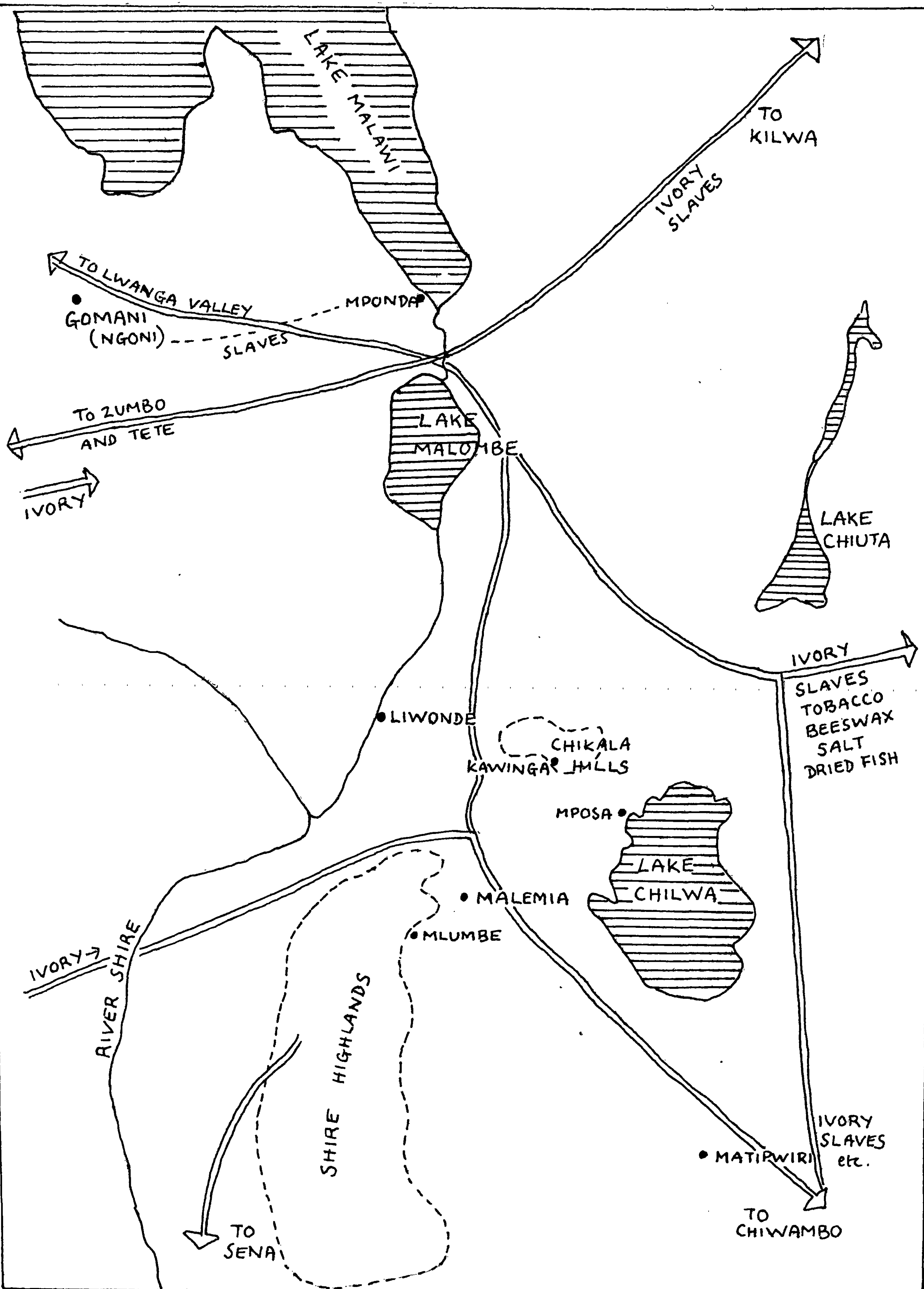
Men in this area spent much of their time involved in the fishing industry. The importance of this occupation to the Nyanja is attested to by the fact that for this industry alone there are strong traditions of chiefly control. The status of Nyanja chiefs living near the lake was tied up with their ritual control over the fishing season in Lake Chilwa. A number of Nyanja chiefs claim to have had the power to ensure good catches in the lake, and also to prohibit fishing at certain times to ensure that men did not spend too much time in this occupation to the detriment of agricultural production.[85] The fishermen made nets from local plants and used these in conjunction with canoes. They also used baskets and, when the water in the lake was low, spears and arrows. Fishing was organised around the matrilineage and the catch shared amongst its members.[86] Any surplus was traded for maize from the hills, and, as informants point out, this was particularly valuable in times of drought and famine on the plain.[87]

In the early nineteenth century, the Nyanja of the Shire Highlands, Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa-Phalombe plain had a diversified and decentralised economy. On the highlands especially, agriculture was pursued energetically and 'new' crops such as maize, rice and cassava were supplementing the older staples of sorghum and millet to support a relatively dense population and provide a surplus for trade. Within the region there was a lively trade in foodstuffs and other articles. In particular, hoes from the highlands were traded for cotton and cloth from the Shire Valley, and salt from Lake Chilwa was traded widely. Ironware and salt were

also traded over long distances.

Nyanja testimonies are possibly misleading on the subject of long-distance trading. With the decline of the Maravi state system it would appear that Nyanja political leaders relinquished all control over long-distance trade, and that increasingly the Nyanja were involved in such trading only passively. There are no strong traditions of long-distance trading, or even of great value having been attached to the main article of this trade - ivory. The Nyanja associate involvement in this wider economic system with "the coming of the Yao", though it is clear from other sources that they must have been directly or indirectly affected by it before the first permanent Yao settlers arrived in the late eighteenth century. The Nyanja inhabited an ivory-rich area which formed a crossroads for a number of long-distance trade routes used by Yao and Bisa traders (see map III). Apart from providing the main article of trade, ivory, the area also supplied important barter goods for the traders - hoes, salt, fish and other foodstuffs. On the surface it would appear that the Nyanja were more interested in maintaining a self-sufficient and resilient domestic economy than in involving themselves in risky entrepreneurial activities. However, the very productivity of the Nyanja economy may have been due in part to the frequent presence in the area of traders and the market they provided for barter goods. The Nyanja were in effect "servicing" the business of long-distance trade, whilst having little share in the sale and profit of the main trade. This fact was to become increasingly significant as the nineteenth century wore on. Having little direct contact with the coast, the Nyanja had restricted access to new technologies and "fashions", so that by the mid-century Yao and

NINETEENTH-CENTURY TRADE ROUTES



Nyanja cultures were moving apart. The Yao aristocracy were using flintlock weapons, built square houses, dressed in Arab garb, took their tobacco as snuff and worshipped Allah. The Nyanja aristocracy (such as it was) used bows and arrows, built round houses, wore home-spun cloth and some imported calico, smoked their tobacco and were deeply involved in local and regional cults.

Whilst the Nyanja of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were primarily 'subsistence cultivators', it should be clear from the foregoing description that this in no way implies the insularity of households, or even of matrilineages, and that 'subsistence' could be attained in a variety of different ways. Whilst the nuclear family or household was the main unit of agricultural production, and the matrilineage the main unit of industrial activity, both of these units worked within the context of regional exchange. A 'typical' Lake Chilwa household, for instance, in calculating its subsistence needs, would do so in the knowledge that foodstuffs could be obtained from the highlanders in exchange for fish or salt. 'Subsistence' in this case would not necessarily mean providing all the household's food requirements by its own direct labour. Similarly, the Nyanja of the highlands employed labour-intensive agricultural techniques in the knowledge that there was a market for surplus foodstuffs. Exchange, then, was a vital part of the Nyanja economy.

The Nyanja describe this pre-Yao exchange in terms of gift-giving between relatives. Whilst being vital economically, the exchange of goods also reinforced kinship links. For instance, marriage between members of the Mwale clan on the highlands and members of the Milasi clan near Lake Chilwa appears to have been

frequent, and it would have been within the framework of these marital links that salt and fish from the lake were exchanged for maize from the highlands. Any 'exotic' goods which a Nyanja chief might obtain were distributed in the same way - to fulfil kinship obligations, or obligations towards ritual leaders such as Bimbi. The main indication of a powerful chief was in the number of dependants he had. People were wealth, and in order to maintain a following incipient fission and dissent had to be forestalled through the distribution of goods.

The Yao migrations

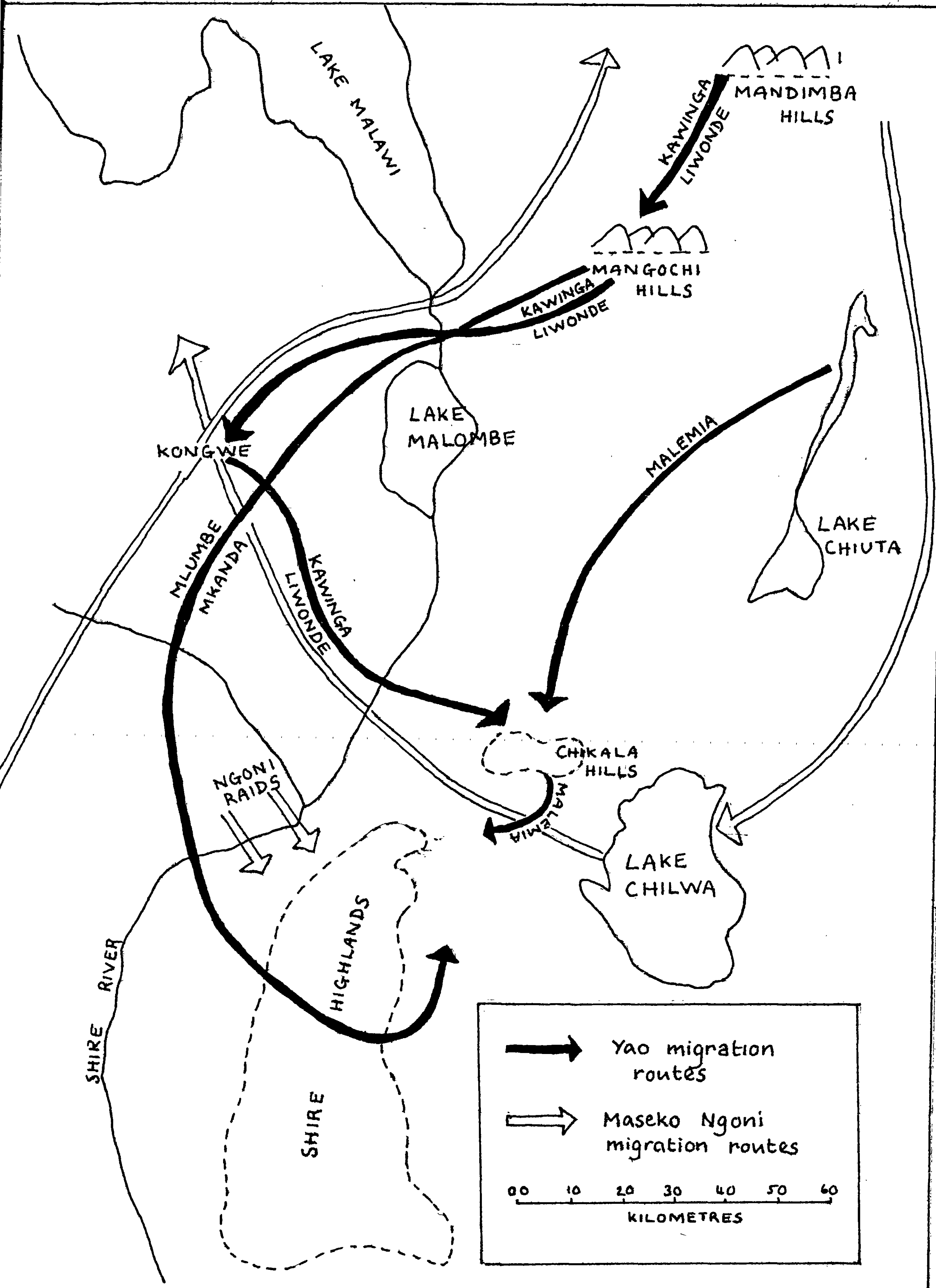
From the late eighteenth century onwards, groups of people who identified themselves as 'Yao' moved in from the east and settled first around the southern end of Lake Malawi, and then further south in the Upper Shire Valley and the Shire Highlands. In order to understand the nature of this immigration and the identity of the immigrants, we need to go back briefly to the events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Mozambique.[88]

In the sixteenth century the Yao lived around 'Yao hill' between the Lucheringo and Luambula rivers in Mozambique. Their neighbours to the south-west were the Nyanja, who had migrated there in the course of the expansion of the Maravi state system, and to the south-east, the Lomwe-Makua. By the early seventeenth century, the Yao had spread out to occupy a more extensive territory, settling on a number of hills from which sub-sections of the group later took their names. The structure and organisation of Yao society prior to this dispersal does not feature in the traditions of Yao people now living in Southern Malawi, but is described

in Yohanna Abdallah's collection of traditions, first published in 1919.[89] This is a major source for Alpers' description of Yao economy and society at this time, and little can yet be added to this picture. The Yao at Yao hill were primarily agriculturalists, growing sorghum as their staple. They hunted and fished, made salt from local grasses, and manufactured bark cloth. One section of the Yao, the Chisi, formed an exclusive caste of iron-workers.[90]

Shortly after their dispersal from Yao hill, probably in the early seventeenth century, the Yao began trading to Kilwa and major changes took place in Yao society as a result. Alpers notes that the Yao originally became traders due to the scarcity of good quality salt in the area which they inhabited, and this would have driven them east to the coast and west to Nyanja country.[91] Webster speculates that the Yao were also supplying neighbouring peoples - the Lomwe-Makua (referred to by the Yao as "Nguru"), and the Eastern Nyanja, with this product, and that in the course of the seventeenth century the Yao language gained dominance as the language of trade amongst all three of these groups.[92] There is substantial evidence from oral sources that both Nyanja and Lomwe peoples became assimilated to Yao society at this time through intermarriage, and adopted a Yao cultural identity, whilst retaining their original clan names (some of which they shared with the Yao).[93] By the late seventeenth century the Yao were the principal ivory traders at Kilwa,[94] and were energetic entrepreneurs, travelling well inland to the Luangwa valley to tap rich ivory resources there. Yao society was a multi-ethnic conglomerate, the stability of which depended on economic prosperity.

Drought, famine and the warfare which accompanied these, caused



YAO AND NGONI MIGRATION ROUTES

a serious interruption to Yao economic growth in the last years of the eighteenth century. Not only were the Yao severely hit by famine, but their trading rivals the Makua-Lomwe, who were equipped with guns, invaded Yao territory looking for food.[25] Yao society fell apart and old ethnic origins came to the fore.[26] The subsequent 'Yao migration' into Malawi is best seen as the movements of different ethnic groups which were sometimes rivals, and which shared only a general cultural (and possibly primarily linguistic) identity as 'Yaos'.

The Yao of Nyanja origins (known as the "Adowito")[27] were the first to move westwards into the area inhabited by their distant Nyanja kindred. This was in the late eighteenth century, but prior to the 1790s. It was the movement, in small groups, of a starving and displaced people, and not a military invasion. These people were still fleeing from "Nguru" attacks and were initially dependent on their hosts for food. They were divided amongst themselves into clan or kindred groupings.[28] The first to enter the region were the Banda kindred led by Somba, and these were followed by the Milanzi kindreds of Mlumbe and Mpama.

The second major group to move westwards a few years later was the Yao of Lomwe origin, belonging to the Mbewe clan, and led by Mkata and Kawinga.[29] The Mbewe had developed a strong militaristic tradition. They clashed with the Yao of Nyanja origin in the Mangochi hills, displacing the latter further south into the Shire Highlands (see map IV). The Yao of Nyanja origin scattered in small groups, settling peacefully with the 'indigenous' Nyanja on the basis of clan identification, and inter-marrying with them. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, relations between these

Yao-ised Nyanja and their hosts had begun to sour as the Yao regained their cultural and economic confidence and increasingly entered the slave trade.[100]

Meanwhile the 'Yao migration' continued. Between 1830 and 1845 Msamala and Malemia, of the Milanzi-Phiri and Mwale clans respectively, moved into the region. Both of these groups were originally of Nyanja origin. After clashing with Mkata, Msamala settled at Nasenga. Malemia settled around the Chikala Hills, having entered the region via Lake Chilwa (see map IV).

A combination of Mbewe Yao aggression and Ngoni migrations[101] through the region caused further population movements and political upheavals. In 1867-8 the Mbewe chief, Kawinga, attacked Msamala who moved to Mbembwe, while Mkanda and Mpama were driven south to Chiradzulu and Mulanje by the Ngoni. In the 1870s the Ngoni were once more instrumental in causing Yao movements. In 1875 they attacked Kawinga at Kongwe, causing him to flee across the river to Chikala, thereby displacing Malemia who moved to Domasi in the territory of Nyani, a Nyanja chief (see map IV).

By 1880, the Mbewe Yao controlled a large area roughly comprising the present day Machinga district. Further south, the Yao of Nyanja origins maintained a somewhat shaky hegemony over most of the country now comprising Zomba, Chiradzulu, Blantyre and Mulanje districts.

Yao society and economy 1700-1800

It is difficult to describe the structure of Yao society in the eighteenth century without projecting backwards information

from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries - a dubious exercise given the immense changes which had taken place over that time.[102] Yohanna Abdallah, in a series of recorded 'traditions', describes Yao society as it was before the coming of the ivory and slave trades. According to him, the Yao were primarily agriculturalists who supplemented their diet by small-scale hunting and fishing. As Alpers has already noted, Abdallah's description implies that Yao society was self-consciously stratified even before Yao involvement in long-distance trading.[103] Abdallah describes how certain forms of dress were restricted to 'nobles' and chiefs, the latter monopolising the wearing of serval skins and woven cloth.[104] There were also those status-seeking entrepreneurs who, "cleverer than their fellows", would plant cotton, then brew beer and invite their friends to come and perform the labour-intensive tasks of cleaning the cotton and making thread. Once this had been done, the owner of the cotton would weave it into cloth and "give it to the nobles and great ones to wear".[105] In marked contrast to Nyanja traditions on the same subject, Abdallah claims that iron forgers amongst the Yao (the Wachisi) were an exclusive, wealthy caste, held in great esteem.[106] There is no contemporary information for kinship structures amongst the Yao, and little on political structure except for Abdallah's comments on the reverence shown to chiefs.

We are on slightly surer ground when discussing Yao involvement in long-distance trading and its implications for Yao society. Sending a trading caravan to the coast was no mean operation. A caravan had to be large because of the need to defend itself militarily. It was away for months and sometimes years, and this had a profound effect on the society it left behind. A successful

trading operation required a high degree of organisation and commercial expertise. The Yao were manifestly successful traders, and within their society the image of the traveller and trader acquired great prestige, as did the exotic goods associated with them.

Traditions agree that hunting parties and trading caravans amongst the Yao were organised by chiefs, though the chiefs rarely travelled themselves, preferring to send their nephews or sons as representatives.[107] The measure of chiefly control over the trade, however, may have varied from place to place and time to time. Some traditions emphasise the relative autonomy of the hunters and traders. The hunter who had shot the elephant from which the ivory had been obtained was said to own that ivory (apart from the ground tusk which was given to the chief on whose territory the elephant had been found). Only on returning from the coast was he under the obligation to share the profits of its sale with the chief who had organised the caravan.[108] Some traditions emphasise the autonomy of the traders which sprang from their "magical" powers, necessary to embark on such a dangerous business as long-distance trading. These traders, the achinahola, were not under chiefly control, they were "magicians who multiplied the numbers in the caravans to three or four times greater than they were. This made the enemy fear to attack them. The people created appeared to carry fancy loads to deceive the enemy".[109] Those who were anxious to have a share in this trade and to obtain exotic goods would offer themselves to the traders as porters, and receive a share of the goods in return.[110]

Amongst the Yao in the eighteenth century a clear and visible distinction emerged between those men who had travelled to the coast

and those who had not. This preoccupation with visible, material signs of wealth may help explain how Yao society achieved, temporarily, a stable multi-ethnicity - the identification of an individual as Yao, Nyanja or Lomwe may have been less important than his ability to talk the language of the coast, his possession of a pole-bed, and the squareness of his house.[111/] Kambuwa describes the departure of a trading caravan:

> "On the day of departure the boys involved sang songs happily, so much so that those remaining were ashamed of their cowardice and some of them used to hide themselves. Trumpets were blown and girls mingled with the young men, chanting heroic songs. This was because the young women knew that the men were going to amass fortunes for them as well. Some of the songs which they sang and which brought shame on the cowards went like this:
>
> "Remain, Remain
Remain you who deal with beans.
There is a man who has given up a journey
Thinking too much about food
And white beans in the plate.
He takes water and drinks." [112/]

Some Yao men became almost permanent exiles at the coast in the position of middlemen. Anyone who spoke good Swahili and who had a thorough knowledge of trade could become a dobadoba, who guided the caravans to the merchants on their arrival at Kilwa or Quelimane, and took a cut of the proceeds of the business transacted. A dobadoba could become very rich in this way and make an impressive return home:

> "At the end of two or three years he would come home very rich and he had to hire carriers to carry his goods."[113/]

Considerable diplomatic skills and political knowledge were needed to conduct trade successfully over as wide an area as the Yao covered. Yao chiefs must have had a wide network of political

contacts and a thorough knowledge of current affairs. According to Kambuwa, an efficient system existed for relaying information and messages. During the whole time the caravan was away the people at home would hear news of their progress and of which chiefdoms and villages they had passed through.[114] The caravan would carry with it quantities of goods to be used as gifts for chiefs whose territories they were passing through. In exchange for these gifts the chiefs would guarantee them safe passage, and sometimes induce these prestigious visitors to stay with generous offers of food.[115]

As Alpers has noted, the information we have on the organisation of Yao long-distance trading in the eighteenth century implies at the very least that a considerable amount of economic and political cooperation existed within that society.[116] We do not know, however, whether this pre-dated Yao involvement in the ivory trade and was a pre-condition of its growth, or whether this was an outcome of involvement in the trade.

The absence of men for such long periods and in such a dangerous occupation placed certain strains on Yao society and also had implications for the structure of the domestic economy and the division of labour within it. Though we have no conclusive contemporary information for this, it would seem likely that, as in the late nineteenth century, Yao society in the eighteenth century was organised similarly to Nyanja society, being centred on the matrilineally defined sorority group, the mbumba, the village being the geographical expression of this group, and the village headman the head of the mbumba. As Mitchell noted much later, this was an unstable unit, as any friction within the matrilineage could cause a younger brother of the headman to break away and

form his own village - something that would be resisted by the headman, whose status was tied up with the number of people under his care.[117] The absence of some men from the matrilineage for long periods could exacerbate these tensions and provide opportunities for disloyalty on the part of their own matrilineal relatives and their wives. Fear of the disease, ndāka, which could only be transmitted and contracted by members of the same matrilineage, was one form of social control which had probably existed prior to involvement in long-distance trading, but which was now utilised in this new context.[118] There was considerable social pressure on wives to remain loyal to their husbands in their absence, and a purifying ceremony lasting several days took place on the return of the trading party to its home village.[119]

Trading was primarily a dry-season activity, but, as many sources indicate, trading caravans would frequently be absent for a year or more. This, combined with the publicly disdainful view of agriculture held by Yao men, meant that food production increasingly became the work of women, and that it was centred more on the matrilineage or sorority group as the cooperative unit than on the "household". Yao traditions stress the lack of attention paid to agriculture in Yao society as compared with Nyanja society. It is possible, though this cannot be substantiated, that the absence of male labour for clearing new land had led to the cultivation of increasingly infertile soils in the eighteenth century and that this contributed to the famine which propelled the first Yao immigrants into Southern Malawi. As traders, the Yao would have had early access to 'new' crops such as maize, cassava and rice from the coast, but it was probably not until the late nineteenth century

that these were fully exploited. It would appear that the Yao concentration on long-distance trading and the status accorded to trade in Yao society had resulted, by the late eighteenth century, in a somewhat distorted economic structure in which agriculture was given little emphasis. That the Yao were involved in "unequal exchange"[120/] is less important than the fact that their concentration on exchange undermined their self-sufficiency and made them more, not less, vulnerable to natural disaster.

In the course of the eighteenth century, Yao society had evolved into a complex, multi-ethnic society whose unity and stability were based on a hazardous form of economic growth. Relationships and status in this society were probably more often then not expressed in the conventional terms of matrilineal kinship. 'Kinship', real or fictive, was a mould in which many diverse elements could be placed - Nyanja, Lomwe and Makua could be assimilated because of their 'kinship' with the Yao; large virilocal lineages could be built up from domestic slaves who became 'kin'; trading chiefs could express 'kinship' with distant chiefs whose territory they wished to traverse; and the dobadoba at the coast could use their 'kinship' with the leaders of caravans in order to secure trade. Beneath the surface, however, fundamental changes were taking place in Yao society which were to have a profound effect on the history of the region as a whole in the nineteenth century. Status in this society was increasingly associated with the possession of exotic goods, and the "acquired" status of the successful hunter or trader did not always coincide with the status ascribed according to the rules of matrilineal kinship and succession. Furthermore, an individual's 'ethnic' identity was no longer only inherited from his forebears but was fluid and depended on other variables.

Being a 'Yao' man primarily involved speaking Yao, and possibly Swahili, and possessing the goods and knowledge associated with long-distance trading. The economy became distorted in favour of trade. Agricultural production became less and less a 'Yao male' occupation and more and more the realm of women and, possibly, domestic slaves. The "household" became an unstable economic and social unit as the senior male member might be absent for long periods.

We have no direct evidence for a 'traditionalist' reaction to these changes, but we do know that they were not effected without a certain amount of strain and tension. Elaborate rituals were devised in order to maintain a stable social structure, in particular, in an attempt to preserve the 'household' through ensuring marital fidelity. There is also reason to believe that the multi-ethnicity of Yao society was extremely fragile, with different groups vying to be regarded as the 'true Yao'.[121/] A Nyanja man may have looked and acted thoroughly 'Yao', but he could sometimes still be identified by his regional accent (hence adowito) and he may have maintained his kinship links with 'true' Nyanja elsewhere.

Yao and Nyanja

The first Yao to move into what is now Southern Malawi were those of Nyanja origin whose position in Yao society may have always been somewhat marginal. This, combined with the fact that they were fleeing from famine and warfare, led to an initially peaceful settlement of the immigrants amongst their Nyanja 'kin'. The Nyanja political system was highly decentralised by this time and this would have aided the peaceful settlement of the immigrants, Nyanja chiefs and headmen welcoming them both as dependants whose

settlement in their territories would enhance their prestige, and as strangers whose acquaintance with long-distance trading was potentially valuable to them. As the nineteenth century wore on they would also have been seen as allies against the slave raiders.

Later immigrants we know to have been at least superficially culturally distinct from their Nyanja hosts, but in the case of these first groups it is not clear how overtly 'Yao' they were. As refugees they may have played down their 'Yaoness' and emphasised the clan names and traditions which they shared with their hosts, but it seems that some of the cultural changes they had undergone in their eighteenth-century absorption into Yao society were deep-seated. For instance, whilst informants stress that inter-marriage between the first Yao and their Nyanja hosts was common, they also emphasise that initiation ceremonies, on which custom differed, were always held separately.[122/] Similarly, when problems arose between the immigrants and their Nyanja hosts, it was largely through the newcomers' peculiarly 'Yao' attitude to food production. Mpama's occupation of Chiradzulu, for instance, arose after one of his men had joined in a Nyanja beer party without having contributed to the hoeing for which it was a reward. This incensed the Nyanja chief, Kamunga, and precipitated a minor war.[123/]

Both Yao and Nyanja testimonies stress the initial economic dependence of the Yao on their hosts, which gradually evolved into economic control. The new immigrants brought little in the way of agricultural innovation to the region. The only crop widely held to have come from the Yao is the groundbean (<u>nsama</u>), which may have been a famine food.[124/] Many informants hold that the Yao brought no crops with them: "They were running from war, so they couldn't

take crops with them - they found them here".[125] Somewhat surprisingly, it is also held that the Yao were not familiar with maize before they came into the region and found it being cultivated by the Nyanja.[126] The Nyanja taught the Yao how to make canoes and how to fish, though throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century fishing remained an occupation which was strongly identified with the Nyanja as a group.[127] The Yao also served an apprenticeship in iron-working. Possibly because of the exclusivity of the Wachisi as an iron-making group, the first Yao immigrants appear not to have possessed this skill, and were taught how to make hoes by the Nyanja. In time, however, Yao chiefs began to manipulate and control the Nyanja iron industry:

> "There were specialists who were invited by the chiefs to make hoes. The specialists were Nyanja. They made the hoes from a special kind of soil. These specialists were paid for their services by the chief."[128]

By the mid-nineteenth century the Yao chiefs of Nyanja origin were in a position of political and economic dominance over their Nyanja hosts in the Shire Highlands. Their trading contacts were particularly important in maintaining this dominance by providing them with arms and ammunition, commodities to which the Nyanja had much more limited access. Around Lake Chilwa some Nyanja groups maintained their autonomy, and some avoided Yao control by refusing to be 'assimilated' and practising a policy of in-marriage. Over most of the area, however, Yao chiefs had established the important political and economic right to claim the ground tusk of any elephant killed in the territory.[129]

The political and economic control exerted by the Yao of Nyanja origin was always relatively shaky. There are no strong

traditions of tribute-giving to these chiefs and, as the first missionaries reported in the 1860s, the Shire Highlands was covered by a jigsaw of minor chieftaincies, both Yao and Nyanja.[130] The crucial factor was their weakness in the face of third and fourth parties - the Mbewe Yao and the Maseko Ngoni. The Mbewe Yao chiefdoms will be discussed in more detail later, but here it is important to note that their military power, centralising tendencies and energetic involvement in the slave trade posed a threat to the earlier Yao immigrants in the Shire Highlands who were forced into some degree of cooperation with the Nyanja. This was especially the case after 1875 when the Mbewe chief Kawinga set up his headquarters at Chikala and came to dominate the trade routes which crossed the Chilwa plain. The presence of the Maseko Ngoni and their raids into the Shire Highlands also fostered a degree of cooperation between the Yao of Nyanja origin and the Nyanja inhabitants. The Nyanja were impressed by Yao defensive abilities and, according to some traditions, voluntarily placed themselves under Yao leadership.[131]

By the late 1870s the Yao, and in particular the Mbewe Yao, had regained their eighteenth-century confidence. Nyanja were being absorbed into Mbewe Yao society in much the same way as the ancestors of the Mbewe chiefs had once been assimilated as 'Yaos' in earlier centuries. Yao dynasties were consolidating themselves as trading elites with a distinct material culture. However, this new prosperity was bought within the socially disruptive context of the slave trade. Whilst it may have been 'traditional' for Yao men to established large virilocal lineages through the acquisition of slave wives, these slaves now had an exchange value and their

absorption into the kinship structure of their owners was now much less certain. Within some Yao chiefly families the tensions brought by wealth acquired in this way were expressed overtly in warfare between different factions, in which the Ngoni were often brought in to play a role. In particular, the issue of inheritance brought about conflict between sons and the legitimate heirs in a matrilineal society, the nephews.[132/] In other families these strains were not so clear, or they were resolved by according a certain amount of independent status to sons. It would appear that the Mbewe Yao were particularly successful in avoiding the more extreme forms of internecine quarrels which affected the Mponda chieftaincy.

In the context of these developments in Yao society it is notable that some respect was maintained for 'the owners of the soil', the Nyanja. Not only were they, in some instances, made councillors to the Yao chiefs,[133/] but they were also looked to for their ritual authority. Despite their access to material wealth and their involvement in a 'new' religion, Islam, the Yao chiefs relied on Nyanja leaders to appease the ancestors and ensure tha t the rains fell. So it was that the most powerful Mbewe chiefs established a relationship of ritual dependence with the Nyanja rainmaker, Bimbi.[134/]

Economic and Ecological Distortion, 1860-1890

Travellers' accounts of the 1860s to 1890s indicate that the economic and political developments of the nineteenth century had wrought changes in the physical appearance and ecology of the area, once inhabited only by Nyanja agriculturalists. Both human and animal populations were more concentrated than they had previously

been, and the movements of the human population were those associated with warfare rather than with the exploitation of natural resources. Agriculture was so disrupted by warfare that a drought, which in normal circumstances might cause hardship but not severe famine, now proved disastrous.[135] Both the Mbewe Yao chiefs and the Ngoni attempted to organise and intensify food production, but the main food producers of the region, the Nyanja, were now concentrated in agriculturally disadvantageous places of refuge. Local exchange in foodstuffs and other products was now inextricably linked with a wider system of economic exchange whose basic commodity was slaves (see map IV). Slaves could be exchanged for trade goods, but could also be bought for food or sold for food depending on local circumstances, and with far-reaching social consequences.

Agricultural production did not feature very high in the value systems of either the Yao or the Ngoni. However, both of these groups, once they had established political control over their respective areas, began to take some interest in food production.

Gomani's Ngoni were settled on the highlands of Ntcheu, with outposts in the Upper Shire Valley. The highlands were tsetse free and therefore suitable for their cattle-rearing economy. Travellers reported the area to be densely populated in the 1870s, with large villages concentrated on hilltops.[136] Maize and millet were grown intensively using Chewa slave-labour in work parties, and in this way the Ngoni seem to have often produced a food surplus. In the case of the Ngoni the extra labour input required to maintain yields in an area of high population concentration, was no constraint. One Nyanja informant said that the Ngoni always had good harvests and frequently came to exchange their millet for salt and

fish from the valley.[137] Yao informants claim that their ancestors would sometimes go and labour on Ngoni fields in order to obtain food.[138] Those Ngoni who settled on the lower, tsetse-infested land, had to modify their economic structure as cattle-rearing was not possible here. They concentrated instead on rearing smaller domestic animals and on cultivating cotton - a skill they had acquired from their Chewa subjects.[139]

In general, the impression given by travellers' reports and oral testimony is one of agricultural prosperity in Ngoni areas. It must be borne in mind, however, that European observers were always easily impressed by intensive forms of agriculture, even though these might be less efficient and more ecologically damaging than 'slash and burn'. The Ngoni economy of the late nineteenth century was in fact a war economy, relying on raiding and on slave labour to maintain its levels of production. Furthermore, the concentrated population and intensive agriculture were ultimately harmful to the ecology of the area. Laws noted in 1878 that Chikuse's area was denuded of trees and that the population used maize roots for fuel.[140]

As we have seen, the Yao immigrants were not renowned for their agricultural expertise - they were known in the region as buyers of food rather than as producers of a surplus. However, the Mbewe chiefs, Kawinga and Liwonde, appear to have attempted to control food production as part of their overall policy to control the economies of their territories. These chiefs developed the custom of holding harvest ceremonies and exacted food tribute from their subjects.[141] According to some informants, Liwonde used the food tribute he was given to feed the poor and visitors. It also enabled

him to control production and, possibly, quality, for seed was distributed by him which was selected from the tribute food.[142] In Liwonde's chiefdom "each village had people who got high yields, and these were the people on whom the survival of the village depended". The village headman reported the names of these individuals to the chief.[143]

Such testimonies imply that the Yao chiefs were making a concerted effort to control and increase food production. Other evidence, however, leads us to believe that this was not a particularly energetically pursued or successful policy. Some informants maintain that it was the custom that "if the maize harvest of the previous year met with the new harvest, the old harvest was burnt".[144] If this custom were rigidly followed it would of course have meant that very little food was stored from year to year and would have increased vulnerability to famine. Perhaps more reliable, however, is the widely held view that the Yao were more often than not short of food and that their economic system functioned on the assumption that a certain amount of food would always have to be obtained by raiding or exchange. This posed relatively few problems in the region initially because of the recurrent surplus produced by the Nyanja, but by the end of the nineteenth century warfare and slave-raiding had had severe effects on agricultural production, so that in many years there was probably an overall food deficit in the region.

By 1875 a large proportion of the Nyanja population had either taken to the hilltops, or fled to the islands of Lake Chilwa. Nyanja informants around Zomba report that their parents and grandparents lived on the higher slopes of Zomba Mountain, and some on

the summit, where they cultivated maize, millet and sweet potatoes, and attempted to avoid Yao and Ngoni raids.[145] As early as 1862, Livingstone remarked on how this unnatural population distribution was affecting agricultural production and increasing vulnerability to famine. In former droughts, "all the people flocked from the hills down to the marshes, which are capable of yielding crops of maize in less than three months, at any time of the year", but since the onset of slave raiding people were now afraid to move down to these areas.[146]

After the Ngoni raid of 1884 which extended over the whole of the Shire Highlands, population distribution was more uneven than ever. In 1887 Last reported that the fertile lower slopes of Zomba Mountain were deserted,[147] and Hetherwick reported that the Upper Shire - Chilwa area was full of abandoned villages, whilst an estimated 3,000 Nyanja were concentrated on Chisi Island in Lake Chilwa, and large numbers were living in pile villages built on the edges of Lakes Chiuta and Malombe.[148] John Buchanan and Henry Drummond painted a very similar picture of the area in the 1880s, and the latter remarked on the increase in the game population in those areas now abandoned by human populations.[149] In the 1860s Livingstone had reported that tsetse was prevalent in the Shire Valley below Zomba Mountain, and that abandoned villages there were full of the tracks of buffalo, elephant and antelope, concluding that "wild animals have now taken possession of what had lately been the abodes of men living in peace and plenty".[150] By the 1880s the whole of the Shire-Chilwa area abounded in game but had been largely abandoned by human populations.

The economy of the region now hinged ultimately on the sale of

slaves at the coast,[151] though ivory, wax, tobacco and rubber were also saleable commodities there. The Yao continued to trade in ivory, selling it at Quelimane in exchange for guns, gunpowder, cloth, beads, coastal salt and other trade goods. They took these goods to Ngoni territory and exchanged them for slaves (mostly Chewa or Chipeta people acquired in raids, and mostly women), whom their chiefs married or sold to slave traders, depending on the prevailing economic circumstances.[152] These wives were known by the Yao as "elephant wives", for they had been bought with the proceeds of the ivory trade.[153] Male slaves, when not sold, were used to strengthen the fighting power of the Mbewe chiefs.[154] The offspring of a female slave took the father's clan name, and the Mbewe clan increased disproportionately in numbers compared to the other clans in the Mbewe chiefdoms.[155] It was not unusual for Yaos to enslave fellow Yaos in the course of raids and disputes such as the war between Kawinga and Malemia, so that the 'Yao' were the victims as well as the profiteers of this trade.[156] The Nyanja, confined to their defensive outposts, had nothing to exchange but themselves.[157] As defence became a priority for Nyanja leaders so the necessity increased for them to sell their own people in exchange for guns and gunpowder, and to collaborate with powerful groups. The Nyanja saw trade primarily in defensive terms. One Nyanja informant described how elephants were killed and the ivory used to "buy off" whichever group seemed the most threatening at the time.[158]

In the course of the nineteenth century, the economy of this area was altered by an increasing involvement in long-distance trade, a trade dominated by immigrants from the East. By the end of the

century this trade was centred on the procurement and export of slaves. The social disruption and warfare which accompanied this trade undermined the production of foodstuffs and altered the 'domestic' division of labour amongst the societies inhabiting this region. The immigrants established their political and economic dominance through the use of firearms and the distortion of the traditional kinship system, although the degree of centralisation and 'assimilation' which they achieved varied from place to place. Political instability, social disruption and economic distortion characterised this area when European settlers began to arrive in this area in the 1870s.

Footnotes on Chapter 1

1/ The term 'Nyanja is here used to denote those people living in the Shire Highlands, Upper Shire Valley and around Lake Chilwa, who were once members of the Maravi state system, and who are closely related to the Chewa of Central Malawi and the Mang'anja of the Lower Shire Valley. Some writers have referred to these people as 'Chewa', but I have chosen to use the term' 'Nyanja', as this is how they refer to themselves.

For the divisions of the Maravi group of peoples see Mary Tew, People of the Lake Nyasa Region, published for the International Africa Institute, London, 1950.

2/ The decline of the Maravi state system and the political disunity of the Maravi in the nineteenth century have been described by a number of writers:

H.W. Langworthy, 'Central Malawi in the Nineteenth Century', in Macdonald (ed), From Nyasaland to Malawi, pp.1-43; and the same author in 'Conflict among Rulers in the History of Undi's Chewa Kingdom', Transafrican Journal of History, I, I, 1971, pp.1-23.

E.A. Alpers, 'The Mutapa and Malawi Political Systems to the Coming of the Ngoni Invasions', in T.O. Ranger (ed), Aspects of Central African History, London, 1968, pp.1-28.

Kings Mbacazwa Phiri has traced the decline of the Maravi state system and the different forms of political organisation which emerged as a result of this decline. According to Dr. Phiri, the Nyanja "simply reverted to the political organisation of the pre-Maravi period":

K.M. Phiri, 'The Chewa of Malawi in the early nineteenth century: an Assessment of the Decline of the Maravi Political System', Paper presented for the International Conference on Southern African History, at the National University of Lesotho, August 1977.

3/ The territorial religious cults of the Maravi state system were examined by W.H.J. Rangeley, and more recently and extensively by J.M. Schoffeleers:

W.H.J Rangeley, 'Mbona - the Rainmaker', NJ, VI, I, January 1953, pp.8-27.

'Two Nyasaland Rain Shrines - Makewana - Mother of all People', NJ, V,2, 1952, pp.31-50.

J.M. Schoffeleers, 'Symbolic and Social Aspects of Spirit Worship among the Mang'anja', D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1961.

'The Chisumphi and Mbona Cults in Malawi', paper presented to the Conference on the History of Central African Religious Systems, Lusaka, 1972.

'Crisis, Criticism and Critique: an Interpretative Model of Territorial Mediumship among the Chewa', Journal of Social Science, III, 1974, pp.74-80.

'The History and Political Role of the Mbona Cult among the Mang'anja', in T.O. Ranger and I. Kimambo (eds), The Historical Study of African Religion, London, 1972, pp.73-97.

(ed) Guardians of the Land, Gwelo, 1977, Introduction, Territorial Cults in Central Africa, pp.1-47.

The Bimbi shrine has only recently begun to be studied as part of this wider system of territorial cults:

J. Amanze, 'The Bimbi Cult and its Impact among the Chewa, Yao and Lomwe of the Upper Shire Valley', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of Sociology, Student Research Report, 12/5/80.
Newby. H. Kumwembe, 'The Development of the Mbewe Chiefdoms, c.1840-1915', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Student Research Seminar Paper, January 1978, pp.8-10.

4/ The Yao migration has been discussed by a number of writers including Rangeley, Alpers and Price, and more recently by participants in the Zomba History Project, whose research has led to a revision of the chronology of this migration:

W.H.J. Rangeley, 'The Amacinga Yao', NJ, XV,2, 1962, pp.40-70.
'The Ayao', NJ, XVI, I, 1963, pp.

Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.250-252.
'The Yao in Malawi: the importance of local research', in Pachai (ed), Early History, pp.168-178.

T. Price, 'Yao Origins', NJ, XVII, 2, 1964, pp.11-16.

For a revision of the chronology of Yao migrations see:

J.B. Webster, 'From Yao Hill to Mulanje Mountain: Ivory and Slaves and the Southern Expansion of the Yao', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Staff-Student Research Seminar Paper, November 1977.

K.M. Phiri has disputed this interpretation: K.M. Phiri, 'The Chewa of Zomba District and their Interaction with the "Mangochi" Yao from 1850-1900', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Staff-Student Research Seminar Paper, February 1978.

Violet Jhala's work with the genealogies collected both by Rangeley and by participants in the Zomba History Project seems to substantiate Webster's hypothesis of a migration beginning in the late eighteenth century:

V.L. Jhala, 'Machinga Destruction of the Maravi Empire', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Student Research Seminar Paper, May 1979.

The Lomwe migration has so far received relatively little attention from historians of the region:

C. Baker, 'A Note of Nguru Immigration to Nyasaland', NJ, XIV, 1 January, 1961, p.41.

T. Galligan, 'The Nguru Penetration into Nyasaland, 1892-1914', in Macdonald (ed), From Nyasaland to Malawi, pp.108-123.

5/ The migration and settlement of the Maseko Ngoni in Malawi was studied by W.H.J. Rangeley who collected a number of traditions on the subject which have been re-examined by Olivia Liwewe:

W.H.J. Rangeley, 'The Ngoni', Society of Malawi Journal, XIX, 2, 1966, pp.62-86 (being only a partial summing-up of his research contained in the Rangeley Papers held by the Society of Malawi, Blantyre).

Olivia M. Liwewe, 'The Maseko Ngoni from 1820 to 1896: a Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Rangeley Papers in the Light of some Secondary Sources', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Student Research Seminar Paper, February 1979.

The Ngoni of Nyasaland were studied by the anthropologist Margaret Read:

M. Read, The Ngoni of Nyasaland, International Africa Institute, London, 1956.

Children of their Fathers: Growing up among the Ngoni of Nyasaland, London, 1959.

'The Moral Code of the Ngoni and their former Military State', Africa, XI, 1938, pp.1-24

'Tradition and Prestige among the Ngoni', Africa, XI, 1936, pp.453-485.

Ian Linden has also written on the Maseko Ngoni:

I. Linden, 'The Maseko Ngoni at Domwe, 1870-1900', in Pachai (ed), Early History.

'Some Oral Traditions from the Maseko Ngoni', Society of Malawi Journal, XXIV, 2, 1971, pp.61-73.

6/ In recent census reports the Nyanja have been subsumed under the heading of 'Chewa'. In 1931, however, the Nyanja constituted 35% of the population of Zomba District.

Nyasaland Protectorate, Report on the Census of 1931, Zomba, 1932. Table Q.

7/ See Map II

8/ZHP/MV/19, Megan Vaughan with Krighton Kuchanga, Mpheta Village, T.A. Kawinga, Machinga District, 23/5/78.

9/ZHP/KMD/29, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Frederick Wazi Phiri, Mbalamanja Village, T.A. Mlumbe, Zomba District, 20/9/77

ZHP/KMD/9, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Lifa Chinawa Mbewe, Mbokwite Village, T.A. Mlumbe, Zomba District, 17/8/77.

J.A.K. Kandawire, Thangata: Forced Labour or Reciprocal Assistance? Blantyre, 1979, pp.103-126.

10/ZHP/MV/36, Megan Vaughan with Kustacio John Kanchewe, Chingondo Village, T.A. Mwambo, Zomba District, 6/9/78.

ZHP/MV/47, Megan Vaughan with Granger Matengula, Chingondo Village, 19/9/78.

ZHP/MV/38, Megan Vaughan with Edith Juma, Nambesa Village, T.A. Mwambo, Zomba District, 7/9/78.

ZHP/MV/43, Megan Vaughan with Whiskers Chakwana, Mbatata Village, T.A. Mwambo, Zomba District, 11/9/78.

11/Tew, Peoples of Lake Nyasa, pp.30-51.

12/This is discussed by Mitchell, Yao Village, p.71, and is mentioned in many oral testimonies.

13/ZPH/MV/4, Megan Vaughan with Hilda Mapata, Khadziko Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 31/1/78.

ZHP/MV/11, MeganVaughan with Elube Chikanda, Chikanda Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District, 9/5/78

ZHP/MV/30, Megan Vaughan with Lene Mtemula and Balile Matola, Lita Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 7/6/78.

14/Mary Douglas 'Matriliny and Pawnship in Central Africa', Africa, XXXIV, 4, 1964, pp.301-13.

15/Kings M. Phiri has described the structure of the Maravi state system in 'Chewa History in Central Malawi and the Use of Oral Tradition, 1600-1920', Ph.D. University of Wisconsin, 1975.

16/ ZHP/MV/18, Megan Vaughan with Roderick Graham Chipande, Nyani Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 22/5/78.

David and Charles Livingstone, Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries, and the Discovery of Lakes Shirwa and Nyasa, 1858-64, London, 1865, p.108.

17/ This contrasts with traditions of the economic control of chiefs in the Chewa kingdoms:

K.M. Phiri, 'Wealth and Power in the History of the Northern Chewa Chiefdoms, 1798-1895', M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972.

18/ ZHP/MV/21, Megan Vaughan with Che Nsinje, Nyani Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 25/5/78;

ZHP/MV/35, Report of a female initiation ceremony held at Nyani Village, 2/9/78.

19/ ZHP/MV/8, Megan Vaughan with Forster Nazinomwe, Nazinomwe Village, T.A. Kuntumanje, Zomba District, 10/2/78;

ZHP/MV/37, Megan Vaughan with Addison Chimbalanga, Chimbalanga Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District, 6/9/78;

ZHP/MV/5, Megan Vaughan with Malindima Muluta, Kabango Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 2/2/78.

J. Amanze, 'Bimbi Cult', p.15.

20/ To be distinguished from Group Village Headman Bimbi of Chief Kuntumanje's area, Zomba District, who claims an ill-defined kinship relationship with Bimbi of the Upper Shire.

21/ As outlined in Schoffeleers, 'Symbolic and Social Aspects', and Amanze, 'Bimbi Cult'.

22/ Phiri, 'The Chewa of Zomba District', p.4.

23/ "Bimbi was a dreamer. When he dreamt something he called the people and told them of it. What he dreamt always happened". ZHP/MV/5.

24/ Amanze, 'Bimbi Cult', p.16.

25/ As evidenced in one case of an intra-Nyanja dispute over land bordering Lake Chilwa, (and possibly involving fishing rights):

ZHP/MV/19; 'How the Yao came here', by G.V.H. Mpheta.

26/ Nyanja chiefs had rights over the allocation of land and over the allocation of 'pawns' in judicial disputes, both of which could be said to have conferred on them certain 'economic' privileges.

27/ J.G. Pike and G.T. Rimmington, Malawi: a Geographical Study, London, 1965, p.66.

28/ Ibid., p.25.

29/ In 1915, for instance, the Shire River ceased flowing except in the wet season, and sand barriers formed near Lake Malombe which were not destroyed by the rising flow of the river until 1935.

30/ Eleusine corocana.

31/ Sorghum vulgare.

32/ M.P. Miracle, Maize in Tropical Africa, Madison, 1966, p.208.

B.F. Johnston, The Staple Food Economies of Western Tropical Africa, Stanford, 1963, pp.91-93.

33/ For the classification of land use employed here see Ester Boserup, The Conditions of Agricultural Growth - The economics of agrarian change under population pressure. London, 1965, pp.15-18.

34/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.110.

35/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.457.

36/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.498.

37/ ZHP/KMD/24, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with William Chiembezeko Mbewe, Chimdikiti Village, T.A. Kalembo, Machinga District;

ZHP/KMD/3, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Juma Chilimba Phiri, Chibwana-Msamala Village, S.T.A. Sitola, Machinga District;

ZHP/KMD/10, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Skamu Napangwa Phiri, Namadidi Village, T.A. Mlumbe, Zomba District.

38/ Livingstone, Narrative, pp.110-12.

39/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.500.

40/ Boserup, Agricultural Growth, p.15.

41/ Schoffeleers draws different conclusions when discussing dambo cultivation in the Lower Shire Valley. He believes that the cultivation of these gardens leads to a high degree of mobility:

J.M. Schoffeleers, 'Trade, Warfare and Social Inequality in the Lower Shire Valley, 1590-1622', Society of Malawi Journal, XXXIII, 2 July, 1980, pp.6-25.

42/ "It takes much longer to hoe and weed one hectare than to clear one hectare superficially with axe and fire. When shortening of fallow leads to clearing of bush instead of secondary forest and hoeing and weeding become necessary, the latter operations add more to labour requirements per hectare than is saved by the fact that bush rather than secondary forest has to be cleared away". Boserup, Agricultural Growth, p.30.

43/ This was noted by Livingstone in the mid-nineteenth century. I am presuming that it would also apply to the eighteenth century when population densities were lower. Livingstone, Narrative, p.485.

44/ ZHP/KMD/21, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Frederick Cholinda Phiri, Phimbi Village, T.A. Msamala, Machinga District.

45/ ZHP/KMD/9; ZHP/KMD/12, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Thomas Njanje Phiri, Chiendausiku Village, T.A. Msamala, Machinga District.

46/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.112; R. Foskett (ed), The Zambesi Journal and Letters of John Kirk, 1858-1863, Edinburgh, 1965, Vol. I, p.129, p.185, p.240; Vol. II, p.355, p.363: Antonio Gamitto King

Kazembe and the Marave, Cheva, Bisa, Bembe, Lunda and other peoples of Southern Africa, being the Diary of the Portuguese Expedition to that Potentate in the Years 1831 and 1832, Translated by Ian Cunnison, Lisbon, 1960, Vol. I, p.82; H. Rowley, The Story of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, London, 1866, p.194; J.T. Last, 'A Journey from Blantyre to Angoniland and Back', Royal Geographical Society Proceedings, IX, 1887, p.177; N. Bennett and M. Ylvisaker (eds), The Central African Journal of Lovell J. Procter 1860-64, Boston, 1971, p.66.

47/ ZHP/KMD/3, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Juma Chilumba Phiri.

ZHP/KMD/10, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Skamu Napangwa Phiri, Namadidi Village, T.A. Mlumbe, Zomba District.

48/ ZHP/KMD/24.

49/ Cyperus alternifolius.

50/ ZHP/KMD/3; ZHP/KMD/2, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Ibu Makunganya, Nkula Village, S.T.A. Sitola, Machinga District;

ZHP/KMD/24; ZHP/KMD/16, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Molesi Kalonda Nsani, Sitola Village, S.T.A. Sitola, Machinga District;

ZHP/KMD/19, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Lucius Muwando Phiri, Khwalala Village, T.A. Msamala, Machinga District;

ZHP/KMD/14, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Kanichainche Phiri, Chimatiro Village, T.A. Msamala, Machinga District;

ZHP/KMD/33, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Roderick Graham Chipande and Frederick Bimbi, Nyani Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District.

51/ ZHP/KMD/21, Ndaka is also described in Mitchell, Yao Village, p.112.

52/ ZHP/MV/8; ZHP/MV/19.

53/ ZHP/MV/8; ZHP/MV/19; ZHP/MV/5.

54/ This was certainly the case amongst the Chewa: Phiri, 'Chewa of Malawi', p.7.

55/ Pike and Rimmington, Geographical Study, p.66.

56/ Ibid., p.85.

57/ Boserup, Agricultural Growth, p.24.

58/ Gamitto, King Kazembe, Vol. I, pp.68-70; Livingstone, Narrative, p.372; Rowley, Story, p.143.

59/ Boserup, Agricultural Growth, p.31.

60/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.26.

61/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.110.

62/ Ibid.

63/ J. Buchanan, The Shire Highlands, London, 1885, pp.118-122.

64/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.110.

65/ The smoking of maize was noted by Alice Werner, Natives of British Central Africa, London, 1906, p.183; and Livingstone noted the storage of sweet potatoes in pits filled in with wood ashes: Livingstone cited in Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.23.

66/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.26.

67/ Most of these deposits are too small to appear on geological maps, but ore is known to occur commonly throughout the highlands. (Personal communication from Dr. R. Crossley, Chancellor College).

68/ N.G.M. Mkandawire, 'Iron Smelting in Malawi', Society of Malawi Journal, XXXI, 2, July 1978, pp.17-20; and personal communication from Spana Davison on sites in the Ntonya Hill area.

69/ Livingstone, *Narrative*, p.113.

70/ ZHP/MV/1, Megan Vaughan with Denis Matukuta, Khadziko Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 21/1/78;

ZHP/MV/7, Megan Vaughan with Andrew Kapitikusya, Kapitikusya Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District;

ZHP/MV/8; ZHP/MV/23, Megan Vaughan with Barton Musonga, Simeon Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 27/5/78;

ZHP/MV/11.

71/ This exchange was noted by Rowley in the 1860s,: *Story*, pp.194-5.

72/ Livingstone, *Narrative*, p.113. Iron hoes were exchanged for calico.

73/ Buchanan, *Shire Highlands*, p.46;

ZHP/KMD/22, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Bula Malindi Kalaliki, Nkaya Village, T.A. Msamala, Machinga District; Livingstone, *Narrative*, p.376.

74/ *Brachystegia woodiana*.

75/ Buchanan, *Shire Highlands*, pp.46-50.

76/ ZHP/MV/1; ZHP/MV/2, Megan Vaughan with Dotha Mitepa, Khadziko Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 24/1/78;

ZHP/MV/3, Megan Vaughan with Rosebe Rari, Khadziko Village, T.A. Malemia, 25/1/78;

ZHP/MV/5; ZHP/MV/11; ZHP/MV/12, Megan Vaughan with John Joseph Mpoto, Mpoto Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District, 9/5/78;

ZHP/MV/22, Megan Vaughan with Whiskers Chilamwa, Mbando Village, T.A. Mposa, Machinga District, 26/5/78;

ZHP/MV/23.

77/ Marriage between Nyanja people of the Chilwa area and those of the Highlands appears to have been common. (Information obtained from genealogies).

[78] The lake was reported 'dry' in 1879, 1900, 1922, 1934, 1968 and 1973: C.O. Dudley, 'The History of the Decline of the Larger Mammals of the Lake Chilwa Basin', Society of Malawi Journal, XXXII, 2 July, 1979.

[79] Pike and Rimmington, Geographical Study, pp.87-91.

[80] Dudley, 'History of the Decline of the Larger Mammals', p.32.

[81] Rowley, cited in Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.26.

[82] Life and Work, November 1894, p.3; Ernest Gray, 'Notes on the Salt-Making Industry of the Nyanja People near Lake Shirwa', South African Journal of Science, XLI, February 1945, pp.465-475.

[83] This is described in the oral testimonies cited in footnote 76.

[84] ZHP/MV/12; ZHP/MV/22.

[85] ZHP/MV/5; ZHP/MV/8; ZHP/MV/16, Megan Vaughan with Adira Saiti, Kapichi Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 19/5/78;

ZHP/MV/22; ZHP/MV/23.

[86] Oral testimony and L. Kapaleta, 'The Coming of the Tonga and the commercialisation of fishing in Monkey Bay area - a case study', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Final Year Sociology Research Paper, 1979/80, Small Scale Enterprises in Malawi, pp.10-19.

[87] ZHP/MV/22.

[88] The following account owes much to the work of J.B. Webster and V.L. Jhala.

[89] Yohanna Abdallah, The Yaos, edited and translated by M. Sanderson, 2nd Edition, London, 1973.

[90] Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.15-22.

21/ Ibid., p.17.

22/ Webster, 'From Yao Hill to Mount Mulanje', p.5.

23/ On Nyanja assimilation:

> "The Phiri clan originated from a hill near Ulongwe in Kasupe West. There lived a woman called Nyangu and she had a lot of children... They were later invaded by a group of people. Some of them went West, others North, and others East. They were originally Nyanja, but are now Yao. Today Phiri who are found among the Yao trace their origin back to Yao-land instead of to the Ulongwe hills".

(Liwonde Historical Text No.40. Peter Rashid with Adulamajo, 10/8/77).

On Lomwe assimilation:

> "The Yaos were originally Ngurus. They came from the East..."

(Liwonde Historical Text No.30, Newby Kumwembe with Amilu Chesoka, 11/9/77).

> "The Mbewes were once Nguru. They became real Yao when they went to Yao and settled at Machinga".

(Liwonde Historical Text No.26, Newby Kumwembe with Makwenda Disi, 9/9/77).

> "Our ancestors came from the East. They were not Yao. They were Achipotola, a kind of Nguru. The real Yao people are those of Mataka. Most of these people you see are half-Yaos. Achipotola became Yaos because they married with the Yao. The Yao found people called 'Achinandowito' along the Shire. The people under Liwonde were called Amangochi. This is because they (the Achinandowito) were speaking a kind of Nyanja which was mixed with chiYao".

(Liwonde Historical Text No.41, Newby Kumwembe with an anonymous member of the Milasi clan, 8/9/77).

24/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.64.

25/ Webster, 'From Yao Hill to Mount Mulanje', p.10; Liwonde Historical Text No.14, Newby Kumwembe with Lujabu Umali, 20/4/77; Liwonde Historical Text No.41, Peter Rashid with Saisi, 17/8/77.

96/ Clan identities especially assumed a new importance. Webster quotes a number of traditions to show this. Webster, 'From Yao Hill to Mount Mulanje', p.11.

97/ Peter Rashid, 'The Rise of the Mbewe', p.7. 'Adowito' refers to the slowness with which these people spoke chiYao.

98/ See V.L. Jhala, 'Machinga Destruction of the Maravi Empire', p.7.

99/ The history of the Mbewe group is described by Rashid, 'The Rise of the Mbewe', and Kumwembe, 'The Development of the Mbewe Chiefdoms'.

100/ See pages 144-145

101/ For the Ngoni migrations in this area see map IV

102/ The main source on Yao society for the late nineteenth century is Duff MacDonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa, 2 Vols., London, 1882.

For the twentieth century the main sources are the works of J.C. Mitchell, as well as H.S. Stannus, 'The Wayao of Nyasaland', Harvard African Studies, 1923, Varia Africana, III, pp.229-372.

103/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.21.

104/ Abdallah, The Yaos, pp.12-13.

105/ Ibid., p.25.

106/ Ibid., p.23.

107/ Kuntumanje Historical Text No.14; ZHP/KMD/22.

108/ Kuntumanje Historical Text No.2, Kingston Lapukeni with Mwachande Mkwate; Kuntumanje Historical Text No.14; Liwonde Historical Text No.40, Peter Rashid with Adulamoyo.

109/ Chiwalo Historical Text No.3, Peter Rashid with Chiwachawo Chimbalanga.

110/ Kuntumanje Historical Text No.2.

111/ We are given no information on how or whether women distinguished themselves as 'Yaos'.

112/ A Kambuwa, Papers. (Chancellor College Library). p.10 in translation.

113/ Ibid., p.12.

114/ Ibid., p.13.

115/ Ibid.

116/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.21.

117/ Mitchell, Yao Village, p.157.

118/ MacDonald, Africana, I, pp.80-85.

119/ Kambuwa, Papers, p.17.

120/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.264-267.

121/ Webster, 'From Yao Hill to Mount Mulanje', p.11.

122/ In the case of male initiation the influence of Islam on the Yao was an important factor:

ZHP/MV/37, Megan Vaughan with Addison Chimbalanga;

ZHP/MV/22;

ZHP/MV/20, Megan Vaughan with Lemon Mataula, Kapitikusya Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 25/5/78.

123/ V.L. Jhala, 'The Shire Highlands: The Establishment and Maintenance of Yao Dominance under changing socio-economic Circumstances 1861-1915', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Student Research Seminar Paper, February 1980, p.3.

The same process was described by Livingstone:

"The usual way in which they (the Yao) have advanced among the Mang'anja has been by slave trading in a friendly way. Then, professing to live as subjects, they have been welcomed as guests and the Mang'anja being great agriculturalists have been able to support considerable bodies of these visitors for a time. When the provisions became scarce, the guests began to steal from the fields; quarrels arose in consequence, and the Ajawa having fire-arms, their hosts got the worst of it, and were expelled from village after village". Narrative, p.497.

124/ ZHP/KMD/1.

ZHP/MV/21.

Liwonde Historical Text No.1, Webster with Chief Liwonde IV.

ZHP/KMD/22.

125/ ZHP/MV/29, Megan Vaughan with Duncan Mangweru, Nkwesaziya Village, T.A. Kuntumanje, Zomba District, 2/6/78.

Z HP/MV/9.

126/ ZHP/MV/10, Megan Vaughan with Frederick Kuchikonde, Kuchikonde Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District, 2/6/78.

ZHP/KMD/22.

127/ The Yao became heavily involved in the fishing industry from the 1920s. Characteristically they specialised as fish-traders and not as fishermen, an occupation still considered today to be a Nyanja preserve.

128/ ZHP/MV/10.

129/ Ibid:

"The tusk of the elephant which touched the ground was given to the chief if his boys (achakanda) had killed the elephant. If an elephant was killed in a Nyanja Village the tusk which touched the ground still went to Malemia... (Nyanja) chiefs like Nyani collected the tusks and took them to the chief".

130/ H. Waller (ed), The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa, Vol. I, London, 1880, pp.126-135.

131/ ZHP/KMD/10.

132/ This was particularly the case in the Mponda chieftaincy in the 1890s when a son irregularly succeeded, resulting in a war between family factions:

D.E. Makuluni, 'The Msamala Kindred: Interaction with Neighbours and the Politics of Succession, c.1830-1895', University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Department of History, Student Research Seminar Paper, 1978.

Tensions within the Mponda stockade are vividly described in the Mponda Mission Diary of the White Fathers:

I. Linden (ed), 'Mponda Mission Diary, 1889-1891: Daily Life in a Machinga Village', Part II, International Journal of African Historical Studies, VII, 3, 1975, p.493.

133/ 'How the Yao Came here', by G.V.H. Mpheta, (translated by James Amanze), p.1.

134/ Kuntumanje Historical Text No.20, Kingston Lapukeni with Elard Bimbi, 12/9/77.

135/ This was noted by Livingstone in 1862:

"In former droughts all the people flocked from the hills to the marshes, which are capable of yielding crops of maize in less than three months, at anytime of the year". But this was now impossible because of the fear of slave-raiders. Narrative, p.

136/ R. Laws, 'Journey along part of the West Side of Lake Nyassa, 1878', Royal Geographical Society Proceedings, Vol. I, 1879, pp.305-321.

137/ ZHP/KMD/21.

138/ ZHP/KMD/25, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Kalako Chimanga Phiri, Chitalo Village, T.A. Kalembo, Machinga District.

139/ ZHP/MV/54, Megan Vaughan with Maria Hindahinda, Hindahinda Village, T.A. Kalembo, Machinga District, 5/1/79.

140/ Laws, 'Journey', p.308.

141/ Liwonde Historical Text No.1, Liwonde Historical Text No.2.

[142]/Jalasi Historical Text No.7.

[143]/Liwonde Historical Text No.33, Newby Kumwembe with Kuchitupa Kuluya.

[144]/Liwonde Historical Text No.15, Newby Kumwembe with Ester Tali.

[145]/ZHP/MV/13.

ZHP/MV/25.

ZHP/MV/9.

ZHP/MV/3, Megan Vaughan with Chensiyaga and Tupesiane, Thunga Village T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 3/1/78.

[146]/See footnote. 135

[147]/Last, 'Journey', p.178.

[148]/A Hetherwick, 'Notes on a Journey from Domasi Mission Station, Mount Zomba, to Lake Namaramba, August 1887', Royal Geographical Society Proceedings, Vol. X, 1887, p.26.

[149]/H. Drummond, Tropical Africa, London, 1888, p.30

[150]/Livingstone, Narrative, p.485.

[151]/See Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.2090253.

[152]/Chiwalo Historical Text, No.12, Peter Rashid with Abiti Fulani.

Liwonde Historical Text No.7, Newby Kumwembe with Chibwana Chiunda.

Liwonde Historical Text No.9, N. Kumwembe with Nyama.

153/ Chiwalo Historical Text No.4, Peter Rashid with Ndindi Mwang'ongomera.

154/ Liwonde Historical Text No.9.

155/ Liwonde Historical Text No.41.

156/ Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.250.

157/ Livingstone, Narrative, p.125.

158/ ZHP/MV/22.

CHAPTER 2

The Colonial Economy, 1891-1915

This chapter attempts to provide an overview of the economic changes which took place in this region in the early colonial period. It relates these changes to the structure of the colonial economy as a whole, and provides a framework within which the 'description' which follows in later chapters, will be analysed.

Perhaps the major 'fact' about the economic history of Nyasaland is that illuminated by the work of Leroy Vail,[1/] namely that Nyasaland was a peculiarly impoverished and neglected corner of Britain's African empire. The 'fact' of impoverishment, however, worked itself out in different ways, at different times, and in different areas of the Protectorate. On the one hand it sometimes propelled the administration towards policies which were oppressive to the African population; on the other hand, the under-capitalisation of the administration meant that there were limits to the efficiency with which any policies at all could be pursued. The over-riding concern was to raise sufficient revenue simply to keep the colonial administration in existence, and this led to a fairly pragmatic approach to economic policy. At the same time, the continuing unviability of the Nyasaland economy led the British Treasury to maintain tight control over financial policy, and limited the autonomy of the local administration. There was little room in Nyasaland for Imperial theorising or fantasy.

The 1880s - Re-direction of trade

The first direct European economic activity in this region took the form of redirecting the trade in ivory and other 'collected' items, away from the Yao and other middlemen and into the hands of European trading companies. This was a slow process, and had not been completed when the British assumed direct political control over the area in 1891. It was, however, an important prelude to colonialism as, when combined with anti-slave - trade measures, it gradually undermined the economic and political importance of the Yao trading chiefs, and ultimately inhibited the development of economic differentiation by making capital accumulation more difficult. Increasingly it was those individuals who sold their labour to the trading companies and missions who had the most direct access to goods such as calico, and thus the extent and nature of distribution of these goods changed radically. It is important to bear in mind that these first direct European interventions in the economy of the region took place at a time when African societies here were experiencing extreme economic and political dislocation.

The Livingstonia Central Africa Company (later renamed the African Lakes Company, and finally the African Lakes Corporation), was formed and began its operations in the region in 1878.[2/] It was originally founded as the commercial arm of the Free Church of Scotland mission which had been established at Cape Maclear on Lake Malawi in 1875, and its functions were to provide transport for this mission and to promote 'legitimate commerce' in the region. The experiences of the A.L.C. in its attempts to 'develop' the region to some extent influenced the kind of

economic policies deemed appropriate for the country by subsequent colonial administrators. The A.L.C. and the early missions combined a genuine concern for evangelisation and for ending the slave trade with boundless expectations of the wealth which could be obtained from the African interior. The first managers of the A.L.C., John and Frederick Moir, envisaged supplying western goods to a prosperous African peasantry, whose products they would export. Fred Moir calculated that it would be possible to buy and export African-grown groundnuts to London at a profit, and also considered the possibility of exporting maize to Natal.[3/] However, these schemes were made impracticable by the expense and labour-intensiveness of the transport system - a factor which was to inhibit economic growth in this area throughout the colonial period. Thousands of porters were required to carry loads from Katunga's on the Shire River, up the escarpment to Blantyre, and again from the Highlands to the Upper Shire, whence the goods were transported by water to the Lake and northwards. Given the high costs of this system and the under-capitalisation of the Company, it soon became clear that the A.L.C. would have to concentrate on the export of high-value products if it were to make any profit at all. Ivory was the product which kept the Company solvent and determined the nature of its operations. The Company originally relied on the shooting of elephants by its own employees, but by the mid-1880s was buying ivory from chiefs and traders such as Mwase Kasungu, Jumbe and Mponda. From the point of view of these 'indigenous' traders there was probably little economic difference between selling their ivory to the coast as part of a system of 'unequal exchange', and selling it to the A.L.C. There was, however,

involved in this latter arrangement a loss of some economic and political autonomy, the extension of which was to take place in the 1890s when these chiefs were forcibly prevented from hunting and trading independently. One should not, however, exaggerate the impact of the A.L.C. as a buyer of ivory. For the most part the great trading chiefs in the area under study had little or no dealings with the Company - Makanjira, Matapwiri, Kawinga, Zarafi (Jalasi) and the Ngoni chiefs Chikusi and Mpezeni, remained aloof from the Company's dealings and continued to trade independently in ivory and slaves. The role for which the Company is remembered in this region is as an employer of labour for tenga-tenga (head porterage), and this constituted its major impact on the economy of the Shire Highlands and Upper Shire Valley.[4/] When the Company began its operations in the late 1870s, there was no difficulty in obtaining sufficient labour - in fact, more labour was available than was needed, and this led to a reduction in the wages offered and a restriction on the number of days a man could work. Payment for labour was in grey calico - merikani - and MacMillan has estimated that by the mid-1880s over 300,000 yards of this cloth were being imported into the region by the company each year, enough to pay 6,000 men for a year at four yards per month.[5/]

The second major employer of labour in the region was the Church of Scotland Mission, founded in Blantyre in 1876. In the course of 1888, for instance, the Blantyre Mission had employed a total of 1950 people in general work (not including skilled and semi-skilled permanent employees who were trained on the mission).[6/] More than this, however, the mission's view of the moral and material benefits of 'labour' were to have a lasting

influence, and it is not coincidental that a number of independent planters and entrepreneurs (both European and African) started off here. The missionaries held that both sides in a labour contract would benefit morally. Steady employment for the African would "tend more than anything else to form that spirit which lies at the base of labour and consolidate a working industrious native community".[7/] Like the 'philanthropic' early directors of the A.L.C., the missionaries initially envisaged economic development taking place from within this "working industrious native community", and viewed with some regret the increasing dependence of the economy on the sale of ivory, whilst accepting that "ivory is a most valuable product and we do not join in any wholesale condemnation of it".[8/] The mission's distaste for an economy of plunder increased with the arrival in Blantyre of Messrs Pettite, Marshall and Steblecki who set themselves up as ivory traders and provided a market for ivory obtained by the Kololo chiefs in the Lower Shire Valley, and from the African entrepreneur in Blantyre, Kumtaja.

In 1881 John Buchanan, a former lay missionary at the Blantyre Mission, obtained land in Zomba from Chief Malemia and set up an estate. By the late 1880s 'land grabbing' was in full swing. The ideal of an economy based on peasant production was now superseded by a vision of the Shire Highlands as an estate coffee production area:

> "I do not come forward with a Utopian dream of a fine country with abundance of labour, a settled government, and a free port; but I do not hesitate to say that there are in the Shire Highlands large tracts of land well-suited for coffee-that there is a fair supply of labour at a small cost - and that transit to the coast, though a little difficult

> at present and freight high, may be much reduced, and, in fact, must be reduced once there is more trade."[9]

Buchanan calculated that a 200-acre coffee estate ought to yield a clear profit of £2,000 a year, and in 1885 he had planted 20 acres of coffee on his Mulungusi estate. In this new vision of the estate economy of the Shire Highlands, African labour was once more seen as the main beneficiary, and European economic intervention as 'philanthropic'. As Buchanan pointed out, in a lucid statement of the missionary-planter philosophy, it might take some time for the African inhabitants of the area to realise how much was being done for their benefit:

> "We have entered the Shire Highlands with the express purpose of developing the country, and civilising and christianising the natives; and we need not expect that they will be capable for many years to come of attributing to us motives beyond what they themselves ever dreamt of. Such a motive as working for the good of a fellow-man is no part of their philosophy; and though we ourselves create in them, and by supplying them with work and wages encourage in them, a spirit of manly and honest independence, which may militate against our own interests, we cannot remain here as Christians without undertaking a heavy moral responsibility, and unless we have in view the higher benefits that civilization and Christianity bring with them, even should we have to fight against such a difficulty as raising the price of labour by our own actions in introducing the cultivation of coffee, building of houses, and other work."[10]

By the late 1880s the economic map of the region under study had already changed. Yao chiefs such as Kawinga continued to trade in slaves and ivory, whilst tapping a new source of wealth by raiding the carriers of their European rivals on the Zomba road. The Ngoni raid of 1884 into the Shire Highlands and

the continued activities of slave raiders had distorted population distribution there and inhibited agricultural production. Ironically, by the late 1880s the much-feared Ngoni were beginning to make their way to the Shire Highlands as labourers.[11] Whilst the Nyanja and Yao populations remained concentrated for security, speculators such as Eugene Sharrer arrived to appropriate vast tracts of 'empty' land. Goods such as cloth were now distributed through two different channels - either as payment for labour in the European trading companies, Missions and estates, or via the Yao trading chiefs who still operated widely over the region.

A British Protectorate was declared over the 'Nyasaland Districts' in 1891.[12] The Scots missionaries had long been pressing for the British Government to assume responsibility for the region, but it was Portuguese rivalry which finally forced the British hand. Portugal had long claimed sovereignty over the area, and the Portuguese authorities were proving uncooperative in efforts to stop the slave trade. The appointment by the British in 1883 of Captain Foot as H.M. Consul "in the territories of the African Kings and chiefs in the districts adjacent to Lake Nyasa" alarmed the Portuguese, who henceforth made treaties with chiefs in the interior and hindered the working of the A.L.C. and the missions.

This Anglo-Portuguese rivalry in the Lake Malawi region coincided with a three-cornered battle between Britain, Portugal and the Transvaal over the occupation of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. The Lake Malawi region became something of a pawn in the game for the richer areas. Cecil Rhodes sought the support of the British Government for the annexation of Matabele-

land and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, to extend rail and telegraph links to the Zambesi River, and also to annex for the British Crown the area to the north of the Zambesi. This proposal for colonisation on the cheap was accepted by the British Government, despite humanitarian pressure against it. The British South Africa Company was granted a charter in 1889 which gave it full financial and administrative responsibility for much of Central Africa. By arrangement with Harry Hamilton Johnston, who had been appointed H.M. Consul to Mozambique, Rhodes included the Malawi region in his deal, and straight away paid for treaty - making expeditions.[13]

Johnston arrived on the Lower Zambesi at the end of 1889, and quickly forestalled Portuguese sovereignty by declaring unilaterally a Protectorate over the Shire Highlands in September, 1889. By the middle of 1890 the Portuguese had withdrawn, and Johnston and his deputy, Alfred Sharpe, were embarking on treaty-making expeditions in the Lake Malawi region. A British Protectorate, whose boundaries had been agreed upon by the Portuguese and the Germans, was declared in May 1891, and Johnston was appointed Commissioner and Consul General.[14]

The early colonial state comprised an administrative staff of fewer than twenty officers, and an army of seventy Indian volunteers.[15] It was primarily a military force, and the first five years of British rule were dominated by a series of small battles against recalcitrant chiefs, some of whom, such as Kawinga, Mponda and Makanjira, had a large following and took some time to 'subdue'. Their defeat was closely connected with the new administration's need for revenue. The raid on Mponda's

in 1891 was a typical incident. In November a coast caravan appeared at Mponda's town on the southern end of Lake Malawi. Mponda was warned of the prohibition on slavery in British dominions, and that "a license tax was necessary for all persons trading in British Central Africa". A tusk of ivory was paid by way of tax but Mponda refused to hand over any of his 'slaves'. Eventually the town was shelled and seventy slaves released, and Mponda forced to pay a fine in ivory.16/

Slave trading, and, more especially, slave keeping, were not suddenly ended by the coming of British rule, as indicated by the numerous reports of slave trading which continue throughout the 1890s. Eventually, however, the superior military technology of even this small British force had its impact on the wealth and prestige of the Yao chiefs. One British participant in these early expeditions, Dr. Wordsworth Poole, described the slave-freeing as "a considerable farce". In his opinion the only effect of these expeditions was to condemn the population to a period of semi-starvation, their food having been burned by the British shelling. He described the 'protection' offered by British rule:

> "I must say I rather sympathise with the natives here. We say to them, now you are the subjects of the great white Queen we are going to protect you. For our protection you must pay a hut tax of 3/- per hut. Then the natives if they are strong with plenty of men and guns say, no, we don't want protection and can look after ourselves and won't have you at any price - leave us alone. So there is a war and we kill their men and burn their houses and collar their cattle and ivory and cloth and beads, and their women whom we call slaves and to whom we give papers found afterwards thrown away in heaps..."17/

The last Yao chiefs to be defeated were Zarafi (Jalasi), Kawinga,

Matapwiri and Makanjira in 1895. In the same year the Chewa chief Mwase Kasungu was defeated and committed suicide. In 1896 the Ngoni chief, Gomani, was captured and shot in an expedition vividly recalled in oral tradition, and which was much criticised by missionaries and observers.[18]

The defeat of the Yao chiefs did not immediately bring about 'law and order'. A state of guerilla warfare existed for some time. To the east of Lake Chilwa a number of Lomwe chiefs were carrying on the slave trade. The problem of robberies on the Blantyre-Zomba road also continued for some time, and there was a new problem of indiscipline amongst Government forces, who were sometimes themselves implicated in incidents of 'slave taking'.[19] However, that the relative law and order imposed had some immediate effect on the area is evidenced by the reports of the Church of Scotland missionaries in the 1890s, who noted how population was beginning to disperse once more from the stockades on the hills, to small scattered villages on the plains.[20] As new gardens were opened up, it seemed that the agricultural economy of the area would begin to return to its pre-1870 high productivity, but already large tracts of land had been alienated, and many of those people who descended from the hills to their old homes found that they were now 'squatters'.

The Economy of the 1890s

Once of the Commissioner's major tasks in the 1890s was to raise enough revenue to finance the activities of his small administration and to make it self-supporting. Between 1891 and 1896 the total expenditure of the British Central Africa Administration was £165,065. The major item of expenditure was the financing

of military expenditions ('police force' accounted for £25,398 and 'naval' for £6,474). The next most important items were 'public works' (£25,398) and staff salaries (£23,135). Over the same period a total of £54,352 was raised as local revenue, mainly from customs duties (£16,439) and, increasingly from the native hut tax (£11,819).

TABLE 1

TOTAL EXPENDITURE JUNE 1ST 1891 - 31 MARCH 1896

	£s
Salaries of staff	23,155
Freight, Transport, Travel	10,614
Postal	4,902
Medical	1,245
Subsidies, Presents	1,533
Police Force	87,166
Naval	6,474
Public Works	25,398
Scientific	1,882
Other	2,181
	£165,065

TOTAL REVENUE JUNE 1ST 1891 - 31ST MARCH, 1896

	£s
Customs	16,439
Rents, Dues etc. at Chinde	822
Roads and River Dues	1,790
Rent of Crown Lands	113
Sales of Timber, Livestock etc.	904
Survey Fees	318
Stamp Duties and Licences	4,458
Native Hut Tax	11,819
Postage Receipts	3,636
Presents from Native Chiefs and Profits on Exchanges ..	10,430
Judicial Fees	370
Gazette Receipts	211
Sale of Crown Lands	3,042
Total Locally Raised Revenue	£ 54,352
B.S.A. Co. Subsidy	64,021
Imperial Grants - in - aid	54,200
TOTAL REVENUE	£172,573

Source: B.C.A. Gazettes 1894-96.

Johnston, along with the British Treasury, believed that British Central Africa "must justify its existence by eventually supporting itself on its locally raised revenue".[21] The story of the economy of this Protectorate is in part the story of its continued inability to achieve this ideal. Between 1891 and 1896 the shortfall between revenue and expenditure was made up by

British South Africa Company subsidies amoumting to £64,021, and Imperial grants-in-aid totalling £54,200.[22] The African contribution to locally-raised revenue was made directly through the raising of hut tax and indirectly in licences and customs duties on goods destined primarily for the African market. Hut Tax regulations were promulgated in 1894 and were initially applied to the Lower Shire, Ruo, West Shire, Blantyre, Mulanje, Zomba, Upper Shire and South Nyasa districts. By 1896 hut tax was collected in all parts of the country except the Northern Ngoni area of the West Nyasa district. Even before the official imposition of hut tax, however, local administrators were raising tax from the African population. Initially this was a 'poll tax' of 6 shillings per head, usually paid in kind. However, as the missionaries pointed out, in 1892, this was a much higher rate than was paid in other British possessions and its payment in foodstuffs contributed to a food shortage.[23] This was converted to a Hut Tax at the rate of 3 shillings per hut, and remained at this rate until 1901-2 when a differential hut tax was introduced. Revenue from the Hut Tax rose from £790 in 1891 to £4,696 in 1895-6.

TABLE 2

TOTAL REVENUE FROM HUT TAX 1891-1896 (£s)

	1891-2	1892-3	1893-4	1894-5	1895-6
Total Revenue from Hut Tax	790	1,639	1,874	2,820	4,696
Hut Tax as % of total local revenue	42%	30%	14%	23%	22%

Source: B.C.A. Gazettes, 1894-96.

Tax collection amongst Africans had considerable political significance and implications. The 'defeated' Yao chiefs were quick to present themselves to the new administrators as the 'local authorities' for the purpose of tax collection, to the detriment of Nyanja leaders who tended to keep their distance from the white man. Tax collection could have an ambiguous effect on a chief's authority. Even before the first Hut Tax regulations had been published, John Buchanan was visiting Chief Malemia at Domasi and "explaining the nature of the system to him". In this case it was decided only to collect a gun tax, but the implications of this for the chief's authority and prestige can be seen from this missionary account of the incident:

> "There was a marked disposition on the part of Malemia to pay himself the gun taxes of the men of his own village. It appears that these guns really belong to the chief although constantly in the possession of his men. By allowing the men to pay the tax, he was probably afraid that he would lose to a certain extent the hold which he has upon them in virtue of their carrying his guns."[24]

The enforcement of a gun tax and confiscation of unlicensed guns was perhaps the most effective method of 'pacification' which the administration had. Without guns, not only were resistance and violent crime made less possible, but also the ivory trade was more easily diverted into European hands. Enforcement of licensing became increasingly effective as the 1890s wore on, and its effect was apparently dramatic. Not only was capital accumulation made much more difficult for ambitious Africans, but the enforcement of hunting laws caused a long-term resentment amongst 'ordinary' Africans.[25]

During these years wages in the transport companies and on

the new European estates were paid in calico at a monthly rate which roughly equalled the annual hut tax. 'Soft goods' (piece goods, calico, handkerchiefs, clothing etc.) constituted the major import, and customs duties on these articles contributed largely to the country's inland revenue. In 1895, for instance, £36,051 worth of 'soft goods' were imported into the country, out of total imports worth £75,720. Customs duties on imports in that year totalled £4,936, which was the largest single item of inland revenue (followed by hut tax receipts at £4,696). Thus, apart from relying heavily on external subsidies, the British Central Africa balance of payments in the 1890s depended to a large extent on direct and indirect contributions from Africans.

TABLE 3

PRINCIPAL ITEMS IMPORTED 1893-1900 (£s)

	1893	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
Alcohol	1,938	3,650	3,270	3,163	5,290	n.a.	4,332
Arms and ammunition	1,098	1,926	3,109	2,318	3,348	n.a.	22,581
Hardware	7,515	8,746	11,325	5,937	6,840	n.a.	22,581
Provisions	7,797	15,199	13,382	7,565	9,969	14,369	82,169
Soft Goods	22,785	36,051	32,511	32,488	46,207	41,950	82,169
Total value of all imports	44,563	75,720	69,300	67,656	78,637	93,743	154,305
Soft Goods as % of all imports	51%	48%	47%	48%	59%	45%	53%

Sources: B.C.A. Gazettes, 1894-1896; Annual Report on the British Central Africa Protectorate, 1897-98; Report on the Trade and General Conditions of the British Central Africa Protectorate for 1902-03.

The nature of imports into the country in the 1890s was typical of an early colonial economy, in that they consisted almost entirely of goods for final consumption, rather than investment goods. The only capital goods imported would have been articles of machinery for European estates, which were included under the heading of 'hardware'.

In 1891 there were 57 Europeans in the Protectorate (including North-Eastern Rhodesia). By 1896 there were over 300 Europeans and 263 Indians. The majority of the Europeans were engaged in 'planting' and trade, and the majority of Indians in commerce. The 1890s was a decade when vast tracts of land were alienated. In fact, so much land was alienated in this period that the subsequent history of land in this area is one of changes in ownership rather than of further alienation. One of Harry Johnston's main tasks in the 1890s was to organise a land settlement, which will be described in more detail later. Altogether, 66 certificates of claim were registered under this land settlement within the Protectorate, alienating a total of 3,705,255 acres, out of a total land-holding potential in the Protectorate of 25,161,924 acres. Of the total land alienated the British South Africa Company was the largest single owner with 2¾ million acres, mostly in the north of the country, and most of which remained unexploited. The rest was largely concentrated in the Shire Highlands where the British Central Africa Company owned 367,000 acres, and the Bruce Estates and the Blantyre and East Africa Company owned 160,000 acres each.[26]

The first crop to be grown on this alienated land was coffee, which in the 1890s overtook ivory as the major export

of the country, and by 1900 accounted for 80% of total exports.

TABLE 4

PRINCIPAL ARTICLES EXPORTED 1893-1900 (£s)

	1893	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
Coffee	2,997	3,402	7,136	16,427	22,412	23,756	62,245
Ivory	42,945	14,516	26,484	16,334	6,029	-	12,821
Rubber	34	-	28	277	1,045	10,234	13,189
Tobacco	-	-	-	-	-	50	113
Total value of all exports	22,139	9,704	17,040	21,711	26,146	36,650	78,514

Sources: B.C.A. Gazettes 1894-96; Annual Report 1897-8; Report on Trade and Conditions 1902-03.

The high prices obtained for coffee in the mid-1890s encouraged early planters to specialise in this crop. The greatest single concentration of coffee planting was on the Blantyre-Chikwawa road. Other important areas for coffee growing were Thyolo, Mulanje, Namadzi and Namitembo. The peak of coffee production was in 1900 when over a thousand tons—worth £62,245, were exported. The sudden decline of this industry after 1900 was caused by a combination of drought and disease locally and also by the saturation of the world market by Brazilian produce which brought prices down dramatically. Reflecting the decline of this industry, the value of total exports in 1902 was down to

the 1893 figure of £22,000, having reached a peak of £78,514 in 1900.[27]

The issue of 'labour' dominated discussions on the economy during this period. The European planters relied largely on Ngoni labour, but suffered severe competition from the transport companies whose labour requirements continued to be massive. Ngoni labour was itself seasonal, and there was a recurrent shortage of labour on the European estates in the rainy season. Because of the labour intensiveness of the coffee industry, and the costs of transport, European planters were anxious to keep wages low. As the hut tax regulations were enforced over the whole country and cash requirements increased, more and more labour from the centre and north of the country especially, found its way south to Rhodesia and South Africa. In the late 1890s wages of 10/- to 20/- a month could be obtained in the mines[28] whilst the agricultural wage in the Protectorate remained static at 3/- a month. The problem of securing labour for the Shire Highlands was not helped by the dislocation of the domestic economy there, which meant that there were frequent food shortages in which the migrant workers suffered principally. As the 1890s progressed, however, the 'indigenous' inhabitants of the Shire Highlands spurned estate employment and concentrated on selling surplus foodstuffs with which to pay their taxes and to sell to migrant workers. Furthermore a small group of mission-trained Africans leased their own land and went into cash-crop farming.[29]

A change in the political economy of the country took place after 1900 with the expansion of European agricultural

production and the compliance of the administration with European demands for the creation of a stable labour force. By 1900 the contribution of the African to the Protectorate's economic development was seen as his labour rather than his direct agricultural productivity.

The Colonial Economy, 1900-1915

In the period 1900-1915 Nyasaland was still unable to support itself on locally-raised revenue, and relied on subsidies from the British South Africa Company (which ended in 1911) and on Imperial grants-in-aid.[30] In 1904 Nyasaland was listed as one of the ten British territories whose annual budgetary estimates the British Treasury demanded to see and sanction item by item. It seemed that Nyasaland was already seen as an unviable territory.[31]

Meanwhile, hut tax receipts rose steadily throughout this period, from £16,756 in 1900-01, to £75,448 in 1917-18. They formed the single most important item of locally-raised revenue and constituted an increasingly high percentage of the total local revenue, in some years forming as much as 60% of it.[32] The rise in hut tax receipts can be seen as reflecting the growth of the administration and its increasing efficiency. On the Shire Highlands, however, it directly reflected the extension of European agriculture and the mechanisms (including the differential tax introduced in 1901) which ensured that more and more Africans spent some of the year as labourers on European estates. That the increase in hut tax receipts in these areas is due to increased wage employment is clear from

the district hut tax statistics which show that very few Africans opted to pay the higher tax which did not require a labour certificate.[33/] Elsewhere the introduction of cotton growing amongst Africans was seen as a device for increasing local revenue.

Another justification for the encouragement of peasant cotton production away from the Shire Highlands was that the money earned by these farmers would be spent on imports, and would thus help raise further the revenue from indirect taxes. 'Soft goods' constituted around 50% of the value of total imports into the Protectorate and the duty raised on these goods formed between 50% and 64% of total import duties raised.

TABLE 5

YEAR	DUTY ON SOFT GOODS (£s)	TOTAL IMPORT DUTY (£s)	DUTY ON SOFT GOODS AS % OF TOTAL IMPORT DUTY
1906	13,184	21,008	63%
1907	7,296	14,179	52%
1908	7,125	13,623	52%
1909	6,158	11,091	56%
1910	12,228	19,084	64%
1911	12,890	21,282	61%

Source: Blue Books, 1906-11

Duty on imported 'soft goods' as percentage of total import duty 1906-11.

In this period, however, it was less the peasant than the labour migrant who stimulated trade and contributed revenue.[34]

The massive expansion of European agriculture at this time contributed little to the prosperity of the country as a whole, and massively to the deterioration of conditions for Shire Highlanders. The total acreage under production by Europeans rose from 18,994 acres in 1906-7 to 51,366 acres in 1918-19.[35] Reflecting this expansion and the decline in importance of 'collected' items, agricultural exports formed an increasing proportion of total exports, rising from 44% of the total value of exports in 1905-6 to 94% in 1918.[36] There was little new land alienated in this period, but increasing exploitation of land which had mostly been acquired in the 1890s.

The two crops which came to dominate the economy over this period were cotton and tobacco, both labour-intensive and land-extensive crops. Tobacco production was largely confined to the highlands, production in Blantyre and Zomba districts accounting for 86% of total production.[37] Cotton, however, was grown both on the highlands and in the Shire Valley, where land which had hitherto remained unexploited due to its unsuitability for coffee now came into production.

The inefficiency of a great deal of European agriculture is demonstrated by the story of estate cotton production. The cotton boom took place in the first years of this century after the demise of coffee. Acreages under cotton on the estates rose spectacularly from 60 acres in 1901 to 22,000 acres in

1904. The initial enthusiasm for cotton was such that little attention was paid to such questions as disease control, the best varieties to use, and the suitability of the land to cotton. Yields were consequently very low. From 22,000 acres under cotton in 1904, only 140 tons of ginned cotton were finally exported.[38] In 1905 the acreage was drastically reduced but productivity per acre was increased as more care was taken and as the least suitable lands were taken out of production. By 1917 cotton exports accounted for 44% of all exports, but an increasing proportion of this was produced by Africans on Crown Land and as tenants on European estates. It was gradually realised that peasant production of this crop was more efficient than estate production, and by the 1930s cotton was almost entirely a 'native' crop.

Whilst the history of cotton is thus closely connected with the history of the colonial peasantry of Nyasaland, the history of tobacco production is more closely tied to the development of a tenantry and to the history of land shortage.

Tobacco overtook cotton as the country's most valuable export in 1911, although the acreage under European-grown tobacco did not exceed the acreage under cotton until the 1920s.[39] Tobacco production was concentrated in Blantyre, Zomba and Chiradzulu and was pioneered in the early years by the Blantyre and East Africa Company. The main market for the Protectorate's tobacco in these years was South Africa where, from 1903, Nyasaland products entered duty-free as part of a deal whereby 1,000 Nyasalanders worked on the mines. Nyasaland tobacco was superior to the South African product and fetched a

higher price there than it would have done on the London market where the main competition was from American leaf. This dependence on the South African market in these years gave rise to an ambiguous attitude to labour migration on the part of Nyasaland planters. At this time it was only the smaller planters who suffered from a labour shortage and had no large resident tenantry, who were vociferous in their opposition to labour emigration. However, this duty-free status came to an end in 1908 and a new market had to be found. In that year the Imperial Tobacco Company, as a result of negotiations with the British Central Africa Company, opened a factory in Limbe, at the end of the newly-constructed railway line to Port Herald.[40/] The development of the tobacco industry was thus closely connected with the construction of the railway (in which the British Central Africa Company had an interest), and with attempts to make this railway pay.

The expansion of tobacco production had immediate effects on the lives of Shire Highlanders, and some of these are documented in Chapter Three. Tobacco is a labour-intensive crop, with a significant labour requirement throughout the year and a peak in the wet season from November to February. It was estimated in 1920 that during the operations of planting and harvesting two men per acre were required for tobacco, as compared with two men for every three acres of cotton.[41/] Tobacco is also land-extensive. It exhausts the soil easily and requires a long land rotation. The early planters cleared new tracts of land each year for planting, and only in the 1920s did they begin to fertilise the soil artificially.[42/] Most firms concentrated on flue-cured tobacco which requires large

amounts of fuelwood for the curing process. In all these ways the cultivation of tobacco, perhaps more than that of cotton, affected the lives of Africans living on the Shire Highlands, and much of the European pressure for legislation on land, labour and conservation can be accounted for by the needs of this new crop. The heavy labour demands of the crop meant that growers with a resident tenant population were at a great advantage in having a constant labour supply. But not only did the landlord need to requisition the labour of his tenants, he also had to ensure that their food crop cultivation did not compete too heavily with the tobacco crop's land and fuel requirements.

The Structure of European Enterprise 1891-1918

The total European population of Nyasaland rose from 345 in 1896 to 724 in 1918. The number of Europeans engaged in agriculture rose only very slowly up to the First World War. According to Johnston, of the total of 345 Europeans in the Protectorate in 1896, 100 were engaged in agriculture. By 1918 this number had only risen to 124.[43] Much of the increase in the total European population can be accounted for by the increasing number of European women coming to reside in the Protectorate.

Apart from involvement in agriculture, many Europeans were employed in 'commerce'. Until the First World War this usually meant as employees in the large trading firms which dominated the wholesale business in the Protectorate, the Asian population dominating the retail trade. After the First World War, however, some of the new European settlers entered the retail trade.

Thus European interests in Nyasaland appear to have been broadly divided between those who were involved in production of primary products for export and those who saw the country as a market for manufactured goods. However, because of the predominance of large companies with interests in both agriculture and trade, there was no clear division between 'planters' and 'traders'. As we have seen, the single most important item imported into the country was cloth destined for the African market. A prosperous commercial sector depended on the ability of the African to purchase cloth and other goods, and the assumption was that this ability would only come from employment in the European agricultural sector, the health of which was thus seen as vital to the prosperity of the whole economy. Occasionally, as in the debate over labour migration, the smaller business companies perceived that their interests did not coincide with those of the agricultural sector as the deferred pay of returning migrants made an important contribution to internal trade. But in general there was little overt division of interest and conflicts were presumably internalised within the large companies.

Up to the First World War the European agricultural sector was dominated by a few large companies possessing massive amounts of land, much of which they were not cultivating. In the Shire Highlands by the beginning of the century a total of 800,000 acres had been alienated, of which the British Central Africa Company held 367,000 acres, while the Bruce Estates and the Blantyre and East Africa Company held 160,000 acres each.

The British Central Africa Company had originated with the activities of Eugene Sharrer who in the late 1880s had 'bought' massive tracts of land in the Upper Shire Valley from Nyanja chiefs and who also set himself up as a trader in opposition to the African Lakes Corporation. He operated the Zambesi Traffic Company, which ran river steamers up and down the Shire, and also owned a chain of stores known as the Kabula stores. In the 1890s he became involved in railway building, forming the Shire Highlands Railway Company, which lobbied the Foreign Office with a railway scheme. In 1902 the Zambesi Traffic Company and Sharrer's Nyasaland Estates were subsumed under the British Central Africa Company, which contracted the Shire Highlands Railways Company to construct the railway. Sharrer sold some of the blocks of land he had earlier alienated to the British Central Africa Company in exchange for shares in the company, and he became a director of both the Shire Highlands Railway Company and the British Central Africa Company.[44/] The B.C.A. Co. thus had interests in transport, trade and, increasingly, agriculture. With the decline of coffee and the rise of cotton and tobacco, the B.C.A. Co. became increasingly involved in both the production and marketing of these products. Not only did the company begin to grow and gin cotton on its estates in the Upper Shire Valley, but it also obtained the right to represent the British Cotton Growing Association in buying cotton produced by African farmers on Crown Land in the Upper Shire. Furthermore, the British Central Africa Company was largely responsible for the presence of the Imperial Tobacco Company in the country, and the subsequent development of the tobacco industry.

More single-mindedly concerned with agriculture was the Blantyre and East Africa Company which was formed in 1901 with a capital of £60,000 and whose land included the estates of the Buchanan Trust, Hynde and Stark and Moir's Lauderdale Estate. It also owned lands in the townships of Blantyre, Zomba and Chikwawa. Both the Blantyre and East Africa Company and the Bruce Estates, however, had a close relationship with the African Lakes Corporation (Alexander Low Bruce was a director of the A.L.C.) and thus had a general interest in 'commerce'.

In 1892 two planters' associations were formed.[45/] The Shire Highlands Planters Association represented Sharrer's interests and was opposed by the mission-supported planters the Moirs and the Buchanans - who formed the Nyasaland Planters Association. In 1895 they amalgamated to form the Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, although the antagonism between the two groups continued. The constitution and the voting system of the Chamber were such as to allow it to be easily dominated by the large companies, and it generally received the support of the administration. After the failure of coffee the planting interests of the country fell apart for a while whilst different districts experimented with different crops and formed independent planters' associations. However, in 1907 they came together once more in the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, which was given the right to recommend names for nomination to the newly constituted Legislative Council.

Even before this official political representation was granted, however, the Chamber had had considerable influence over decisions affecting economic policy in the Protectorate and had consistently lobbied both the local administration and the Foreign Office on the issues of 'land' and 'labour'. In general there was little opposition of interest between the local administration and the Chamber in this period. Successive governors saw the economic development of the territory as hinging on the prosperity of the European agricultural sector, and legislation such as the differential taxation system was designed to directly benefit the European estate owner. Perhaps more important, however, was the ability of the planters to ignore legislation which was not in their interest, such as some aspects of the 1904 Lands Ordinance. Similarly, the government acquiesced in the development of the _thangata_ system, ignored the reports of successive land commissions, and rarely enforced such regulations as those governing the feeding of labourers on private estates. It was only on the subject of labour migration that the planters were less than wholly successful in their lobbying of the government and the Foreign Office, and throughout this period official policy on labour migration vacillated, whilst unofficial migration continued apace. The Chamber's influence on trading policy in the Protectorate was considerable and strengthened by the fact that its members were also members of the Blantyre and Limbe Town Councils. Through these bodies the activities of both Asian and African entrepreneurs were controlled and defined.

Despite these numerous advantages, European enterprise

in Nyasaland was not a great success in the long run. In the short term, however, profits could be made, and it was not necessarily "chronically unprosperous".[46] In the long run it was unable to support an expensive private railway and was subsidised from other sections of the economy, but the expansion of European production in this period and the rise in the value of exports implies that there were gains to be made in the short term. Possibly because of its political status as a Protectorate, Nyasaland was always regarded as a 'marginal' settler economy where short-term profits could be made and reinvested elsewhere. The exodus of settlers from Nyasaland to Southern Rhodesia which took place in the depression of the 1930s implies that this was an established pattern, and that many European enterprises in Nyasaland had investments in more 'secure' colonies. Throughout this period, however, there was an expectation of profits to be made, even given the consistently high transport costs.

In 1897, Mr. Israel, who owned a coffee estate near Blantyre, published in the government gazette a balance sheet for his estate, showing that he expected to make a considerable profit if the current high prices paid for coffee were maintained. Wages for labour in the estate and for transportation of the crop accounted for some 40% of total expenditure.[47]

Throughout the period European agriculture remained very labour-intensive and thus highly sensitive to wage costs. This explains the anxiety of the European landholder to secure a supply of tenant labour with little alternative but to work

for extremely low wages, and also accounts for the vociferous opposition of the planters to labour migration and to cash-crop production by Africans in the Highlands. The success of the planters in keeping the cost of labour low in Nyasaland probably goes a long way to account for the survival and expansion of European agriculture there.

The situation had changed very little by the 1920s. According to the Nyasaland Planters' Association, the 'average Nyasaland Tobacco estate' could be expected to make a profit of £176 on 80 acres of tobacco, as well as paying a salary of £400 to the European manager (the equivalent of a Resident's salary at that time). If this salary is deducted, then labour charges accounted for nearly 70% of the annual cost of running the estate.48/

The African in the Colonial Economy

The African in Nyasaland was perceived first and foremost as a labourer. The ability of the European planters, backed up by the administration, to coerce the African to work locally for extremely low wages was vital to the working of the European sector of the economy. More fundamentally, however, the economy of Nyasaland remained an African economy. Taking Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia together, about 38% of the African population of the whole area lived in Nyasaland, while 80% of the Europeans lived in Southern Rhodesia. Lacking mineral resources, Nyasaland remained an agricultural economy. In the late 1940s Phyllis Deane estimated that almost half of the net value of output produced in Nyasaland was

derived from agriculture, and more than three-quarters of the national income was earned by Africans. The African in colonial Nyasaland was the major taxpayer, consumer and contributor of foreign exchange.[49]

The pattern of tax contribution which we have noted for the early colonial period continued. In 1938 hut tax contributions still accounted for 28.7% of total local revenue in Nyasaland, whilst they accounted for 8.2% in Northern Rhodesia and 12% in Southern Rhodesia.[50] In the early 1920s, when new sources of revenue were being sought, it was estimated that 60% of all customs revenue fell on Africans, and that taking all sources of revenue together the ratio of incidence was Europeans 14%, Indians 8% and Africans 78%.[51] In 1922, Alexander Hetherwick in the Legislative Council argued that, given the massive contribution of Africans to local revenue, more ought to be spent on their education. Hetherwick argued that "Government were asking for and expecting to get from natives in the way of Hut Tax £111,047, practically £112,000 direct money paid by native for taxes to government. Now, he thought, if government looked into the matter they would find that no less than half the import dues paid at customs were paid indirectly by the native. The government therefore asked for another £30,000 to be paid by them, that is to say that the native was to contribute £140,000, and he thought out of that sum something more should be done directly for the native."[52]

It is difficult to see what benefits can be said to have

accrued to the African taxpayer. Taking the year 1906-7 as an example, in that year the Protectorate government spent £111,533 in total. The largest items of expenditure were the military budget (£35,641) and District Administration (£19,094). A very high proportion of this expenditure went on paying the salaries of European staff. Out of the total District Administration budget of £19,094, 81% was spent on 'personal emoluments', and of this only £2,873 was paid to 'native staff'. Taking expenditure as a whole for that year, 'personal emoluments' accounted for 61% of the total.[53]

The African's role as a major contributor of indirect taxes was tied up with his role as consumer and as a labour migrant. The Annual Report for 1905-6 reported a large increase in imports of 'soft goods' and a boom in 'native trade'.[54] There were 160 Indian stores in the Protectorate by then, and most of the goods retailed in them were bought from European trading firms. Accounting for this trade boom the report stated that migrants returning to British Central Africa were bringing with them between £10 and £20 each to spend, and that in the past year £22,000 had been paid to returning migrants. £22,000 was equivalent to the pay of 146,000 men working locally for one month, and as the local labour requirement at this time was calculated to be 120,000 men, then it can be seen what an important contribution remittances made to the whole economy.[55]

The trade depression in the Protectorate between 1907 and 1909 was due to local unemployment and the flooding of the labour market by labourers who had been working on railway

construction. The 99% increase in imports of soft goods which occurred in 1910-11 was attributed in part to the repatriation of migrants from the Transvaal.[56] Whilst the remittances of labour migrants were an important contribution to the colonial economy as a whole, they were not particularly significant in the area under study as compared with other areas of the Protectorate. Although there are no detailed statistics available until the 1930s, it would appear that, apart from some Yaos who migrated as capitãos and domestic servants, the majority of the families in the Shire Highlands and Upper Shire Valley earned their cash locally. In 1934 an estimated 10% of the adult male population of Zomba district was absent, 2% in Blantyre District, 7% in Mulanje District and 5% in Chiradzulu District; compared with an estimated 65% in Mzimba District, 60% in West Nyasa and 50% in North Nyasa.[57] Migrants who returned home with substantial remittances, however, could make an economic impact disproportionate to their numbers - as in the Upper Shire Valley where the only successful cotton growers were those returned migrants who had enough capital to overcome some of the constraints suffered by others.

Cash crop production did not 'take off' until the 1920s and 1930s when it began to be seen by administrators as a possible way out of Nyasaland's economic troubles. Already in our period, however, some European estate owners were beginning to perceive the advantages to themselves of a tenant production system in the cotton and tobacco industries. As have seen, from the early years of the century the Blantyre and East Africa Company used a tenant system to grow dark-fired and sun-air

cured tobacco, while the British Central Africa Company ran cotton-growing tenant schemes in the Upper Shire Valley.[58] In these schemes the landlord supplied the seed or seedlings, minimum supervision, and bought the crop direct from the tenant grower. The advantages to the landlord were that his overheads were low, the risks (such as of a natural disaster ruining the crop) were shared with the tenant, and the problem of motivating his labour was done for him. Furthermore, the tenant grower effectively provided the labour of several adults and children at peak periods.

TABLE 6

African Cotton Production as % of Total Cotton Production 1906-22

YEAR	AFRICAN COTTON PRODUCTION[1] (TONS OF SEED COTTON)	ESTIMATED TOTAL COTTON[2] PRODUCTION (TONS OF SEED COTTON)	AFRICAN COTTON PRODUCTION AS % TOTAL COTTON PRODUC.
1906	77.5	702	11 %
1907	24.5	540	4.5%
1908	17	1,011	1.6%
1909	94	1,149	8.1%
1910	692	2,386	29.0%
1911	962	2,013	47.7%
1912	744	1,517	49.0%
1913	1,198	-	-
1914	930	4,443	20.9%
1915	798	4,648	17.1%
1916	942	5,102	18.4%
1917	1,084	1,395	77.7%

Table 6 (Contd.)

YEAR	AFRICAN COTTON PRODUCTION[1/] (TONS OF SEED COTTON)	ESTIMATED TOTAL COTTON[2/] PRODUCTION (TONS OF SEED COTTON)	AFRICAN COTTON PRODUCTION AS % TOTAL COTTON PRODUc.
1918	365	378	96.5%
1919	299	1,326	22.5%
1920	375	2,144	17.4%
1921	329	3,101	10.6%
1922	747	3,748	19.9%

1/ Does not include cotton produced by African tenants on estates.

2/ Estimated from exports of ginned cotton and cotton seed and assuming production of ginned cotton to be 33% production of seed cotton.

Source: Blue Books, 1906-1923

In general, however, large-scale estate production using hired labour was the norm in this period, and most European landlords were suspicious of anything which resembled African cash-crop production. It was to some extent due to their pressure that the cotton-growing scheme for Africans living on Crown Land was eliminated from the Shire Highlands and confined to the valley. Once again, independent cotton growing by Africans did not 'take off' until the 1920s and coincided with the decline of the estate cotton growing industry. In the early years this scheme was bedevilled by problems of marketing, transport and insufficient extension advice. The labour input required to

grow cotton was not always repaid, and the peak period for labour on cotton was also the busiest time for food crop production. African cotton production rose slowly up to the First World War, and fell with the post-war slump in price . The industry in the Upper Shire did not recover from this, and when African cotton growing rose again in the 1920s it was almost wholly confined to the Lower Shire Valley.

Footnotes

1/ Vail 'Railway Development'.

2/ MacMillan, 'Origins and Development of the African Lakes'Company.'

3/ Ibid., p.126.

4/ See Chapter 4.

5/ MacMillan, 'Origins and Development of the African Lakes' Company', p.183.

6/ Life and Work, December 1889, p.3.

7/ Life and Work, August 1888, p.3.

8/ Ibid.

9/ Buchanan, Shire Highlands, p.52.

10/ Ibid., p.108.

11/ Life and Work, June 1888, p.2.

12/ The story of British assumption of political control in this region is told in detail in A.J. Hanna, The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia 1859-95, Oxford, 1969.

13/ Ibid., p.140.

14/ Ibid., p.145; p.183.

15/ Colin Baker, 'The Development of the Administration to 1897', in B. Pachai (ed), The Early History of Malawi, London, 1972, p.328.

16/ Life and Work, November 1891, p.3.

17/ Dr. Wordsworth Poole to Mother, April 16th, 1896. Private papers of Dr. Wordsworth Poole, National Archives of Malawi.

18/ ZHP/KMD/12.

19/ This was the subject of correspondence between Alfred Sharpe and Alexander Hetherwick. F.O. 2/56. 31/3/1893.

20/ Life and Work, April 1891, p.8; Life and Work, December 1892, pp.6-7.

21/ H.H. Johnston, British Central Africa, London, 1896, p.111.

22/ See Table 1.

23/ Life and Work, August 1892, p.3.

24/ Life and Work, December 1891, p.8.

25/ This came to light in the Chilembwe Rising: Nyasaland Protectorate, Report of the Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor to inquire into Various Matters and Questions concerned with the Native Rising within the Nyasaland Protectorate, Zomba, 1916, p.7.

26/ See Chapter 3.

27/ See Table 4.

28/ Boeder, 'Malawians Abroad', p.95.

29/ See Chapter 3.

30/ See Table 1, Appendix I.

31/ L.J.L. Nthenda, 'H.M. Treasury and the Problems of Nyasaland Public Finances, 1919-1940'. D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford University, 1972, p.1.

32/ See Table 2 Appendix I.

33/ Blantyre District Notebook, Vol. I, 1907, District Census Summary.

34/ See footnote 56.

35/ Figures derived from Nyasaland Protectorate, Blue Book of Statistics, Zomba, volumes published 1906-19.

36/ See Table 3, Appendix I.

37/ W.H.J. Rangeley, 'A Brief History of the Tobacco Industry in Nyasaland; Part I, N.J., X, 1, January 1957, pp.62-83.

38/ C. Baker, 'Nyasaland, The History of its Export Trade', NJ, XV, 1, January 1962, p.16.

39/ Ibid., p.21.

40/ W. Twiston Davies, Fifty Years of Progress, Bristol, 1958, pp.13-17.

41/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Department of Agriculture, Notes for Intending Settlers, Zombe, 1920, p.8.

42/ Rangeley, 'Brief History', p.73.

43/ See Table 4, Appendix I.

44/ See Chapter Four and C. Crosby, 'Railway Development in Malawi: The Early Years, 1895-1915' in MacDonald (ed), From Nyasaland to Malawi, pp.124-144.

45/ Myambo, 'Socio-Economic Change', Chapter 1.

46/ Vail, 'Railway Development', p.365.

47/ See Appendix 2.

48/ See Appendix 2.

49/ P. Deane, Colonial Social Accounting, Cambridge, 1953, p.89.

50/ Rhodesia-Nyasaland, Report of the Royal Commission of 1939, Cmd. 5949, p.71.

51/ Minutes of the Legislative Council, 22nd Session, 9/3/1920, p.7.

52/ Minutes of the Legislative Council, 25th Session, 10-11/4/1922, p.8.

53/ See Table 5 Appendix I.

54/ British Central Africa, Annual Report for 1905-06, p.20.

55/ Ibid.

56/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for 1910-11, p.1.

57/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Report of the Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor to enquire into Emigrant Labour, 1935, Zomba, 1936, p.18.

58/ See Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 3

The Shire Highlands

By 1915 the majority of households in the Shire Highlands were incorporated into the colonial economy through the direct appropriation of a portion of their male (and some female) labour by the European estates. This appropriation of labour, combined with increasing population pressure resulting from land alienation and immigration into the area, rendered food production uncertain and highly vulnerable to natural disaster. In the early nineteenth century this area had, through a relatively intensive use of labour, become a food surplus-producing area, but by the First World War there was often an overall food deficit here.

Groups and individual households on the Shire Highlands adopted a number of strategies to avoid a complete crisis in food production here. Until land shortage became acute, population mobility was a very important factor, and many people attempted to avoid the crippling demands on their labour by occupying Crown Land whenever possible. In the 1890s their involvement in the wage economy was discretionary rather than obligatory, the inhabitants of the Shire Highlands generally preferring to raise cash through the sale of surplus agricultural produce rather than as labourers. In this period the European agricultural sector relied almost entirely on migrant labour from areas outside the Shire Highlands. After the turn of the century, however, 'official' and 'unofficial' pressure placed increasingly effective demands on the labour power of both Africans resident on Crown Land, and those who were tenants on

private estates. The latter were the most severely affected, and a large proportion of these were Lomwe immigrants from Mozambique. On top of this, the expansion of European agricultural production and the adoption of a land-extensive crop, tobacco, meant that the production of food by tenants on private estates was further restricted. The inefficiency of the European agricultural sector, combined with the expense of transport and the effectiveness of European political pressure, kept wages on the estates extremely low and conditions poor. Tenants were expected to feed themselves and their families, and although migrant labour was in theory supposed to be fed, this was often not the case. The production of adequate food by the inhabitants of the Shire Highlands was thus crucial to the maintenance of a cheap labour force. Whether inhabitants of Crown Land or tenants on private estates, people here were faced with the problem of producing enough food for their subsistence, with less land and labour available to them. In most years this could be achieved by placing extra burdens on female labour, and by cultivating new crops - the higher-yielding maize and the less labour-intensive cassava. In the long run, however, people were also competing with a decline in soil fertility associated with this more intensive cultivation, and their diets were further impoverished by hunting and gun-tax regulations. At the same time, however, a certain degree of economic stratification had arisen on the Shire Highlands, which was broadly based on differential access to labour. The evidence for food shortage and famine in this period seems to indicate that some groups were unable to maintain their subsistence production and had become dependent on buying foodstuffs from the more fortunate.

Production and Social Organisation in the Shire Highlands - the Late Nineteenth Century

Chapter 1 described the organisation of Nyanja production in the nineteenth century, and briefly outlined some of the effects of the Yao migrations into this area. It appears from oral sources and from Livingstone's accounts that a relatively labour-intensive form of agriculture was practised here. Population densities were high by African standards and whilst in some places a forest-fallow system was used to grow millet and sorghum extensively, it appears that the iron hoe had been in general use here for some time and a more labour-intensive bush-fallow agriculture was practised, in combination with the cultivation of dimba gardens.[1] This had consequences for the sexual division of labour within Nyanja society. Forest-fallow agriculture required an initial heavy labour input by men who were responsible for felling trees and burning the undergrowth, but relatively little labour was required after this stage, and that which was required was largely provided by women. With the transition to bush-fallow agriculture, however, a more sustained labour input was required by both men and women in preparing the soil and weeding the crop at various stages in its growth. Furthermore, this system of agriculture was dependent on the use of the iron hoe, itself a product of male labour. The Nyanja were stereotyped by both European travellers and incoming African groups as hard-working, home-loving agriculturalists, and there does seem to have been some truth in this description. Family labour was intensively exploited to produce a frequent agricultural surplus which was traded with other areas and sold to passing caravans. One should

not exaggerate, however, the productivity of this agricultural system or the level of labour input which it involved. Whilst there was some market for agricultural surpluses it was not a large one, and production remained primarily for subsistence. There were therefore limits to the amount of labour which it was useful for this society to expend in agricultural production. On the other hand, when compared with some other African systems of production,[2] it would appear that the Nyanja economy involved the intensive use of family labour. In the nineteenth century the labour of Nyanja women was expended in food production, in domestic tasks and child-rearing, in the manufacture of pots and the procurement of salt. Nyanja men, apart from cultivating with the women and caring for domestic animals, also manufactured iron goods, barkcloth, and sometimes cotton goods - all tasks requiring a heavy input of labour on occasions.[3] It is easy to see how the appropriation of anything up to six months of male labour for the estates during the colonial period would have unbalanced this system of production. However, it would be mistaken to see the nineteenth century wholly as a period of high peasant productivity undermined by the imposition of a colonial economic system. In reality, colonial rule was imposed on a society whose productive capacity had already been severely affected by warfare, famine and involvement in a trade in luxury goods. Whilst the colonial economic system brought more fundamental structural changes, it is nonetheless necessary to see them as being imposed on an already distorted system of production.

The arrival of the Yao in the Shire Highlands, whilst initially peaceful, was soon marred by disputes over food, the Yao being seemingly uninterested in agricultural production, and the

values of their society having been altered by involvement in long-distance trade.[4] It may be worth quoting at length one testimony which illuminates Yao attitudes to production and to their Nyanja hosts:

> "While in Yao, Mlumbe used to conduct trade with the inhabitants of this land. In the course of doing so he became friends with Kamunga who was chief of this area (in Zomba)... All his followers were Nyanja and their country was beautiful and fertile ... Mlumbe one day assembled all his friends and told them: "My friends, in the course of my travels I have discovered a very beautiful country out there in the west whose owner is a Nyanja. I have befriended the chief of that land and he now depends on me for cloth, as all his people wear chiwondo (bark cloth)... My feeling is that we should migrate and see if we can find better land on which to settle in that country". He said this to his fellow headmen such as Makanjila, Chikumbeni and Kuchipiko. He further told them that Kamunga and his followers did not have guns and that their country abounded in dry season gardens where vegetables and peas grew aplenty. So they agreed that they should migrate and take some hoes with them so that with these they would be able to purchase food from the Nyanja."[5]

Instead of purchasing food, however, they raided the gardens of Kamunga's people who fled to Lake Chilwa ("where they were lucky to have fish for their food") and took their land. There are many similar stories of Yao abuse of Nyanja hospitality, and by the early 1860s it would appear that in some areas of the highlands food production was already dislocated. This development was documented by the Anglican missionaries at Magomero near present-day Chiradzulu. In December 1861 Henry Rowley noted the difficulty of procuring food in the area:

> "Owing to the unsettled state of the country a great deal of land had been left unsown in the previous season, and the pumpkins and corn which had been lately planted could not

> be gathered until the end of January. Instead of the natives flocking in every day with food for sale, they sometimes asked for a little food from us, and it was no uncommon occurrence in many parts of the surrounding country to find by the wayside the bodies of natives that had died of hunger..."[6]

This situation was compounded by a drought, so that by the end of 1862 a full-scale famine had developed. When possible the people of the highlands pursued their old strategy of migrating to the Shire River along whose banks crops still survived. But the Shire became "a river of death" where hungry people from the highlands attempted to steal crops and were killed by their owners.[7] In some places the hardy perennial sorghum (sumbwi) which the Nyanja grew survived the drought,[8] but according to the missionaries large areas of cultivated land were burnt during Yao raids, and thus natural disaster was compounded by the disruptions of warfare.

By the 1880s the organisation of Nyanja production on the Shire Highlands had already been considerably altered. Raids by the Yao and Ngoni had driven many Nyanja either to the edges of Lake Chilwa, or onto the top of mountains such as Zomba plateau.[9] Here they attempted to continue growing their staple food crops on stony soils, but it is clear that agricultural production was severely disrupted in this period. The self-sufficiency of the Nyanja regional economy broke down. Not only were their fields raided for food, but the general insecurity in the area meant that vital economic links with the Shire Valley and Chilwa plain were disrupted, so that the regular exchange of food and hoes for fish and salt could no longer be relied upon. In some areas the Yao immigrants attempted to control Nyanja iron manufacture,[10] but in general they left the

production of iron, fish and salt to the Nyanja, concentrating instead on control over exchange. Even by the 1860s the Yao had had an effect on the nature of exchange in this area and the values attached to different goods. The presence in the highlands of slavers from the Zambezi valley, as well as of the Yao themselves, enhanced this tendency. In 1861 the Anglicans at Magomero reported the presence of seventy black 'Portuguese' slave traders, headed by a white man.[11] In January 1862, when food was beginning to run short at Magomero, the missionaries found that their neighbours would only consider selling foodstuffs in exchange for slaves and goats.[12] Like their kin in the Upper Shire Valley, the Nyanja of the highlands were to a greater or lesser degree integrated into a slave-trading economy, the control of which rested largely in the hands of other groups. This had effects, not only on the nature of production here, but also on social organisation. What follows is a necessarily somewhat speculative account of some of these changes.

As we have seen, Nyanja society in the early nineteenth century was politically decentralised. The widest unit of social organisation was the exogamous matrilineal clan. Beneath this were villages based around matrilineal kin groups, and beneath these the household, which was the major unit of production. Yao social organisation, whilst broadly similar, had been affected by a long involvement in long-distance trade which diverted male labour from agricultural production and placed certain strains on the social organisation - particularly on the institution of marriage. This tendency seems to have been enhanced with greater involvement in

the slave trade, and to have affected Nyanja as well as Yao groups. It is possible that amongst the Yao women had relied increasingly on their sorority groups and matrilineages as the most stable units of society when their husbands were absent for unpredictably long periods. It is perhaps significant that, unlike earlier migrations, the movements of population dating from the late nineteenth century are described in terms of the movements of matrilineal and sorority groups, and often in terms of the movements of individual women. From the oral evidence it would appear that some women moved in groups apart from their male kin, or led migrations which their male relatives followed. One group of six Yao women migrated from Mozambique in the late nineteenth century, and all married men whom they found in the area to which they moved.13/

Migrations are sometimes described as having been led by an "ancestress" of the matrilineal group. This may not always have been literally true, and to some extent may simply be an idiom in which to describe the movement of the group. Some cases are explicit, however. One Yao woman, Namwanji, was said to have led her elder and younger brothers, as well as about thirty distantly related households, from Makanjila's to the Zomba area.14/ Another movement of Yao people was described as the ancestors following women members of the family who had already dispersed and married into families around Zomba.15/ Thus the matrilineage was a common unit of migration, and women were central to this as by marrying amongst the host people they paved the way for the migration of their families.

Whilst some women thus featured as the 'heroic' leaders of

this period, the majority were experiencing extreme insecurity, as the growing slave trade altered social norms. Many women were completely uprooted in this period, and the changes in the nature of the marriage institution were largely unfavourable to them. Marcia Wright has described how, in nineteenth century Tanganyika, 'customary' relationships with the security they offered women in marriage and kinship gave way to a system in which women approximated to currency.[16] Undoubtedly this change occurred to some degree in Southern Malawi as well.

In one instance recorded by the missionaries at Magomero, it is evident that the mere fact of intermarriage between Yao and Nyanja did not ensure the security of women:

> "Going out, we saw a man in the hands of two of the Makololo, and a number of women vociferating around him, and several of our own people shouting that he was an Ajawa. We thought of spies at first, but it turned out that one of the women, lately came, recognized him as having sold her, and wearing the cloth he had received as her price. She declared a relationship to exist between them, her own husband and his wife being brother and sister, and that these two worthies had together taken her and sold her into slavery. ... he confessed to having sold her, and appears to have been indeed an Ajawa settled amongst the Mang'anja".[17]

Alfred Kambuwa also illuminates the nature of marriage in this period when he describes the fortunes of his mother as a young girl in the mid-nineteenth century. She was a 'free-born' Yao girl from Mozambique who was chosen by her people as a 'priestess' whose role was to offer sacrifices to the ancestors when the village moved to a new location. In the course of one such move she was taken by the host chief as a fine, and war broke out between the two groups

as a result. This war resulted in a further migration in the course of which the girl was forced to travel with her captors. When they reached the village of their relatives a litigation was in progress in which a man had to be compensated for theft. The captured girl was handed over once again as payment, and from this time on she was considered to be a 'slave'. The girl was apparently treated badly at the hands of her new 'owner' and ran away, seeking asylum with a Nyanja chief who welcomed her and treated her well. However, a few years later the chief's elder wife became seriously ill and said that when she died she wished the captive girl to accompany her to the grave. Another woman warned the girl of this and advised her to run away, which she did, eventually finding refuge with another Nyanja family. This was around 1860. As we have seen, the famine, disease and warfare of the 1860s drove many Nyanja off the Shire Highlands. Maenje, the girl's host, was one of these and he left the girl in hiding on the highlands to fend for herself, whilst he looked for land elsewhere. Her eventual 'marriage' which dates from this period, was the outcome of an argument between two men who found her here and who both claimed her for themselves.[18]

If this was a typical story, and it seems that it may have been, it is clear that there was little security in marriage for a woman in the late nineteenth century, and that she was therefore possibly more dependent on her own matrilineal relatives than before. Of course, the 'household' was still usually based around a marriage, and was still the major unit of production, but the stability and centrality of this social and economic unit had been to some extent undermined by the changes associated with the slave trade. The predominance of women as 'domestic slaves', and the ease

with which many of them were absorbed into new lineages, implies that their productive and reproductive capacities were highly valued. On the other hand, the very instability of these relationships undermined their productive capacities, as did their potential exchange value which led to some of them being withdrawn from agricultural production altogether. Even their reproductive potential could be diminished by the physical and psychological stress which accompanied the slave trade.[19/]

The political authority of Yao chiefs in this area, such as Malemia, Mlumbe and Chikowi, was never so well defined as it was amongst the Mbewe chiefs of the Upper Shire Valley.[20/] The Yao here were themselves insecure in the face of both Mbewe and Ngoni aggression, and as a consequence alliances between and among all the groups in the area were constantly being made and unmade. Being insecure themselves, the Yao often used 'peaceful' institutional means of control over the Nyanja population, as well as military means. These methods included widespread intermarriage and utilisation of shared clan identity to facilitate assimilation. As we have seen, however, inter-marriage was no guarantee of security for their subjects, and the institution of 'pawnship' was extended and distorted.[21/] Whilst 'upward mobility' for slaves was possible and frequently achieved through marriage to a member of the 'owner's' family, the slave was nonetheless in an insecure position because his or her future depended on the fortunes in war of the group to which he was attached. If he was a man, the best thing he could do was to distinguish himself in warfare, thus earning himself status within the group and eventually 'freedom'. It was just as probable, however, that his group would

lose at war and that he would be traded as a peace offering or payment to the enemy.[22]

In the last half of the nineteenth century there arose a significant degree of social and economic dislocation on the Shire Highlands. The picture we have drawn for the early nineteenth century of a productive agricultural community, relatively protected against disaster, has to be redrawn for the latter part of the century. In many places agricultural production was severely disrupted. Communities were both physically mobile and unstable in terms of their composition. Much male labour was diverted into warfare and defence, and the nature of economic exchange had changed, with slaves becoming a currency against which the value of other goods was measured. The highlands were made vulnerable to famine and to the diseases which accompanied it, and the traditional strategies for averting disaster, such as migration to the Shire, could often not be pursued because of the level of physical insecurity in the area.

When European settlers began to arrive in this area in the late 1870s and 1880s, they found vast tracts of 'empty' uncultivated land. The Nyanja people were not greatly in evidence, having taken to the hill-tops for security, and the major occupation of the Yao appeared to be warfare.

Changes in Production and Exchange 1880-1900

This period saw the establishment of European trading and agricultural enterprises on the Shire Highlands. It also saw the gradual phasing-out of the slave trade and the diversion of the ivory trade into European hands. The inhabitants of the Shire

Highlands responded to the new conditions of relative physical security by re-occupying the more favoured soils in the area and re-establishing food production. By 1891, vast areas of the better land had already been alienated to Europeans, but very little of it was under direct production, and African agriculture was as yet relatively undisturbed. The labour for the trading companies and for the European production of coffee was largely supplied by migrants from the centre and north of the Protectorate, and these migrant labourers provided a growing market for foodstuffs on the Shire Highlands. The 1890s saw the emergence or re-emergence of a peasantry on the Shire Highlands, whose production was geared to this market, and who generally declined to work as direct labour on European enterprises. In the same period a small group of Africans with extensive mission contact obtained individual ownership of land, employed labour, and began producing cash-crops and entering the retail trade.

After 1900, however, the increasing demands of European agriculture for land and labour gradually transformed the Yao and Nyanja populations into a dependent labour force, and undermined, not only their production for the market, but also their subsistence production. The evidence for the sale of food crops in the markets of the Shire Highlands continues for the 1900s, but becomes more ambiguous, and is accompanied by increasing evidence for famine and the disruption of food production. Whereas in the 1890s, the beginning of economic stratification based on control over agricultural production and marketing could be seen amongst the African population of the Shire Highlands, after 1900 this becomes increasingly insignificant.

In the 1880s a large number of Africans on the Shire Highlands were involved in two systems of exchange and distribution. Yao chiefs such as Matapwiri in Mulanje signed treaties with the Portuguese and continued their slaving operations throughout the 1880s and 1890s.[23] Their slave-trading caravans traversed the Shire Highlands at the same time as porters employed by the African Lakes Corporation carried goods to and from the company's stores and river depots. Of course, these two economic systems were not entirely distinct, and neither can they be characterised as an opposition of the 'traditional' and 'modern'. After all, the early European traders were involved in much the same kind of activity as the Yao chiefs prior to the dominance of the slave trade - they were, in the main, interested in 'collected' items, particularly ivory, and relied heavily for the supply of these on African hunters and middlemen. Some groups may have seen the involvement of Europeans in trade simply in terms of an overall escalation in economic activity and exploited this by extending their raiding activities to include this new source of wealth. Groups of armed Yaos hijacked porters on the roads and stole their loads, whilst the porters themselves (who were usually Ngoni) made off with their own loads.[24]

One individual whose career neatly summarises the circumstances of this period is the African entrepreneur, Kumtaja. Kumtaja has been discussed by other writers,[25] and he provides the only documented example of continuity between pre-colonial and early colonial entrepreneurship in this area. Kumtaja's origins are obscure. It seems that he may have had some claim to the Malemia

chieftaincy, though he is also described as a descendant of Makanjila's, and elsewhere as a Nyanja.[26] The obscurity of his origins is not untypical of many leaders of this period. In any case, he was able to build up an independent following by exploiting factional differences on the Shire Highlands, and accumulated a considerable amount of capital as an elephant hunter. With the arrival of the Europeans he played them at their own game by negotiating a large concession of land from the chiefs around Blantyre and going into coffee cultivation and the brick-making business. His labour was provided by the Ngoni, with whom he had a prior military alliance, and for some time he successfully competed with European enterprises for their allegiance. As with the early European entrepreneurs, however, he relied ultimately on the sale of ivory for his capital, and as the European traders increasingly monopolised the export of this product, he was reduced to a relationship of dependence on them. In the end his other enterprises failed, and in 1911 he died impoverished.[27]

For the majority of Shire Highlanders the late 1880s and 1890s was a period when their main efforts were directed towards the re-establishment of efficient and reliable agricultural production. From a very early date, however, it seems that they responded to the new markets created by the European presence, not only by increasing production of their 'traditional' crops, but also by adopting new crops for sale. In the 1880s John Buchanan praised the efficiency of African agriculture on the Shire Highlands and the responsiveness of the African cultivator to opportunities for the sale of their products. "Once introduce a market for their agricultural products" he wrote, "and they will cultivate

extensively... they will cultivate at once those things which are likely to remunerate them best".[28] From the vantage point of his estate in Zomba, Buchanan noted that people were extending their gardens in order to grow patches of groundnuts, sesame and sugar-cane for sale.[29]

In the 1880s, however, this kind of production was probably limited to the immediate environs of Blantyre and Zomba. Most households were returning to something like their early nineteenth century system of production. In the 1880s, craft production had been little affected by imports, even on the Shire Highlands. As Buchanan noted, men still manufactured iron goods, cotton cloth and bark-cloth, and the women still made salt.[30] The sexual division of labour was thus very similar to what it had been in the early nineteenth century, and with the gradual decline of the slave trade and its accompanying disruption, male labour was freed from many military and defensive tasks. Some of this male labour was then diverted into wage labour for the transport companies, but in general societies in this area preferred to utilise it to intensify agricultural production and sell the surplus. By the mid-1890s the local Yao and Nyanja populations of the Shire Highlands were moving away from the immediate environs of Blantyre where the European presence was most strongly felt, to areas where a free access to land could be guaranteed. The Blantyre missionaries remarked that this tendency endangered the food supply of the Blantyre area, upon which large numbers of imported labourers relied.[31] Nevertheless, by the end of the 1890s the supply of surplus foodstuffs to the centres of labour was such as to raise a demand for a "native market" to be set up in Blantyre, "where natives could sell at a

fixed tariff".[32] A market was finally set up in Blantyre in 1905 and was said to be very popular, with "many hundreds" congregating there daily to sell food to labourers. A similar market was opened in Zomba in the same year.[33]

The Yao population to some extent continued to live up to their image of being disdainful of agricultural labour. Instead of intensifying production themselves some preferred to employ migrant labourers in their gardens on their days off and to pay them in food.[34] The 3s hut tax was apparently easily raised through the sale of produce in the labour districts and the Central African Times somewhat exaggeratedly described Africans living in the "settled districts" as living "in idleness and luxury on the enormous profit of petty trading". It was apparently possible to raise enough cash to pay the hut tax from the sale of ten to twelve fowls, or thirty-six eggs, three baskets of flour, three baskets of potatoes, or three pots of beer.[35] Of course the evidence of the planters on this point is biased because their main concern was at the loss of potential labour which such activity implied, but they were nevertheless broadly correct in their observation that "the richer on average a native grows the more he takes to independent means of making money".[36]

The concentration of a large number of labourers in the area and the beginnings of European agricultural production may have briefly stimulated some 'traditional' industries as well as the production of surplus food crops. The tobacco growers of Zomba and Chikala found a ready market for their product amongst the labourers of the Blantyre area, to whom they sold 1 lb rolls of

cured tobacco for 2d each.[37] The first European planters relied on their labourers to supply their own hoes, and this may have stimulated the local iron industry. This was a very brief phenomenon, however. One informant in Zomba described how hoes were made in his village and then detailed how this industry was undermined:

> "I was told that Buchanan came here and took one of Khoswe's hoes as a sample and soon afterwards the A.L.C. began selling us hoes."[38]

It is clear from this evidence and from the frequent assertions of the European planters, that the Yao and Nyanja of the Shire Highlands spurned wage labour in favour of peasant production in this period. Where they did enter wage labour it would appear that the Yao in particular managed to monopolise the skilled tasks. In 1897 the division of labour in Mr. Israel's plantation near Blantyre was described in the Government Gazette. It was said that "every tribe has fitness for a certain type of work" and that the Yao were particularly suitable for "skilled labour, such as sawing, pruning and brick-laying".[39] Their position as a labour elite, combined with their employment of migrant labour on their own gardens, demonstrates that the Yao of the Shire Highlands entered the new colonial economy largely on their own terms.

In the same period a remarkable group of African entrepreneurs emerged on the Shire Highlands who obtained individual leases to land, employed labour and grew cash crops. This group has been described in some detail by Myambo,[40] and so the information presented here will be selective. Unlike Kumtaja, the careers of these individuals show little continuity with pre-colonial economic entrepreneurship. They were largely products of the Blantyre Mission and they were encouraged in their activities both by the missionaries and,

initially, by the administration. Harry Johnston, for instance, remarked on the desire of "the more intelligent natives" to possess their own land, and said that he had "always encouraged this feeling as it gives the man a much greater sense of being settled down, and he becomes a more responsible personage with a stake in the country".[41] In any case, a number of Africans did obtain freehold and leasehold land from the administration in this period.[42] The mere possession of individually-held land does not, of course, necessarily imply that this land was exploited any differently to customary land, especially when the acreage held was very small. However, we have evidence that a number of these landholders did use wage labour to produce some crops exclusively for sale. Furthermore, many of them combined their agricultural activities with involvement in the retail trade, and in rural areas they monopolised the sale of imported items to the local inhabitants prior to the growth of Indian retailing.

In Zomba, for instance, an ex-capitao of Buchanan's, Paton Somanje, obtained a lease of 200 acres from the Buchanan Bros. in 1896. He used both family labour and hired labour in order to grow coffee, oranges, chillies, cabbages and masala. The coffee was sold to Buchanan Bros., while the other products were hawked around Zomba. Like other African entrepreneurs, Somanje did not find the cultivation of coffee profitable, but made money on his other enterprises, which included the ownership of a shop. At one time Somanje had six full-time workers who lived on the estate, as well as ganyu labour. He had five children, and his sons as well as daughters stayed on the land with their spouses and provided labour. One of his surviving daughters-in-law,

Elizabeth Tembo, recalled how she had helped in weeding and doing other jobs, and said that Somanje had used the profits of his business to send all five of his children to school. When he died, Somanje left his estate to his eldest son, Edward, but in the meantime he had acquired another estate of 100 acres at Ulumba near Zomba, which was specifically for his nephews and nieces and which was not exploited commercially.[43] In this way the Somanje family avoided the problems associated with inheritance which faced other African landholding families, such as that of Andrew Kapitikusya.

Kapitikusya was a Nyanja from Zomba and had also been a capitao for Buchanan. He had earned a reputation for his knowledge on the running of estates, and when new Europeans arrived in the area they were said to have come to him for instructions. Kapitikusya also acquired a lease of land from the Blantyre and East Africa Company at Jali and farmed it commercially, but the estate fell apart at his death as a result of the conflicting claims of his descendants.[44]

There were other, more formidable obstacles to the survival of this group, however, as Myambo has described, and although they were still active at the time of the Chilembwe Rising, the seeds of their decline can be seen in discriminatory colonial policies dating from the turn of the century. One early measure which may have affected them, as well as Kumtaja, was the introduction of gun licensing and hunting laws in the 1890s, which effectively cut off a major source of capital for aspiring Africans.[45] Furthermore, any African who wished to hold land individually was required to go through a cumbersome and expensive bureaucratic procedure;[46] he was dependent on Europeans for the marketing of any 'exotic' export crop such as coffee; after 1901 his labour supply was jeopardised

by the institution of the tax rebate system which did not allow him to sign labour certificates;[47] and after 1903 the Credit with Natives Ordinance made it illegal for him to obtain credit of more than 20/- from any 'non-native' without official approval.[48]

If only for a short period, this group of entrepreneurs were vocal and influential figures on the Shire Highlands, playing something of a mediating role between the mass of the African population and the missionaries and embryonic colonial administration. Somanje was chosen to represent the whole African population of the Protectorate when he read a speech at the King's Birthday Celebrations of 1902.[49]

Somanje and Kapitikusya were elders of the Zomba Church of Scotland and toured the villages dissuading people from participating in initiation ceremonies.[50] It seems likely that they provided a model for aspiring peasants on the Shire Highlands, and the model was a capitalistic one.

The date 1900 is a somewhat arbitrary one with which to end this section. The evidence for both small-scale independent peasant activity and for proto-capitalist enterprise does not end in 1900, but after this date the evidence becomes somewhat more ambiguous, indicating that for some groups the option of independent peasant production, as a means of subsistence and as a source of cash, was being closed to them.

The evidence for peasant production on the Shire Highlands in the 1880s and 1890s is not as overwhelming as that for other parts of Central Africa at the time, and this is no doubt partly

because the market for their goods was still limited.[51] It does, however, indicate that whenever possible, Africans here preferred to raise cash through the intensification of their agricultural activities, rather than through the sale of their labour. Because of the prevalence of inter-marriage and because of the misleading colonial characterisations of different groups, it is not easy to make any meaningful contrasts between 'Yao' and 'Nyanja' during this period. The evidence of colonial observers points to a continuation of the male Yao disdain of agricultural labour, and their aptitude for middleman positions. This begs the crucial question of who the 'Yao' were at this period.

Apart from the adoption of new vegetable crops for sale, there were no radical changes in the crops grown, or the technology used to produce them. The 'traditional' hoe was copied and sold back to the African cultivator, and in most places the alienation of land had not yet necessitated any radical changes in land use. Maize may have been gaining ground at the expense of sorghum and cassava, but the main evidence for this change comes after the turn of the century.

As regards trade and distribution, however, the picture is more complex. The military destruction of the Yao trading chieftaincies was not fully accomplished until the end of the 1890s, and although Africans on the Shire Highlands were probably more involved in colonial networks of trade than those elsewhere, it is nonetheless likely that many of them continued to participate in older systems of distribution and exchange, at least until the hut tax came to be demanded in cash. Thus, in the early 1890s a

kinship group on the Shire Highlands may have bartered food for salt from Lake Chilwa, have bought hoes and other ironware with goats and chickens, have acquired cloth from the East Coast through a kinship link with a Yao trader, or have traded a 'slave' for such cloth. At the same time, members of this group might have raided the A.L.C. carriers on the Blantyre to Zomba road, might have sold foodstuffs to Europeans in exchange for rupees, might have employed Ngoni labour in their gardens in exchange for food, and might have acquired imported British or Indian cloth through a month's labour at the Blantyre Mission.

Their cultural contacts may have been equally varied. Swahili _waalimu_ toured the area in this period, spreading the Islamic religion and bolstering the prestige of the Yao chiefs in proportion to their economic decline.[52/] In some places initiation and funeral rites, and to a lesser extent dietary habits, underwent considerable change as a result. At the same time the influence of Christianity spread with the extension of the Church of Scotland's activities, and with it the spread of European literacy.[53/] Furthermore, the early colonial regime brought with it a variety of 'exotic' camp followers - Sikh soldiers were used in the campaigns against Yao chiefs, as were Makua from Mozambique.[54/] Tonga labourers from the northern lakeshore came to work as carriers for the government and for the A.L.C. as did many Ngoni, some of whom settled in the area and intermarried with the local Yao and Nyanja.[55/]

During this period, then, Shire Highlanders were selective in their participation in the colonial economy, generally avoiding wage labour in favour of an intensification of agricultural production which would guarantee their subsistence needs as well

as provide them with the means to pay their taxes and to meet other cash requirements.

The Development of a Wage Economy 1900-1915

The transformation of the people of the Shire Highlands from independent peasants to wage labourers and tenants was not achieved overnight, but during this period the increasing demands of European agriculture for land and labour, coupled with legislation favouring the European sector, undermined the economic independence of the peasant here and made an annual period of agricultural labour on the estates virtually obligatory for all men. Thus, to different degrees, households in this area had to adjust to the loss of part of their labour force, usually at the busiest time of the agricultural year. This loss of labour, together with increasing pressure on land resources, jeopardised food production and gave rise to a series of more or less serious food shortages in this period. A full-scale disaster was in fact averted by the flexibility and adaptability of the peasant farming household which adopted new cropping patterns and extended its female labour in order to meet its needs.

From the earliest years the issue of 'labour' figured prominently in the writings of all involved in European agriculture, and it is through studying labour supply that one is able to make the connections between European production and African production, which tend to stand separated in the written sources. It is also on the issue of labour that oral information becomes most useful. The experiences of estate workers, and particularly the imposition of a labour tax, *thangata*, is an aspect of colonial life on the Shire Highlands which has been frequently discussed by post-independence politicians, and

it is sometimes difficult to disentangle the politicised and popularised image of this experience from the reality. In general, however, informants seem to maintain remarkably independent views, and what emerges from the oral evidence is the fact that conditions varied quite widely from estate to estate and, wherever possible, people used their limited freedom to improve their position.

As we have seen, in the 1890s the European trading companies and coffee producers relied largely on imported labour from the centre and north of the country, whilst Shire Highlanders themselves worked only irregularly. Even the imported labour, however, was initially seasonal. The annual influx of Ngoni labourers into the Shire Highlands took place in March or April, after the harvest of their own food crops. If for some reason the harvest was late, as it was in 1892, the labourers arrived later.[56/] The Ngoni labourers travelled by foot to Mpimbi where they crossed the Shire River. Here they were usually recruited for work on one or other of the Shire Highlands estates, or as tenga-tenga labour. Johnston introduced the first labour regulations in 1893 in order to control the conditions of this recruitment.[57/] These regulations stipulated that any African who was engaged for more than one month should be engaged before an officer of the Administration, and a contract recorded then and there on a form for which a charge of one shilling was made, to be met by the employer. The European agricultural interests, represented by the Shire Highlands Planters' Association and the Nyasaland Planters' Association, protested, and the Blantyre missionaries claimed that these regulations would "prey very heavily" on the planting interests, and that the government was acting autocratically.[58/] It is clear that Johnston feared already

that the methods of recruitment used and the conditions of employment of Africans were often oppressive. In a despatch of January 1893 he described an incident in which an agent of the African Lakes Corporation carried an argument with his 'table-boy' to the extreme of raiding his village, confiscating all the goods therein, and tying up and beating the boy and his family. Johnston added that "there are other landholders who are proceeding to treat the natives living on native reserves within their estates, as serfs. These also are very indignant because I assert the right of the native to work for whom he will, or not to work at all unless he chooses.[59]

Apart from those Tonga and Ngoni who were frequently recruited and then left destitute around Blantyre,[60] Shire Highlanders were also recruited for forced labour recruitment in this early period. In the minds of many ordinary Africans the government agent and the labour recruiter were one and the same. In 1892 the missionary, Hetherwick, complained about the actions of a Zanzibari in the employ of the Administration, who abducted the daughter of a headman near Blantyre and refused to release her until he paid his taxes:

> "We read that where slave raiding is unhindered Arabs seize women and hold them in durance till tusks of ivory redeem them. Here, if we substitute Protectorate taxes for tusks, the principle (or want of it) is not so very different."[61]

Kambuwa claims that when Europeans needed labour on the highlands they approached the District Resident who sent messengers to find recruits:

> "Whenever they went to a village they had their relatives with them. They often asked the village headman to give them two or three people, according to the size of the village. They also

> demanded a chicken. Later on messengers began to catch people in the villages without the chief's permission. It was discouraging that these people were treated like thieves".[62]

According to Kambuwa, messengers were called askari, whether they came from the Boma or were actually soldiers of the King's African Rifles, but:

> "After sometime people realised that true soldiers were those who came from the K.A.R. and that those who came from the boma were only messengers. These people were easily beaten in the villages but people made sure not to tear their uniforms."[63]

Thus, in the public mind the confusion between administrator, soldier and planter was complete, though the Shire Highlands population were the first to unravel them and make some assessment of their relative power and influence.

Despite the coercion of the population, the European planters, expanding their production of coffee in this period, continued to rely heavily on imported labour throughout the 1890s. However, they were worried by the seasonality and unreliability of this supply. The Ngoni chief, Chikuse, was defeated in 1896 and the central Ngoni 'subdued', thus opening up a wider area for labour recruitment. The expected influx of labour did not, however, live up to expectations. Labourers were paid in calico, and although wages had apparently risen from seven yards per month in 1892 to fourteen yards in 1896,[64] this was not sufficient to entice the now "saucy" Ngoni and Tonga to the Shire Highlands in sufficient numbers.[65] Furthermore, the tendency for Africans from the north and centre of the Protectorate to migrate outside the country for better paid employment greatly concerned local Europeans.[66] The Planters' Associations were quick to point out that this labour migration

contributed to a local labour shortage. In reality the relationship between migration and local labour supply was not straightforward or automatic, but the fact that the planters believed it to be is nevertheless important.[67]

The answer to their problems obviously lay in the creation of a pliant, permanent supply of local labour, and to some extent this was achieved for them by the immigration of the Lomwe from Mozambique, which began at the turn of the century. The Lomwe were escaping from what appear to have been extremely oppressive conditions in the Companha da Zambezia's concession in Mozambique.[68] Most of them found their way into Nyasaland independently, but some were deliberately sought by labour recruiters. In 1900 thousands of Lomwe were recruited by a firm named Messrs. Walker Brothers and Sinderman and were left sick and dying of smallpox in appalling conditions in Ndirande, near Blantyre.[69] Despite the poor conditions which often greeted them, these were evidently preferable to what they had left behind, for the Lomwe continued to come - their immigration gathered pace in 1903-4 and continued into the 1930s.[70] In 1907 Duff estimated that there were 15,000-20,000 Lomwe immigrants in Mulanje district alone.[71] Many Lomwe immigrants were able to claim some relationship with 'indigenous' Nyanja inhabitants of the Shire Highlands and this enabled them to settle on Crown Land.[72] There are no available statistics to tell us what proportion of immigrants were thus settled, but the impression one gains from both written and oral sources is that as time went on and as Crown Land became more crowded, the Lomwe came to form the basis of a tenantry on the private estates.

Though the local administration claimed to have a policy of

non-interference on labour matters, it was in fact becoming increasingly involved at the turn of the century as an accomplice to European planting interests. Those Africans whose land had been alienated by the certificates of claim now found themselves transformed into 'tenants' with little or no protection. In 1901 Hynde, the manager of the newly-formed Blantyre and East Africa Company, set about securing a steady supply of local labour by asking the tenants on his Zomba estates either to sign an agreement with him for payment of rent in cash or in labour, or to leave the estates.[73] This example was quickly followed by other landholders. The African tenants were not entirely without their defenders, as witnessed the famous case in 1903 when the supervisor of Native Affairs petitioned the High Court on behalf of residents of one of the Blantyre and East Africa Company estates.[74] The upshot of this was the Native Locations Ordinance of 1904 which recommended that a cash rent be paid by tenants on estates and that they be provided with a certain amount of security of tenure. The Ordinance was never enforced and in the meantime the government had encouraged the growth of labour tenancy, or <u>thangata</u>, by introducing a system of differential taxation in 1901 by which an African who produced a certificate to show that he had worked for one month or more for a European paid half the tax of one who had not performed any labour for a European planter or for the administration.[75] The effect of these regulations was apparently immediate, and the impact on all residents of the Shire Highlands must have been considerable. Those who were tenants on estates were now faced with the possibility of working one, two or even three months for their rent, and another for their tax payment. Those living on Crown

Land had either to earn six shillings from some other source, or to work on an estate for their labour certificate and their tax.

These new regulations brought forward a more regular supply of labour and facilitated the expansion of European cotton production.[76] In 1902-3 nearly 150,000 Africans of the Protectorate worked for at least a month, while 13,000 did not work at all for a European.[77] Some of these 13,000 may have performed labour for other Africans, but only European employers were allowed to issue tax certificates. Very soon it was claimed that the bulk of the work on the estates was now being performed by 'local' Africans. This is borne out by the labour statistics from Mulanje district for 1904 which show that out of a total of 12,349 men employed in the district, 11,487 were 'local' men.[78]

But the landlords, ever fearful of a labour shortage, continued to strengthen their hold over tenants. 1903 was the year of the Nunan judgement and the Lands Commission where concern was expressed at the lack of security of tenure for tenants on private estates. Yet, also in 1903, the Commissioner stated that he was prepared to sanction temporary agreements between landlords and tenants for the provision of labour rent, and a number of these agreements are recorded in the Blantyre District Notebooks. On the Blantyre and East Africa Company estates tenants were required to pay 3/- rent in cash or to perform one month's labour, but on their Chiradzulu and Michiru estates the cash rent was 4/-. The Zambezi Industrial Mission required 4/- or a month's work. The A.L.C. estate at Thyolo required 8/- or a month's work, as did the British Central Africa Company. Tenants on Hutton's estate at Luchenza,

however, were required to grow one acre of tobacco.[79]

Whilst in theory tenants were thus permitted to pay their rent in cash, in practice on most estates thangata was the rule, and was promoted by the arrangements which grew up between estates and District Residents to facilitate the payment of taxes. One such arrangement was recorded in the Mulanje District Notebook. In 1900-01 there were 470 huts belonging to tenants on that portion of A.L. Bruce's land which lay within Mulanje district. A "verbal agreement" was apparently made between the manager and tenants to the effect that tenants would work for two months in the wet season: "The local manager informs the Resident about January, asking him to inform natives that they must turn out for work, and when they have completed this work a list of their names and a cheque are sent to the Resident, who then issues tax papers directly to natives. The Resident then takes a census of huts in February or March so as to prevent any natives proving defaulters".[80]

Despite the fact that better pay lured labourers to the railway in this period,[81] it was only the small independent planters who suffered from lack of labour. One of them wrote to the Central African Times that he saw "no chance for the small man who has only a few acres and no tenants to assist him".[82] The fact was that through the mechanism of thangata and through the differential taxation system, the large companies had their labour supply virtually ensured at a very low price.

The issue of thangata dominates reminiscences of the colonial period on the Shire Highlands. According to informants, conditions varied widely from estate to estate and people moved from one to

another in search of better conditions, or from estate to Crown Land if they could find a headman there to accept them.

The early, pre-_thangata_ days of European agriculture are remembered as something of a 'golden age'. One Lomwe informant, whose family probably arrived in the area well after Buchanan's day, asserted that Buchanan grew sugar-cane and distributed it free to his workers.[83] Buchanan is more generally remembered for not having employed any coercive measures in order to obtain labour. This was the case when Peter Malindi's father worked as a builder for Buchanan, but by the time Malindi himself came to work there the estate had come under the ownership of the Blantyre and East Africa Company, and _thangata_ was in force.[84] A number of people living on their Zomba estates ran away to escape _thangata_. Village Headman Nazinomwe asserted in interview that his village had not in fact been within the boundaries of the Blantyre and East Africa Company estate, but that _thangata_ of one month was demanded of the village all the same. Many people moved away because of _thangata_ and because of a land shortage caused by the creation of the estate.[85] One Mpotola family who were immigrants from Mozambique settled for some time on the Bruce estates near Chiradzulu, but were treated so badly that they left to settle on Crown Land.[86] Hilda Mapata from a village near Zomba said that many women went to work for two or three months a year on the nearby Mulungusi estate belonging to the Blantyre and East Africa Company, and they were paid in cloth.[87] Elsewhere, however, women as well as men were obliged to perform labour service for no pay. One informant said that originally only men had had to perform _thangata_, but in time this was extended to include unmarried women as well.[88] The same

family, who were immigrants from Mozambique, had a history of movement from estate to estate. They had moved from one estate at Magomero because, not only were they forced to perform thangata, but the women of the family were arrested for collecting firewood on the estate.[89] There were attempts at controlling the mobility of tenants, and apart from the beatings handed out by estate managers,[90] Africans received 'official' lashes for breach of the Native Labour Ordinance of 1906. Floggings were often queried by the Colonial Office, however, and in one instance the Governor admitted that two men had been flogged in error under the mistaken impression that they were "incorrigible rogues", the Assistant Magistrate concerned having interpreted this as meaning "habitual offenders" against the Labour Ordinance.[91]

Other immigrants onto the Shire Highlands took a different view of life on the estates. One Yao family who had been wandering from place to place for years finally settled on one of the Blantyre and East Africa Company estates, managed by Hunter, in 1910. Explaining why they had settled there the informant said:

> "My father had originally suggested that we should ask for land from Mlumbe in Zomba, but mother refused and said that we would rather ask for land from a white man than from a fellow black African. We felt that a fellow African would later remind us that we were strangers to the land. But a white man would not do so as long as we gave him thangata."[92]

Leonard Phiri's family then performed thangata for their landlord "in appreciation of his hospitality", and attempted to regard him as they might regard a chief, developing a loyalty to him, and identifying with him in his quarrels with other Europeans:

> "we felt that our own landlord, Hunter, was the most considerate. But the others felt

> that too about their landlords. Perhaps it was really Jarvis Livingstone of the Bruce Estates who was harsh because if we happened to pass by his house he would ask us: 'Whose slave are you?' When one replied, 'I'm a slave of Hunter!' one was in trouble. But if one mentioned Carmichael he would not touch you."[93]

Reminiscences of thangata are difficult to date as they tend to dominate views of the whole colonial period. It is not easy, from oral testimony, to decide when and whether conditions worsened on the estates. The Chilembwe Rising of 1915 does however stand out as a distinct event. Leonard Phiri was one of many informants who attested to the harshness of the regime on the Bruce estates.[94] Denis Matukuta was another. He was working as a capitao on Bartlett's estate in Thondwe when the Rising took place:

> "Livingstone was very cruel to his tenants. It took six months to get a tax letter, and a month's wages were a couple of tobacco leaves. It was too bad if you didn't smoke!"[95]

It is not clear what effect, if any, the Chilembwe Rising had on the attitude of tenants on other estates. When asked if they ever refused to perform thangata, most people explained that they had not because of the real threat of having their huts burnt to the ground.

Not all families lived under conditions as harsh as those on Bruce's estates, but a significant proportion of the Shire Highlands population were tenants in this period. In 1904 in Zomba district, for instance, a total of 9,239 huts were taxed, and of these slightly over half (4,637) were the huts of Africans resident on estates.[96] Inhabitants of Crown Land escaped the worst forms of coercion, but the system of differential taxation had ensured their participation in the economy as wage labourers. In Blantyre district in 1904,

for instance, out of 29,103 huts taxed, only 211 paid at the higher rate of 6/-, whilst the remainder provided proof of their having worked for at least one month for a European.[97] Some Crown Land residents may have earned their labour certificates by performing tenga-tenga, and a minority, at least, held on to their economic independence through a variety of means. A large trade in labour certificates grew up whereby Africans in Blantyre District were able to buy certificates from migrant labourers who constantly changed their employers and gave a different name at each change.[98] Furthermore, the administration was ambivalent in its attitude to independent peasant farming on the Shire Highlands, and for a while this survived. For instance, the government-sponsored African cotton industry briefly affected a small number of Shire Highlanders (there were 66 growers in Blantyre District in 1910), who grew small patches of cotton and sold it to the Administration, in some cases receiving a tax rebate on the cotton grown,[99] and in 1906 "over 1,500 tons of maize had been purchased from natives in Blantyre district alone".[100] By 1915, however, the Blantyre Resident wrote in his District Notebook:

> "It is now recognized that native cotton growing should not be encouraged in the highlands of Blantyre District. Four-fifths of the cultivable land of the district belong to private landowners who are opposed to a native cotton industry which would take labour from their own estates and would lead to considerable thefts of growing crops."[101]

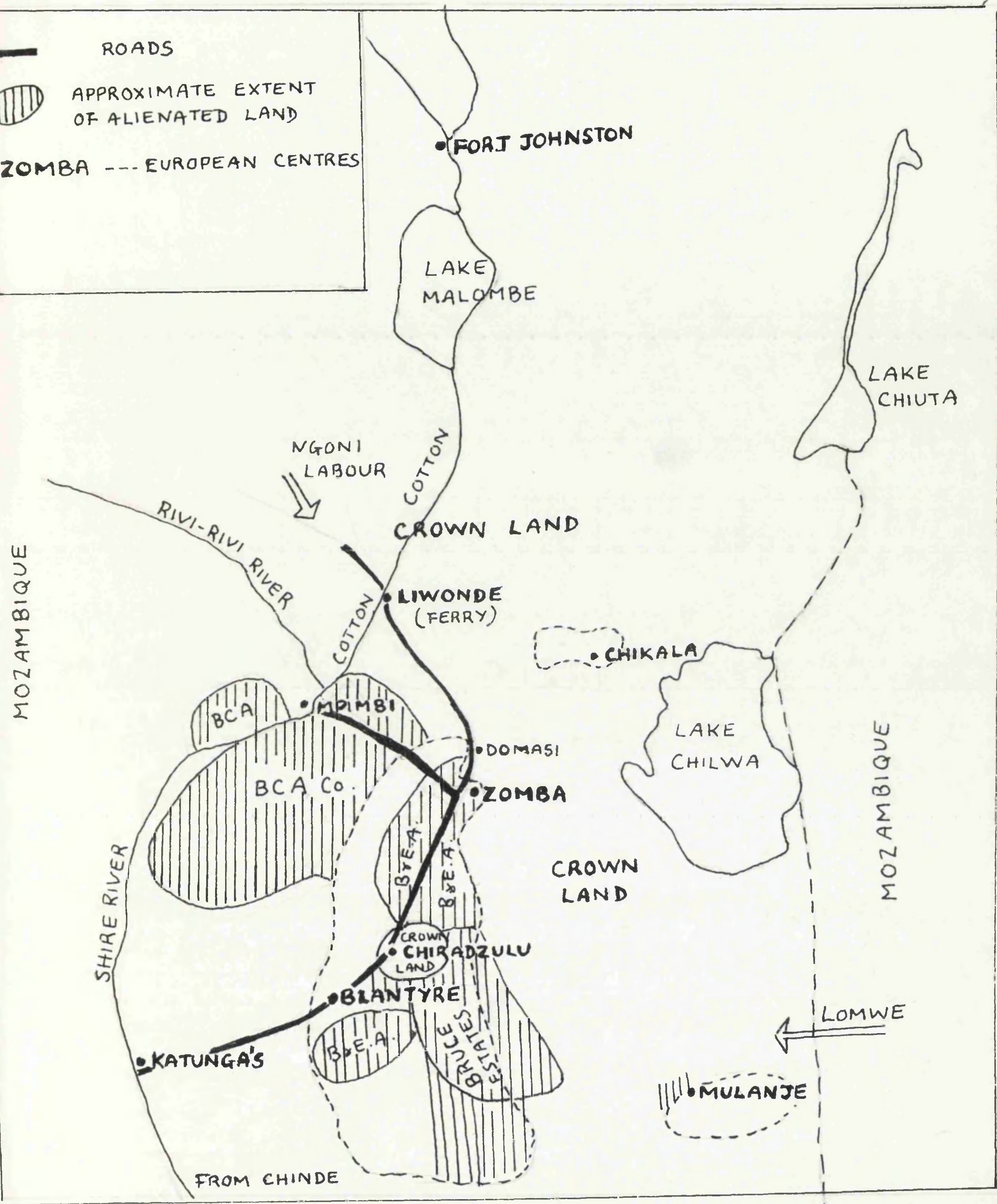
As far as we know, labour emigration to Rhodesia and South Africa was not a prominent feature of societies on the Shire Highlands,[102] and indeed, this option was not open to the tenantry whose families were liable to be evicted when an adult male emigrated. Furthermore, in this period, the evidence for the sale of surplus foodstuffs

needs to be seen side by side with a body of evidence for land pressure, famine and disease, which implies that an overall food surplus was no longer being produced on the Shire Highlands, and that the inhabitants of Crown Land, as well as tenants, were beginning to feel the pressure of the presence of the estates.

Land Pressure, Famine and Disease: 1900-1915

The story of land alienation in the Shire Highlands has been told in detail by Pachai and Krishnamurthy.[103/] In Johnston's land settlement, which began in 1892, 66 Certificates of Claim were issued in the Nyasaland portion of British Central Africa, alienating a total of 3,705,255 acres, out of a land holding potential in the Protectorate given as 25,161,924 acres. Apart from the huge British South Africa Company's grant in the north, the rest was almost all good arable land in the Shire Highlands, and the major part of this was portioned out in a few large claims. In the early years only a very small proportion of the land thus held was developed. In 1903 the Land Commission found that on average European landholders had developed little more than 1% of their land. In the Shire Highlands the Blantyre and East Africa Company claimed to have developed 3,000 acres out 160,000 (less than 2%); the British Central Africa Company 5,000 acres out of over 300,000, and the Bruce Estates only 500 acres out of 160,000.[104/]

It could be argued from this evidence that in the first 15 years or so of land alienation the effects were insignificant for the African population of the Shire Highlands. However, despite the small amount of land developed, the Land Commission of 1903 already noted that large landowners were making no efforts to provide



THE SHIRE HIGHLANDS, UPPER SHIRE VALLEY AND CHILWA PLAIN IN THE EARLY C20 TH.

sufficient land for African residents, and were already exacting labour service.[105] There is evidence from as early as 1893 that landowners were anxious to keep their claims intact for sale to others as the price of land in the Shire Highlands had already risen rapidly since the initial settlement and the beginning of coffee cultivation. Johnston reported to the Foreign Office in 1893 that people were now willing to pay 2s.6d. per acre for what they would have thought dear at 1d per acre in 1890.[106] And in 1895 the Central African Planter warned that:

> "It is a mistake to allow natives on private estates under the idea that they will work for you. This they do not do and they are continually trying to "eat your land" without giving any adequate return. The best solution we know of when native villages are included in an estate is to draw a boundary round their present cultivated ground and refuse to allow them another inch."[107]

That land availability for Africans was already a problem in the Shire Highlands by 1903 is evident from the comments of the High Court Judge, Nunan. In that year Nunan noted that on the Blantyre and East Africa Company's estates in the ten years since the original granting of the Certificate of Claim, the non-disturbance clause[108] had not been observed. Furthermore, the situation had been made worse by the recent influx of Lomwe immigrants and, Nunan claimed, given the prevailing system of cultivation, it could not have been Johnston's intention to protect only those gardens existing at the time of the land grant, for in general the soil was exhausted after three years. The intention must have been, he argued, that adjoining land would be included in this protection, and he argued that some six acres per hut should be allowed, plus a further two acres per hut to allow for natural increase of population

(without taking into account the effects of further immigration).[109]

The picture of land pressure on private estates was further elaborated by the findings of the 1903 Land Commission which argued, amongst other things, that all estates should set aside one-tenth of undeveloped land in blocks of no less than 80 acres each, and that 8 acres per hut were to be allowed for African tenants at an annual rent of 4s per allotment.[110]

The landlords' reactions to these recommendations were predictably adverse, and although they were embodied in the Lands Ordinance (Native Locations) of 1904, they were never enforced. As the Jackson Commission of 1920 pointed out, the non-enforcement of this Ordinance probably had much to do with pressure from European landholders:

> "... from the point of view of landlords the application of the Ordinance would have meant the permanent expropriation of a large proportion of the cultivable area of their estates, since the settlements must have been made upon fertile and well-watered soil."[111]

Despite general recognition that the position of tenants on private estates was a 'problem', action to remedy it was continually deferred. The question of reserves was discussed in a Legislative Council debate of 1910, in which Alfred Sharpe outlined a scheme whereby three kinds of reserves would be established: Urban reserves for educated Africans; suburban reserves for temporary migrant labourers; and rural reserves in each district for the bulk of the population.[112] Indeed, 'native reserves' were favoured by European landholders as well, who argued that if confined to specific areas the African would be forced to improve his methods of cultivation for "if he once learned that he had only a certain acreage of ground

to work with, he would soon see that "cultivation" was necessary, for the natives' gardens at present cannot be termed cultivated".[113]

The estate owners were reluctant, however, to regard the supply of land for African cultivation as a real problem. They confidently pointed out that in the country taken as a whole there was no land shortage, while omitting to observe that population concentration in the Shire Highlands was vital for their own labour interests:

> "21½ million acres of land are still at the disposal of the government, just upon 4 million acres having already been alienated or leased. Scattered over this vast area is to be found under a million natives and about 700 whites - approximately 25 acres to every individual, and yet we are told that there is not enough land for native development."[114]

The problem of land for 'native development' was not confined to the private estates, but increasingly affected Crown Land as well. Between 1895 and 1912 the government had no clear policy on whether to alienate Crown Land in freehold or leasehold, but from 1906 the general pattern was to issue leases with or without the option to purchase. In reply to resolutions passed by the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture the Governor, Alfred Sharpe, stated in 1908 that it was not government policy to grant large blocks of land in freehold but that "there is not and has never been any desire to stand in the way of any purchase by lessees of blocks improved by them". At the same time, Sharpe seems to have been well aware of the land shortage developing in the Shire Highlands:

> "The extent of Crown Lands is by no means large in any district of the Protectorate, and in certain districts is so limited as to barely leave enough to provide the necessary area for cultivation required by

> natives. In such localities it is clear that Government cannot part with what land it holds".[115]

The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1912, echoing this concern, terminated the granting of freehold land as well as leases with the option to purchase. Crown Land was henceforth to be disposed of by auction and the condition of all leases was that within three years of their commencement one third of the area leased was to be planted with the crop for which the leasehold was obtained and within five years one half of the area leased was to be similarly cultivated.[116]

In fact, very little land (5,000 acres)[117] was obtained under this Ordinance and the majority of new settlers obtained land under lease from the large companies. However, in the course of amendments being made to this Ordinance much discussion arose as to the relationship between privately-owned land, Crown Land, and the Lomwe immigration. In an Executive Council meeting of 1912 the Governor, Colonel Manning, pointed out that in the Shire Highlands the limit of cultivation had been reached and that although much unsettled privately-owned land still existed, landowners tended to discourage or forbid settlement once their own labour requirements were met. For this reason, more recent Lomwe immigrants were apparently gravitating towards Crown Land. The Governor proposed to discourage this tendency by 'reserving' Crown Lands from further settlement, so that the immigrant was faced with the choice, either of returning to Portuguese territory, or of accepting any terms demanded by the private landholders:

> "The latter result would be satisfactory in as much as only those Anguru who were prepared to work for their tax and possibly also to pay rent, would remain in the Shire Highlands. This would be economically satisfactory as giving the planter the labour he might want and retaining only a

> valuable labour asset in the Protectorate, as against a possible excess of population disinclined to work."[118]

The idea of 'Crown Lands Reserved' was not adopted until 1921, and in the meantime the Lomwe immigration continued. Whilst many Lomwe became tenants on private estates, a large number continued to be welcomed onto Crown Land by Nyanja headmen, despite the increasing land shortage in these areas. In this period many people moved off the Shire Highlands altogether into the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa-Phalombe plain, where land was more plentiful, though the rainfall was less reliable.[119]

Both written and oral evidence shows that, whilst most adult males would have performed some wage labour, their families on Crown Land often attempted to raise cash through the sale of foodstuffs. Some sold maize, which may or may not have been surplus to their requirements, while some women cultivated cassava and potatoes for sale, but did not sell their maize.[120] Of course, it must be remembered that a family would be likely to raise cash in a variety of ways and might sell food at one time of year, only to buy it back later. At all events, the evidence for famine and disease in the Shire Highlands points to a crisis in food production for some groups there.

The first major food shortage of the colonial period on the Shire Highlands occurred in 1900. The planters' paper, the Central African Times, tended to report shortages if only as an adjunct to its readers' concern for the labour supply. The newspaper reported that there was severe malnutrition on the Shire Highlands and that "the matter deserves serious attention as every death has a bad effect on the native labour question".[121] By the end of May 1900,

flour was very scarce in Blantyre district, and in Zomba district many villages were reported to have harvested only half the normal crop.[122] The large numbers of imported labourers (including the newly-arrived Lomwe) in the area made added demands on the food supply. By July 1900 a serious famine, compounded by a smallpox epidemic, was affecting the Blantyre area. In 1901 smallpox once again broke out on the estates of Zomba and Blantyre districts. Mortality was so high in some areas that the government began a mass vaccination programme.[123] By the end of 1902 the effects of a long drought were once more apparent in famine. The 1902 crop was so depleted that food supplies ran out in early 1903.[124] Fortunately, 1904 saw a plentiful harvest, but in 1905 there was concern for the food crops on the Shire Highlands following a locust swarm.[125] In the same year there was an outbreak of beri-beri, a nutritional disease, amongst workers on the new railway line, and this disease was then noted as being widespread.[126] On the estates at Chiradzulu there was another outbreak of virulent smallpox.[127]

In 1911 there was another serious food shortage in the Shire Highlands, and this worsened in 1912. Maize was reportedly selling for £3 per ton in the Shire Highlands, a rise of 200% over the previous year, and European and Indian traders who had cornered stocks of food were exploiting the scarcity.[128] After a meeting of the Executive Council, the government issued an Ordinance prohibiting the sale of foodstuffs by Africans, prohibiting all contracts between Africans and Asiatics or Europeans, and prohibiting the export of grain purchased from Africans.[129] Though the reasoning behind this Ordinance was clear, it probably led to a worsening of the situation as it further prevented the

free movement of food from one area to another. The Nyasaland Times reported that:

> "The shortage of food is enabling some planters to get labour as many of the local natives are so short that they are willing to do day labour for chimanga. This is proof of the scarcity in some districts because the native will always prefer to work for another native (if any of his friends have food) as they always get better measure. Not being able to get food from their neighbours they are per force resorting to the planter."[130]

As the famine worsened, however, and as money became valueless in an area where no food could be procured, many labourers deserted their work.[131] The Labour Bureau introduced new rules on the feeding of labour, but the degree of enforcement is indicated by the £2 fine imposed on the Shire Highlands Railway Company for failing to feed their labourers.[132] Most estates appear to have been negligent in this respect, though there is some indication that the severity of this famine brought a realisation that a weakened labour force was against their own interests. Even the Central African Times pleaded with the government to allow Africans to hunt during such times of dearth,[133] and in early 1913 the same publication reported that:

> "Many of the natives appear to be getting to the stage where they are too weak to work, and once they allow themselves to get into that condition it is hopeless trying to do anything with them."[134]

Recent research on the nature of famine indicates that a decline in the food supply may not be the only factor at work in causing famine, and may sometimes not be a factor at all.[135] In the case of famine on the Shire Highlands at this time it would seem that a poor harvest affected the food entitlement of those

groups who were no longer self-sufficient in food, and these were for the most part the tenants on European estates. When there was a relative decline in food supply in the area, due to poor rains or a locust invasion, the price of food in the markets rose dramatically, and many people were unable to afford to buy enough to feed themselves. The fact that famine affected primarily those people who were permanent labourers on estates, explains why these food shortgages and inflation in prices were recorded in some much detail by the planters' newspaper.

In his report for 1908 the Cotton Expert, Samuel Simpson, complained that practically no interest had been taken in African agriculture apart from the relatively insignificant enouragement of rice and cotton growing in some areas.[136/] There is very little information on African agricultural production on the Shire Highlands for this reason. From oral testimony, however, we know that major adaptations were taking place which, given the contemporary picture of the conservative, inflexible, 'lazy' African farmer, were remarkable for the flexibility which they exhibited.

Both on Crown Land and on the estates the major preoccupation of households was how to grow enough food to feed themselves, with less land and labour available to them. One response to the land shortage was a change in staple from millet and sorghum to maize, which seems to have occured in the first few years of the twentieth century.[137/] Maize had been known and grown in small quantities in this area for probably over a hundred years[138/] and it was well suited to the climate and soils of the highlands. Its adoption as the staple, however, required considerable changes in techniques of

production and processing, as well as in 'tastes'. For instance, whilst maize was less prone to attack from birds, it required more weeding. Whilst millet was traditionally smoked and stored in the hut, maize was stored in a separate grain-bin and needed to be protected against pests. The method of preparation was different; the grains were pounded and sifted whereas those of millet were threshed, winnowed and ground between stones. Finally, of course, it tasted different.

The reason for the adoption of maize (and the necessity for all these changes in agricultural and domestic technology) was that maize gave a higher yield per acre than millet or sorghum,[139] and this was of course a significant factor in an area of increasing land shortage. Set against this was the fact that it exhausted the soil more quickly and was more sensitive to drought.[140] These disadvantages were to some extent offset by the increased cultivation of cassava, and the appearance of a new variety of this crop. A new, fast-maturing variety of cassava was introduced by the Lomwe immigrants who can be said, to some extent, to have thus brought with them their means of survival.[141] Though nutritionally inferior to the cereal crops, cassava requires less labour (in its production, though not in its preparation) and is very resilient to drought. It was therefore a useful addition to maize, and may have been the staple crop for some tenants for whom labour and land were particularly short.

The evidence for famine in this period indicates that some families were only partially successful in their attempts to feed themselves through these new strategies. As in the late nineteenth

century, African agricultural production was made increasingly vulnerable to any natural disaster such as drought, but the similarity is only superficial. In the early twentieth century the productivity of African agriculture was being undermined at a much more fundamental level, through the alienation of land and the appropriation of labour. The land available to Africans was being exploited more intensively and was thus exhausted more quickly, and a long-term decline in soil fertility was the result. An extra burden of labour fell on women who had to make up for the seasonal absence of male agricultural labour, as well as perform domestic tasks. Regulations such as the restrictions on the cutting of firewood on estates increased the labour involved in some of these tasks. On some estates female labour was also required for _thangata_, and in these cases only the very young and the very old were exempt.

Everything indicates that in this period the availability of labour was regarded as the most crucial factor determining survival, and that the pre-colonial values associated with this continued to exert an important influence on societies in this area. This may be one of the reasons why Lomwe immigrants continued to be welcomed onto Crown Land long after a land shortage had become apparent, for additions to a village represented 'strength'. Associated with the value placed on labour was the fear of depopulation. In the report of the 1926 census it was said that many elders had expressed fears of depopulation:

> "In some districts the chiefs and headmen report that such complaints as consumption and bronchitis and influenza, as well as

> rheumatism and allied complaints, are more prevalent and more fatal than they used to be... as well as famines and witchcraft ordeals."[142]

At a time of massive immigration into the area, the fear of depopulation might appear to be a somewhat irrational one, but the chiefs and headmen were correct in seeing that the health and welfare of the population was being undermined. According to Kuczynski, it is probable that in the first three decades of British Administration, there was no natural increase of population in Nyasaland.[143]

The underdevelopment of African agriculture on the Shire Highlands and the decline in living standards there were ultimately due to the nature of the colonial economy of Nyasaland and the position of European agriculture within it.

As we have seen, in Nyasaland the African was the major contributor of both direct and indirect taxes, and in some parts of the Protectorate it was recognised that this vital contribution to the colonial finances could be made through a variety of means, including labour migrancy and peasant agriculture. On the Shire Highlands however, tax collection and the performance of labour on local estates came to be inseparable in the minds of local administrators, and whilst there were sometimes disagreements with European settler interests, in general, as Myambo has shown, these interests predominated. By 1915 the average Shire Highlander had very little choice as to how his livelihood was to be gained. Furthermore, the transport costs and inefficiency of the European sector kept wages extremely low and conditions very poor on the estates. There is little doubt that what prosperity existed for Africans in the Protectorate (as represented by 'trade-booms' such

as that of 1905-6 and 1910-11) was accounted for by the remittances of labour migrants, predominantly from the north and centre of the country, and not by any economic benefits accruing to Shire Highlanders.

Footnotes for Chapter 3

1/ See Chapter 1 pp. 49-51

2/ Gavin Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourge oisie, Yale, 1980, pp.14-20. Kitching sees considerable under utilisation of labour as being a feature of the pre-colonial economy of Kenya which made for a relatively easy adjustment to the demands made by a colonial and settler presence. This model does not seem to fit the case of Southern Malawi where higher population densities had given rise to greater utilisation of labour in the pre-colonial period.

3/ Especially in the case of large-scale iron-working which required a large amount of labour in manufacturing charcoal and transporting water and ore-yielding rocks.

4/ See pages 66-68

5/ Chikowi Historical Text No.7. Kings Phiri with Andrew Likambale, Makanjila Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District 21/7/80.

6/ Rowley, Twenty Years, p.90.

Interpreting this evidence for Yao disdain for agriculture is problematical, as it reflects the Yao self-image more than anything else. The immigrants arrived in waves of small groups, and in all probability, when they first arrived in the area they relied on raiding for their food supplies, although after this initial stage they settled down to produce their own food. Not surprisingly, the initial impact of the Yao raids was the most dramatic aspect of their immigration, and has thus been preserved vividly in oral traditions. The main problem here may be the 'male' bias of oral tradition, for whilst male Yaos may have for a time concentrated their activities on raiding their women were in all probability concentrating their labour on food production.

7/ Ibid., p.145.

8/ Bennett and Ylvisaker (eds.), The Central African Journal, p.191.

9/ See ZHP/MV/7.

ZHP/MV/5.

ZHP/MV/3.

ZHP/MV/34.

ZHP/MV/11.

ZHP/MV/12.

ZHP/MV/13.

10/ See page 73

11/ Bennett and Ylvisaker, Central African Journal, p.97.

12/ Ibid., p.179.

13/ Kuntumanje Historical Text No.22.

14/ ZHP/KMD/11, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Leonard Kalitera Phiri, Mtuweni Village, T.A. Mlumbe, Zomba District, 27/8/77.

15/ ZHP/KMD/8, Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni with Sulainana Milazi, Jussu Village, T.A. Mlumbe, Zomba District, 12/8/77.

16/ Marcia Wright, 'Women in Peril: A Commentary on the Life stories of Captives in Nineteenth Century East-Central Africa'. African Social Research, 20, December, 1975, pp.800-819.

17/ Bennett and Ylvisaker, Central African Journal, p.111.

18/ Alfred Kambuwa, 'Papers'. Section entitled 'My Mother'.

19/ G.Hartwig and K.D. Patterson (eds.), Disease in African History., Durham, 1978, p.9.

20/ See Chapter 4.

21/ Bennett and Ylvisaker, Central African Journal, p.181.

22/ Kambuwa, 'Papers'. Section entitled 'Slavery in Yao Society'.

23/ Linden, 'Mponda's Mission Diary', Part I, IJAHS, VII, 2, 1974, p.296. Also Life and Work reported in November, 1889 that:

> "The caravan which Malemya sent down to Quellimane with a present of two tusks for the Governor has returned. It brought ten loads of calico, six guns, and ten kegs of powder. The chief cherished great expectations from his new "friendship" with the Portuguese and had sent down a large number of people to bring back the goods he hoped to receive in return". Life and Work November 1889, p.4.

In November 1891 the same publication reported that Matope, a chief on Ndirande, as well as two headmen of Kapeni's was sending a caravan of ivory to Quelimane. Life and Work November 1891, p.2.

24/ Life and Work, No.82 December 1894, p.3. January 1895, No.83, p.2, also Johnston to Rosebery, 1/3/1894 in F.O. 2/66:

> "Of late, however, coincident with the marked development of trade and traffic which has taken place during the last 6 months... certain bands of unruly Yaos living in the inaccessible parts of Tshiradzulu, Zomba and Mlanje and other mountains, have resumed their old habits of brigandage which were such a trial to the settlers in the earlier days of Nyasaland".

25/ Myambo, 'Socio-Economic Change', pp.33-34.

L.M. Bandawe, Memoirs of a Malawian, ed. B. Pachai, Claim, Blantyre, 1977, pp.59-63.

26/ Myambo describes him as a descendant of Makanjila's. Life and Work, however, said that he was a contestant to the Malemia chieftaincy. Bandawe describes him as a 'Mang'anja' Memoirs p.59.

27/ The Central African Times gave him a long obituary and commented on his economic failure:

"He was not a genuine old hereditary chief. He was however an enterprising Yao who used to work in the Carpenter's shop at the Mission. He also took to elephant hunting and made a certain amount of money. He then bought a piece of land from Kapeni, the paramount chief of Blantyre district and built himself a brick house. He also planted the land which is now Boma property with coffee and was in fact one of the most go-ahead men of his time. He got into financial difficulties and gradually lost most of his land and finally was settled down on the Upper Shire. He was more or less always in debt but was always trying to make ends meet by burning lime, selling sawn timber, and so on... He was well-known locally and had he not been so extravagant might have down well for himself and his people, whom he had collected in the old days when a strong man attracted a following". C.A.T. Vol. XIV, No. 35, 31/8/1911, p.3.

28/ John Buchanan, East African Letters, 1880, p.18.

29/ Ibid., p.14.

30/ Ibid., p.17.

31/ Life and Work, No.83 January 1895, p.3.

32/ C.A.T. Vol. II, No.51, 16/9/99, p.9.

33/ Ibid., p.9.

34/ C.A.T. Vol. III, No.7, 11/11/1899, p.4.

35/ C.A.T. Vol. III, No.25, 17/3/1900, p.7.

36/ C.A.T. Vol. IV, No.48, 31/8/1901, p.7.

37/ C.A.T. Vol. III, No.3, 14/10/1899, p.7.

38/ ZHP/MV/23.

39/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. IV, No.14, 15/8/97.

40/ Myambo, 'Socio-Economic Change', Chapter 2.

41/ H.H. Johnston, 'Report of the First Three Years' Administration of the Eastern portion of British Central Africa' dated 31 March 1894. HMSO 1894, p.40.

42/ The following lists are derived from B. Pachai, Land and Politics in Malawi, pp.50-51.

Freehold land granted to Africans in the 1890s

David Livingstone	- 100 acres for £22.10.0d at Mbame Village near Blantyre in 1895.
George Chokabwino	- 100 acres at Mpemba in 1895 for £22.7.6d.
Donald Malotta	- 100 acres at Chiradzulu in 1895 for £12.10.0d.
Joseph Bismarck	- 50 acres on the Chikwawa Road in 1895 for £12.10.0d.
Duncan and George Mattaka	- 100 acres in Blantyre district in 1896 for £15.0.0., and a further 150 acres in 1898.
Thomas Lalanya	- 100 acres in Chiradzulu in 1897 for £15.0.0.
Peter Kambona	- 100 acres in Zomba in 1897.
Sam Sambani	- 100 acres in Blantyre district in 1899.

List of land once classified as Crown Lands, granted freehold to Africans 1900-1915

John Chilembwe	- 93 acres in 1901 for £27.10.0d.
Joseph Bismarck	- 100 acres in 1901 for £30.0.0d.
Thomas Lalanga	- 20 acres in Mulanje for £5.0.0d.
Chitambili	- 40 acres in 1902.
Nacho	- 60 acres in 1901.
H.C. Kapito	- 50 acres in 1903 for £6.5.0d.

John Gray Kufa and others - 140 acres in 1905 for £142.0.0d.

Hassan Roper - 10 acres in 1905 for £5.0.0d.

Mwamadi - a plot in Zomba township, 1905.

Johnstone Sasuze - 30 acres in 1907.

Joseph Bismarck and Paton Somanje - ¼ acre in the Indian Township, Blantyre, 1909, for £60.0.0d.

43/ This information is derived from interviews with Paton Somanje's daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Tembo, and his grandson, Elwin Edward Somanje.

ZHP/MV/14, and ZHP/MV/15, Somanje Village, T.A. Mwambo, Zomba District, 10/5/78 and 16/5/78.

44/ ZHP/MV/7.

45/ Myambo, 'Socio-Economic Change' pp.34-36.

46/ _Ibid._, p.45.

47/ _Ibid._, p.48.

48/ _Ibid._, p.51.

49/ _Life and Work_ No.213, December 1906, p.9.

50/ Church of Scotland Mission Records (N.A.M.), Zomba Church Kirk Session Minute Books 1900-1905.

51/ The size of the European market was small. In 1901 there were only 304 Europeans in the country (compared with 11,000 in Southern Rhodesia at the same date).

It is possible to guess at the size of the African market for foodstuffs on the Shire Highlands, using figures for the number of labourers employed by different enterprises there, and subtracting a figure for those who can be presumed to have been self-sufficient in foodstuffs.

In the 1890s approximately 4,000 Ngoni labourers arrived in the highlands for work every month, and if one presumes that they stayed for a minimum of two months, then there were about 8,000 of them there at any one time, employed by the transport companies and the

coffee estates. If we add to these another 4,000 Tonga labourers, plus approximately 10,000 wage labourers who came from too far away to provide their own foodstuffs, we reach a figure of approximately 22,000 people on the highlands who were probably dependent on the market for their food.

52/ The spread of Islam in this area is outlined in many of the testimonies included in Amachinga Yao Traditions, Vols. I and II. See also R. Greenstein, 'Shayks and Tarigas, 1885-1914, Chancellor College, History Seminar Paper 1976.

53/ In 1907 the total number of students enrolled in Church of Scotland Schools in Blantyre was 2,366 boys and 652 girls. By 1911-12, the Church of Scotland had 58 village schools in Blantyre district. (Figures devived from Blue Books 1907-1912).

54/ The impression created by these exotic 'camp-followers' is vividly described by Kambuwa, 'Papers', Section entitled 'Sikhs'.

55/ See for instance, ZHP/MV/12, Megan Vaughan with John Joseph Mpoto, Mpoto Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba district, 9/5/78.

56/ Life and Work, No.37 March 1892 p.2.

57/ These and later regulations are described in detail by Krishnamurthy, 'Land and Labour in Nyasaland'. Chapter IV: A Policy for Labour.

58/ Life and Work, No.75 May 1894 p.4.

59/ F.O. 2/54. Johnston to Anderson, 21/1/1893.

60/ F.O. 2/66 folio 6. Johnston to F.O. n.d.:

> "I may mention a case which recently occured where an Austrian named Stebleki went to the west coast of Nyasa and engaged 900 Atonga. He brought them down to the Shire Province but, not being able to obtain the terms that he wanted, and being at the end of his resources, he abandoned the men to their own devices and went off to Tshinde. The Atonga, having nothing to eat, took to raiding some of the villages around Blantyre and serious disturbances arose".

61/ Hetherwick to Waller, enclosure dated 15/11/1892 in F.O. 2/56.

62/ Kambuwa, 'Papers', Section entitled 'Carriers, Askari and Messengers'.

63/ Ibid.

64/ Life and Work, No.95, January 1896 p.3.

65/ Ibid., p.3.

66/ Boeder, 'Malawians Abroad', p.21.

67/ In 1899 planters complained that 1,000 passes had been issued to Africans in West Nyasa district in three months, permitting them to work in Salisbury. (C.A.T. V. III, No.5, 28/10/99, p.7). Probably the same number again migrated unofficially. Yet in that year labour in the Shire Highlands was more plentiful than ever.

68/ Testimonies collected from Lomwe informants by students of Dr. R. Boeder, Chancellor College, 1980.

69/ C.A.T. v. III, No.42, 14/7/99, p.3.

70/ The Census Report of 1926 reported the presence of 176,505 'Nguru' in the Protectorate. By 1931 there were reported to be 235,616 'Nguru'. These figures were probably an under-estimate, as many Lomwe identified themselves as 'Nyanja'. (Nyasaland Protectorate, Report on the Census of 1926 by S. Murray. Zomba. 1926, Table O; Nyasaland Protectorate, Report on the Census of 1931, Zomba, 1932, Table Q.).

71/ Mulanje District Notebook, Vol. I, p.31.

72/ ZHP/MV/27.

ZHP/MV/46.

ZHP/MV/43.

ZHP/MV/17.

ZHP/MV/16.

ZHP/MV/6.

73/ C.A.T. Vol. V, No.12, 2/12/01.

74/ This case is fully described in Pachai, Land and Politics, pp.85-93.

75/ Regulations published in B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. VII, No.12, 31/12/01.

76/ The acreage under cotton on European-held land expanded from 60 acres in 1901 to 22,000 acres in 1904.

77/ Report on Trade and General Conditions of British Central Africa for the year 1902-3. H.M.S.O., 1903, p.22.

78/ Mulanje District Notebook, Vol. I, p.138: Statistics of labour employed in Mulanje District, 1904.

79/ Blantyre District Notebook, Vol. I, p.173: Register of Agreements made before the Resident between European owners of land and their native tenants.

80/ Mulanje District Notebook, Vol. II, p.181.

81/ In 1904, 4,500 men worked on railway construction (C.A.T. v. VII, No.40, 2/7/04, p.9). The scandal over conditions there and the outbreak of disease do not seem to have discouraged people from seeking work there in order to earn the relatively high wages offered. In 1906 wages on the railway had risen to 7 shillings a month, and over 12,000 men were employed there. (C.A.T. v. IX, No.32, 12/5/06, p.3). The usual wage for agricultural labour at this time was 3/- a month.

82/ C.A.T. v. IX, No.17, 27/1/06, p.4.

83/ ZHP/KMD/6. Vaughan, Phiri and Makuluni with Masangano Mwale.

83/ ZHP/KMD/6

84/ ZHP/MV/13. Megan Vaughan with Peter Malindi, Chikanda Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District, 10/5/78.

85/ ZHP/MV/8.

86/ ZHP/MV/27. Megan Vaughan with Awani Lichinga, Kapichi Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 29/5/78.

87/ ZHP/MV/4.

88/ ZHP/KMD/9.

89/ Ibid.

90/ ZHP/KMD/6.

91/ C.O. 525/23. Manning to C.O. 5/2/08.

92/ ZHP/KMD/11.

93/ Ibid.

94/ Ibid.

95/ ZHP/MV/1.

96/ Zomba District Notebook, Vol. I, District Census Summary.

97/ Blantyre District Notebook, Vol. I, District Census Summary.

98/ C.O. 525/12. Enclosure in Sharpe to C.O. March, 1906.

99/ Hector Duff, the Resident for Blantyre in this period, was a great enthusiast for the African cotton industry, and had previously

pioneered it in Mulanje. He wrote in the Blantyre District Notebook:

> "Every effort should be made to encourage natives who do well with their cotton, so as to make it generally felt that attention to this industry will recommend the cultivator very favourably to the notice of the Resident".
>
> (Blantyre District Notebook Vol. I., p.212).

100/ C.O. 525/12. Sharpe to C.O. March 1906.

101/ Blantyre District Notebook. Vol. I, p.234. (dated 1915).

102/ The 1926 Census reported 221 Africans from Blantyre District to be absent. This was almost certainly a gross under-estimate, but nevertheless, the degree of absenteeism was obviously much less than that for other areas. In the same report 4467 absentees were recorded for Lilongwe District, 4308 for Dowa, and 3363 for Mombera's. _Report on the 1926 Census_ p. xxviii.

103/ Pachai, _Land and Politics_; Krishnamurthy, 'Land and Labour in Nyasaland'.

104/ _Report of Land Commission_, 1903, quoted in Pachai, _Land and Politics_, p.84.

105/ _Ibid_.

106/ F.O. 2/54 H.H. Johnston to Anderson. 21/1/93.

107/ _C.A.T_. v. I, No.3, November 1895, p.36.

108/ The non-disturbance clause was part of Johnston's land settlement, whereby in theory existing villages and plantations were exempted from the land purchases and villagers were informed that the sale of the surrounding land did not include the alienation of their homes and plantations. In practice, of course, these people were gravely affected by the sale of surrounding land, given their extensive system of cultivation.

109/ Reported in C.A.T. Vol. VI, No.40, 9/5/03.

110/ Cited in Pachai, Land and Politics, p.84.

111/ Report of Commission to Enquire into and Report upon certain matters connected with the occupation of Land in Nyasaland Protectorate, 1921. (Jackson Report), p.13.

112/ Minutes of Legislative Council, November 1910.

113/ C.A.T. v. XI, No.25, 21/3/08, p.7.

114/ C.A.T. v. XVI, No.19, 8/5/1913, p.

115/ Minutes of Executive Council Meeting, 4/5/08 in C.O. 626/6, p.18.

116/ See Pachai, Land and Politics, pp.54-55, for a full description of this Ordinance.

117/ Ibid., p.56.

118/ Minutes of Executive Council Meeting, 26-27/9/1912. in C.O. 626/2. p.213.

119/ This is evident from a number of oral testimonies in Amachinga Yao Traditions Vol. II, in the testimonies of Lomwe informants in the possession of Dr. R. Boeder; and in some of my own interviews, e.g. ZHP/MV/27 with Awani Lichinga, Sipagweje Wadi and William Mbayani.

ZHP/MV/37 with Addison Chimbalanga and Dola Mwekuwa.

120/ ZHP/MV/1.

ZHP/MV/8.

ZHP/MV/5.

121/ C.A.T. v. III, No.32, 5/5/00 p.5.

122/ C.A.T. v. III, No.33, 12/5/00 p.7.

123/ C.A.T. v. V. No.10, 7/12/01, p.4.

124/ C.A.T. v. VI. No.21, 21/2/03, p.4.

125/ C.A.T. v. VIII, No.32, 6/5/05, p.7.

126/ C.A.T. v. VIX, No.3, 21/10/05, p.9.

127/ Ibid.

128/ Nyasaland Times v. XIV. No.40, 5/10/11, p.2.

129/ Native Foodstuffs Ordinance, published in C.A.T. Vol. XV, No.25, 20/6/1912.

130/ Nyasaland Times v. XIV, No.52, 28/12/11, p.5.

131/ Nyasaland Times v. XIV, No.42, 19/10/11, p.2 Letter from an 'Old Planter':

> "Owing to the scarcity of food in many districts this year, local labour, not being able to obtain food where planters are endeavouring to comply with the rules of the Labour Bureau, are deserting their work after having signed for three months and going where they can obtain poso".

132/ Nyasaland Times, Vol. XVI, No.12, 20/3/1913, p.4.

133/ Nyasaland Times, Vol. XV, No.48, 28/11/1912, p.2.

134/ Nyasaland Times, Vol. XVI, No.2, 9/1/1913, p.2.

135/ "Famine is a characteristic of some people not having enough food; it is not a characteristic of there being not enough food. While the latter can be a cause of the former, it is one of many possible

causes, and indeed may or may not be associated with famines. Food supply statements say things about commodities as such, while statements about famines are concerned with the relationship between persons and commodities. To understand famines, we need to go into this relationship" (italics in original).

Amartya Sen, 'Famines', World Development, Vol. 8, No.9, September 1980, p.614.

136/ Report of the Agricultural Officer for the year 1908 in C.O. 525/24.

137/ ZHP/MV/37. Megan Vaughan with Addison Chimbalanga and Dola Mwekuwa, Chimbalanga Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District 6/9/78. Addison Chimbalanga's family had moved from Mulanje to their present village site (on the western edge of the Chilwa plain) at the turn of the century. At Mulanje they had grown millet and maize, but only began growing large quantities of maize after their arrival in this area. Dola Mwekuwa said that they had left Makanga (near Mulanje) because of famine. At Makanga they had grown mainly millet, but on arrival in this area they began growing more maize "because it was more productive".

ZHP/MV/34. Megan Vaughan with Jameson Khuzumba, Kalimba Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 10/6/78: "maize came here with the whites".

ZHP/MV/41. Megan Vaughan with Ajaba Ngadamika, Topola Village, T.A. Mwambo, Zomba District, 8/9/78. The informants' family are Kokola from Mulanje. Before the Europeans came they grew mostly millet, but early in the century they started growing more maize "because it lasted longer".

Also see SHP/MV/47. Megan Vaughan with Granger Matengula, Chingondo Village, T.A. Mwambo, Zomba District, 19/9/78.

ZHP/MV/51. Megan Vaughan with Aladi Chilumba, Male Village, T.A. Malemia, Zomba District, 9/10/78.

138/ See Miracle, Maize in Tropical Africa, pp.96-100.

139/ Maize has a higher yielding potential than indigenous cereals in areas with satisfactory rainfall and a free-draining soil. (J.D. Acland, East African Crops, F.A.O. Longmans, London, 1971, p.124). It also has the potential for greater genetic variability and thus, in a situation where conditions of cultivation are changing relatively rapidly, it is a more 'adaptable' crop than millet or sorghum.

One factor which may have precipitated the change over to maize was the high incidence of locust attacks in the last few years of the nineteenth century. Though maize crops are also damaged by locust attack, they are not as vulnerable as sorghum and millet (especially bullrush millet).

140/ Bullrush millet, for instance, is extremely drought resistant and can be harvested 3-4 months after sowing. (Acland, East African Crops, p.27). Most millets will grow in acres with 11-16 inches of rain per annum. Some sorghum will grow with as little as 15-20 inches of rain. Maize, however, generally requires an annual rainfall of 30-60 inches.

141/ This fact is mentioned in almost all of the testimonies collected. Some cassava varieties can be harvested less than a year after planting but other varieties produce tubers more slowly and may not be ready to be harvested until two years after planting. Such varieties, however, can be stored in the ground for up to 6 years, and thus provide a valuable famine reserve. Cassava will grow on very poor soil and is resistant to pests. It requires very little labour for its cultivation and there are no labour peaks. Compared to the cereal crops, however, it is deficient in protein, in trace elements, and vitamins. Acland, East African Crops, pp.33-37; Miracle, Maize in Tropical Africa, p.10.

142/ Report on the Census of 1926, p.xiii.

143/ R.R. Kuczynski, Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire Vol. II London, 1949. p.632.

CHAPTER 4

The Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa Plain

Chapter Three has demonstrated that in the Shire Highlands between 1880 and 1915 land alienation, population pressure, and the labour demands of European agriculture, backed up by the power of the colonial government, made a dramatic impact on the lives of the majority of Africans resident there. The impact varied even within the Shire Highlands. One group of people became effectively proletarianised as tenants on estates, and with little control over either their land resources or their labour power. Others remained as largely autonomous peasants with some obligations to the state, but with a greater measure of control over their means of production. 'Traditional' forms of social and economic organisation persisted, but operated in a very changed context and played new roles.

In most of the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa basin land alienation was not a significant factor leading to changes in economic and social organisation. It would appear that the ecological factors described in Chapter 1 as having decisively influenced settlement and production in these areas [1/] persisted to a much greater degree than they did in the Shire Highlands. This is not to say, however, that these areas remained unchanged from the nineteenth century. The degree of involvement in the colonial economy varied quite widely from place to place within this region, and 'natural' ecological factors could take on a new importance within the context of the colonial economy. For instance, when the Upper Shire river silted up this not only necessitated changes in domestic production on the part of those living on its banks, but also significantly altered the labour

demands of the colonial state. When Lake Chilwa flooded widely, forcing population to move westwards towards Zomba, this ecological factor now operated within the context of land pressure on the higher ground.

The degree of pre-colonial economic and political centralisation and integration experienced varied considerably within this region, and thus the 'baseline' for colonial change was very variable. Some areas around Lake Chilwa had been Nyanja refuges, only very marginally incorporated into the Mbewe Yao chiefdoms, and some of these remained marginal also to the colonial economy and administrative system. Some parts of the Upper Shire Valley had been depopulated in the 1880s and left to the spread of game and tsetse. In some instances these areas were now incorporated into the estates of the British Central Africa Company, and resettled both by the 'original' nineteenth century inhabitants and by immigrants from the Shire Highlands and from Mozambique, all of whom were subject to thangata. Other parts of the Upper Shire Valley had experienced a relatively high degree of economic and political integration in the Mbewe chiefdoms of the late nineteenth century and were left both more 'autonomous' and more 'marginal' when these structures fell apart under colonial rule.

The effectiveness of the colonial local administration was very uneven. In some areas people were regularly recruited for 'public works' schemes such as road-building, via the agency of village headmen. In others the colonial administration was rarely encountered and tax collection was extremely lax. Generally possessing more control over their labour power than residents of the Shire Highlands, families in the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa

Basin raised their cash requirements in a variety of ways, the choice depending partly on ecological factors, partly on market opportunities, and partly on the demands of the colonial state. A large number of residents of the Upper Shire Valley were involved in tenga-tenga work for the colonial government or for the trading companies, whilst others manufactured charcoal and sold it to the river transport companies. These companies had depots on the river where, amongst other things, they sold imported salt to Africans, but up and down the river and on the shores of Lake Chilwa women continued to manufacture salt and exchange it with other goods. Fishing remained a major occupation along the river and at Lake Chilwa, and the market for fish slowly expanded as Blantyre and Zomba grew. Within the vast area alienated by the British Central Africa Company direct labour was employed in growing cotton and tobacco. By the First World War, however, a number of the B.C.A. Co. estates were operating tenant cotton-growing schemes, buying the product directly from their tenants, ginning and exporting it. Further upstream was an area of 'independent' cotton cultivators, whose industry was sponsored and regulated by the colonial administration. There was no overall land shortage in this area, but population did increase with resettlement of the valley and immigration from Mozambique. The soils here are very variable and settlement was highly selective. The river banks were a 'traditional' refuge during famine periods, and so, despite the unreliability of rainfall in the valley, it was rare for people here to actually starve, as a harvest of some sort could always be obtained from inundated dry-season gardens. The drought-resistant millets and sorghums persisted for longer as

staples here, and in most parts a shifting system of cultivation was apparently still in operation in the 1930s.[2] Around Lake Chilwa, a system of production persisted which built around fluctuations in the lake level and ecological changes associated with this. To say that agricultural production was less disturbed here than on the highlands does not, however, imply the existence of any great prosperity in these areas. Whilst 'intensive' agricultural techniques such as double-cropping of rice and maize, were possible on the river banks and around Lake Chilwa, these areas were not close to the markets of the Shire Highlands and no active encouragement was given to the intensification of commercial food production. It is symptomatic of the shortage of cash in the Lake Chilwa region that, for many years, people in this area raised their hut taxes by hewing limestone and transporting it to Zomba where it was used in the construction of administrative buildings. Though this was not an area of very high migrancy rates, male migration from the Upper Shire and South Nyasa districts reached significant proportions, and it is notable that the only really successful cotton growers in this area were returned migrants who utilised their capital to overcome the constraints of poor transport and marketing facilities.

The relative abundance of land here meant that different cultural linguistic groups maintained their separate identities and interacted in a rather more 'natural' way than they did on the Shire Highlands where land pressure forced 'tribe' and 'clan' into new roles. In this area, whilst 'tribal' identities were distinct, their boundaries remained fluid. The Yao cultural imperialism of the nineteenth century persisted into the twentieth,

and found expression in the spread of Islam and the cultural forms associated with this.

Ecological Change - The Resettlement of Valley and Plain

Chapter 1 described how, between 1860 and the mid-1890s population distribution, both on the Shire Valley and in the Chilwa Basin, was severely distorted by slave-raiding and warfare. This section will describe this situation of ecological change in more detail, and will go on to describe the later repopulation, of these areas.

From the 1860s, and more particularly after the Ngoni raid across the Shire in 1883, large tracts of land in the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa Basin were abandoned by human populations and left to wild game. The retreat of human settlement, the regeneration of the bush, and the increase in the wild animal population were conducive to the spread of the tsetse fly. In the 1890s, Johnston noted that tsetse was prevalent, not only in the Shire Valley, but also on parts of the Highlands between Zomba and the river port of Mpimbi, and around Lake Chilwa. Johnston rightly associated the spread of tsetse with the retreat of human settlement and cultivation. His proposed solution to the problem, but one which he never followed up, was to repopulate those areas most liable to tsetse infestation:

> "Certainly the tsetse tends to disappear before the presence of man and the one certain cure for it would seem to be the placing of all low-lying parts of British Central Africa under cultivation and the settlement of innumerable negroes."[1]

In the first two decades of colonial rule, however, the full

repopulation of these areas was inhibited, in part by a pattern of disease and natural disaster which rendered rapid natural increase unlikely, in part by colonial policies for the conservation of wildlife, and in part by the alienation of land which was left largely unexploited.

When, in the late 1870s, the Ngoni and their vassals began to settle strategic positions in the Upper Shire Valley, they claimed to have found it almost deserted except for a few Nyanja fishing settlements.[4] This was probably an exaggeration, but there is little doubt that the valley was underpopulated in this period, especially on the western bank, and that large numbers of people had retreated to the spurs of Zomba mountain.[5] As both the Ngoni and the Mbewe Yao continued their raiding activities well into the 1890s, normal non-strategic resettlement was slow to take place here. Game was abundant and the Ngoni cattlekeepers had to modify their domestic economy due to the presence of the tsetse fly here.[6] A similar situation prevailed around Lake Chilwa where, in the 1880s and early 1890s, travellers and missionaries remarked on the depopulation of the plain, the abundance of game, and the intense concentration of the Nyanja population on Chisi island and other places of refuge.[7] On Lake Chiuta the level of insecurity was such that people lived in pile villages built in the water, and buried their food supplies on the banks.[8]

Despite the efforts of both Ngoni and Mbewe Yao chiefs to control and intensify agricultural production in their areas,[9] this must have remained severely disrupted by the artificial

concentration of settlement. The villages of Lake Chilwa and the Phalombe plain were frequently raided by slavers from chief Kawinga's headquarters in the Chikala hills.[10] In 1890 missionaries from Domasi station explored the Phalombe river area and found only one village where formerly there had been many large villages on both banks.[11] When the same missionaries visited chief Kawinga in 1891 they ascended from the deserted Chilwa plain, up the Chikala hills, and came to the village of Kawinga's son, Mposa, which was densely built on a small plateau surrounded by rocks. Ascending further the next day they came to another plateau, densely occupied by Kawinga's own settlement.[12]

So long as there was a market for fish and salt, and as long as they were able to travel moderate distances, the Nyanja of the Chilwa basin could survive, and to this extent their economy was more suited to the conditions of insecurity than a purely agricultural one requiring longer periods of settlement in one place. In 1888 the Blantyre missionaries found difficulty in procuring food locally but "caravans of fish from Lake Chilwa, bringing likewise crates of fowls, have supplied the children and the Europeans with food".[13] Similarly, those who remained in the Upper Shire Valley were able both to fish, and to obtain a quick harvest from the river's banks.

By the late 1890s, after the subjugation of the Mbewe Yao chiefs and the decline of the slave trade, population began to disperse once more into the valleys and onto the plains. The Chikala ridge, which had been so densely occupied in the 1880s, and early 1890s, was an area of poor land, but soils improved

as the land sloped down westwards to the Shire Valley, and eastwards to the shores of Lakes Chilwa and Chiuta, and so it was to these areas that people moved once more.[14] Similarly, the higher land to the west of the Shire, near Basale, which was the home of many Ngoni and Yao immigrants, was poor and waterless, and so many of these people now moved down to the richer soils of the valley, apparently thus trading-in the possibility of cattle-keeping for an improvement in soil. There was obviously a widespread knowledge of soil variability in this region. In 1896 the Collector for the Upper Shire district reported that Ngoni headmen were asking permission to build villages between the Shire river and the foothills, where soils were rich; and in 1897 he reported that the population of the valley had largely increased.[15] In 1895 the Domasi missionaries reported that villages were shifting towards the Chilwa plain, adding that:

> "along the slopes and base of hills soils are very strong and people say they are tired of hoeing among stones."[16]

There were, however, new factors which inhibited the full resettlement of these areas and the expansion of agricultural production. In the southern part of the Upper Shire Valley, below Zomba mountain, Eugene Sharrer had acquired 200,000 acres of land in the 1880s, and much of this lay unexpoited and uninhabited, a reserve for game and tsetse. Furthermore, the game regulations promulgated by Johnston apparently had almost immediate effects, and the number of guns in the hands of villagers dropped dramatically.[17] In 1896 Johnston reported that the elephant population was increasing.[18] In 1896 and 1897 the <u>British Central Africa Gazette</u> noted that lions, previously rare, were now frequently

found around Mpimbi's on the Shire River.[19] The Gazette for 1898 reported that in the Upper Shire district revenue from gun licences had decreased owing to Africans being discouraged from shooting game.[20] By 1900 the Central African Times was claiming that:

> "During the last few years it is quite a common thing for lions to roam over a populous native district and never have a shot fired at them because the number of men with guns are few..."[21]

In 1903 the newspaper reported a huge increase in the population of hippopotami, which were ruining crops along the banks of the Shire and other rivers.[22] The 1910 Nyasaland Handbook reported that on the Upper Shire "game is evidently on the increase, and what is killed by sportsmen and wild animals is more than compensated for by natural increase",[23] and in 1912 the Nyasaland Times described how the existence of a wide tsetse belt in the area prevented the use of draught oxen:

> "If the game were exterminated in the district we believe the tsetse would disappear for it must be remembered that when the same district was well populated by Malemia's and Kawinga's people and before game preservation had increased the game, there was no tsetse as far as Liwonde."[24]

Though the relationship between game populations and tsetse is not a straightforward one, it would appear that in some areas the increase in game discouraged human settlement, and this in turn encouraged the spread of tsetse.[25] In 1910 a European hunter described the heavy tsetse infestation of land belonging to the British Central Africa Company in the Upper Shire Valley:

> "In the patch of country between Chindusi and Mpimbi on the Shire River, and between these places and the old coffee estate of Namitembo, situated at the back of Zomba mountain and within twelve miles of Zomba,

> the flies settled on my natives and
> on myself by scores".[26]

It is clear that strictly enforced colonial game regulations were partly to blame for the difficulty of re-establishing agricultural production in this area. The 1910 Handbook reported that in South Nyasa district, where game was plentiful and damage to crops by hippos extensive, there was a total of only 37 licensed guns in the hands of Africans.[27] The Upper Shire District Notebook recorded that in 1910, 14 gun licences and 9 game licences had been issued to Africans.[28]

A similar picture of the increase, or at least maintenance, of large game populations, is shown for the Lake Chilwa area where, in 1897, a Game Reserve was declared.[29] Menwhile, the natural resources of the Shire Valley were being decreased by the wholesale destruction of riverside timber for fuelling the steamers.[30] Over the area as a whole a series of natural disasters and outbreaks of disease occurred which affected food supply and general health in the area. In 1897 there was a drought which damaged crops and an outbreak of rinderpest which destroyed cattle in those pockets of tsetse-free land which still existed.[31] Further upstream near Mponda's, there was a severe outbreak of measles and the mortality rate was reportedly very high.[32] Crops were poor in the Upper Shire in 1898 due to a large locust warm, and in Liwonde in 1899 crops once again suffered from locusts.[33] Between 1898 and 1900 the people of the Chilwa area were subject to outbreaks of smallpox,[34] and in 1900 there was a general drought and famine which is well remembered in the area as having precipitated the immigration of large numbers of Lomwe

and Nyanja people from the other side of Lake Chilwa. On the Chilwa plain the father of the present village headman Njala (meaning 'hunger') acquired his name when he built a boat which aided a number of famine-stricken people to cross the lake in 1900.[35]

By 1902 the Church of Scotland Mission had two schools on Chisi Island in Lake Chilwa, where they reported that population was still very dense and there was much ill-health and malnutrition.[36] In 1903 Lake Chilwa dried up after a drought, and a serious famine ensued on the island:

> "So hard pressed are the people at one end of the island by hunger that those attending school have been compelled to leave their homes in search of food. Some have gone to the gardens of such as are in a position to pay them in food, while others are said to be gaining their livelihood by hunting for field rats which they barter for grain in the villages".[37]

The same drought caused a severe shortage of drinking water in the Chikala district and the Resident reported that "hundreds of people" including many new immigrants, had had to settle elsewhere.[38] Along the Shire River itself crops survived, but away from the river the maize crop was said to have failed completely at Linthipe, Gwaza, Phalombe, Chilwa and Liwonde.[39] This drought also caused the silting-up of the Upper River to reach serious proportions. In 1902 the Matope-Mpimbi section of the river was abandoned by steamers. Until 1905 it was possible to work steamers and barges from Liwonde up to Lake Malawi, but thereafter this was not possible for half the year. By 1906 "the whole aspect of the river had changed" and new islands had been formed.[40] This degree

of silting was unprecedented in the memories of the inhabitants of the Upper Shire and necessitated considerable (though familiar) adjustments in their domestic economy and patterns of settlement.

Whilst people living close to the river rarely starved, it is nonetheless clear that agricultural production in this period was adversely affected by unfavourable settlement patterns, by prolonged drought, and by other natural disasters such as locust swarms, and in some areas by land alienation. What evidence we have also indicates that repeated poor harvests left the population malnourished and vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases such as measles and smallpox. The continued concentration of population in areas of refuge on Lake Chilwa also led to an increased vulnerability to famine and disease there. Around the Chilwa basin as a whole the effect of the prolonged drought of the early years of this century was to encourage the movement of population westwards to the higher, better-watered elevations where agriculture was less risky. In these more favoured areas of Crown Land localised population pressure may have occurred with the influx of Lomwe immigrants and exiles from the Shire Highlands estates. Symptomatic of this was the change-over from millet to maize as the staple crop in these areas,[41] a change which occurred at the beginning of the century. Whilst there was no overall population pressure in the Upper Shire Valley or Chilwa basin, settlement was highly selective, determined by soils and possibly also by the distribution of game populations. In the Upper Shire district as a whole population per square mile increased from 23.45 in 1907 to 33.38 in 1917.[42] When, in the 1920s, Liwonde district was distinguished from the Upper Shire as a whole, the unevenness of settlement becomes apparent in the

statistics. In 1920-21 there were 13.09 people per square mile in Liwonde, whilst there were 68.50 per square mile in the rest of the Upper Shire, a figure substantially higher than that for Zomba district at the same date.43/ Thus, despite the evidence of one District Commissioner for the Upper Shire in the 1930s, that local, shifting cultivation continued in this area,44/ it would seem likely that in some of the more densely populated areas land use patterns changed.45/

Around Lake Chilwa, as population dispersed and increased, the agricultural potential of the area could be more intensively exploited, though the manner of exploitation was probably little different from that which had been practised in the nineteenth century, prior to the period of disruption. In the areas close to the Lake where seasonal flooding occurred, some rice was grown when the land was inundated, and this same land could be used to graze animals when the water receded. On the higher elevations a rotational agriculture was practised, but the crops grown varied with the wide variations in soils and drainage here.

In the first two decades of colonial rule, then, the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa basin were gradually reclaimed by the human populations which had been driven from them in the late nineteenth century. The change to more favourable settlement and cultivation patterns was however, a slow process, and did not result in any immediate prosperity. Indeed, this was a period characterised by poor harvests and outbreaks of disease. By 1910 the physical appearance of these areas had probably come to resemble their appearance prior to the 1860s, as land was reclaimed from bush and game, and as the more favourable soils were re-settled.

Resettlement, however, took place in a completely new political, economic and social context, and it is to this that we now turn our attention.

Baselines for Colonial Change - Late Nineteenth Century Economic and Political Structures

The Upper Shire Valley

In the second half of the nineteenth century political and economic authority in the Upper Shire was shared between the Mbewe Yao chiefs (Kawinga and Liwonde), the Milanzi-Phiri Yao chiefs (Msamala, Kalembo, Mponda), Gomani's Ngoni, and the Nyanja leaders Nyangu, Bimbi, Phimbi and others. Despite the fact that this was a period broadly characterised by warfare and hostility between groups, it was also the case that a degree of political and economic centralisation was achieved, particularly under the Mbewe Yao chiefs, which was greater than anything which had existed since the dissolution of the Maravi state system. Along with this political and economic control there began to develop amongst some ruling groups a degree of economic and social stratification based on the accumulation of material as well as of 'human' wealth.[46]

By the late 1870s the east bank of the Upper Shire was largely under the control of the Mbewe Yao chiefs, Kawinga and Liwonde. Liwonde ruled the valley from the Likwenu river in the South, to Lake Malombe in the north, while Kawinga and his son Mposa dominated a large area to the east of this, comprising the Chikala hills

and the northern part of the Chilwa-Chiuta plain.[47] From these positions, and with the help of firearms, they dominated the trade routes to the coast, organising caravans, buying and selling slaves, ivory and other goods.[48] Chapter 1 described the varied origins of the 'Yao'. Kawinga and Liwonde's ancestors were of Lomwe origin, and possibly also of 'slave' origin, who had been culturally assimilated into Yao society.[49] Within their own late nineteenth-century chiefdoms the Mbewe Yao exercised control, partly through force, but partly through a similar practice of 'assimilation'. This was achieved through the deliberate enlargement of the Mbewe clan, and the appointment of 'slaves' to official positions within the chiefdom.[50] The Mbewe Yao intermarried with other Yao clans, and with the Nyanja whom they found in the area on their arrival. According to the normal rules of the Yao and other matrilineal people, a child took the clan name of his or her mother. Amongst the Mbewe, however, children of 'free' marriages were classified as Mbewe if either their mother or their father was a member of this clan, and the children of Mbewe-owned slaves automatically became Mbewes.[51] This policy of out-marriage and assimilation not only implied a constant expansion of the chiefdoms, but also had implications for the pattern of social and economic stratification in the area, for whilst the chiefs and their relatives accumulated quantities of luxury goods and inheritable wealth, any member of the chiefdom potentially had some access to this through a kinship link, and none were denied access by 'birth'. Similarly, men of slave origin were frequently appointed as councillors who advised the chief, were his war leaders, messengers, and who organised the giving of tribute.[52] If Mbewe Yao society was still a relatively 'open' society in terms of access to status and wealth,

the chief nevertheless exercised a considerable degree of control over legal decisions, as well as over the distribution of goods. Whilst exercising very little direct control over the agricultural production of their subjects, Kawinga and Liwonde exacted tribute on a regular basis, and this was organised by the _induna_ in different parts of the chiefdoms. Even in the more marginal areas of Liwonde's chiefdom, which were largely Nyanja refuges, the chief appointed _induna_ as tribute - collecting agents.[53/]

Whilst some Nyanja groups in the Upper Shire Valley may have avoided 'assimilation' by the Yao by avoiding inter-marriage, there were other aspects of the Mbewe Yao presence which tended towards their involvement in the economic and political organisation of the chieftaincies. Quite apart from the exaction of 'tribute', many Nyanja were involved in free economic exchange with the Yao, particularly in the supply of fish and salt, industries for which the Nyanja were renowned.[54/] In this way they became involved in a wider economic system which was under Mbewe chiefly control, for goods such as imported cloth and beads could only be procured through these channels. Although some Nyanja chiefs in this area, most notably Nyangu, Bimbi and Phimbi, retained a considerable degree of autonomy, they were militarily vulnerable and did not organise their own trading caravans. The status which continued to be accorded to these chiefs was based on their ritual authority which, in the case of Bimbi, was also acknowledged by the Mbewe Yao chiefs. Liwonde in particular was aware of the importance to the Nyanja of the Bimbi cult and managed to harness this to his own authority by consulting Bimbi himself through the medium of another Nyanja headman.[55/] Thus, whilst the Bimbi lineage remained

'pure' Nyanja, and whilst Bimbis were still chosen internally, the Bimbi office was to some extent performing a political function within Liwonde's chiefdom.56/

The Nyanja of the Upper Shire also frequently found themselves acting as political agents and diplomatic links between the Yao and Gomani Ngoni. In the 1870s, following a long period of war and land disputes between the Ngoni and the Mbewe Yao chiefs, a boundary between the two groups was agreed upon under the 'Treaty of Basale'.57/ A number of Ngoni-assimilated Nyanja were sent by Chikusi to occupy the border areas, including men like Chienda-usiku.58/ There is some evidence that these Nyanja 'vassals' also performed an economic role by growing cotton on the low-lying ground, which was taken by the Ngoni and woven into cloth.59/

Further downstream, other Nyanja headmen, and some 'imported' Mang'anja such as Gwaza, found themselves on the other side of the Ngoni-Yao divide and were positioned to guard the river crossings against Ngoni raiders.60/ Yet others came under the authority of the more recent Yao immigrant chiefs, such as Msamala, who married into the dominant Nyanja clan in the area, the Phiri, and who was also involved in the Ngoni-Mbewe network of trade and diplomacy.61/

Thus whilst this was a period of insecurity, particularly for the Nyanja, but also for some Yao and Ngoni groups, it was also the case that in the 1870s and 1880s the majority of people in the Upper Shire experienced a greater degree of economic and political centralisation than had existed in the early part of the century. Indeed, it could be argued that the insecurity

in itself and the increase in the slave trade gave rise to this centralisation as weaker groups sought protection from stronger. It was a period when political boundaries between groups were relatively well defined and when involvement in a wide trading network was central to economic organisation.

The people of the Upper Shire Valley were living at a major crossroads of long-distance trade[62] and it is important to note the variety and extent of Yao cultural contacts which arose from this. Not only were the Yao chiefs in direct contact with Arab and Swahili culture, but they also had dealings with groups far to the west and north. The variety of slaves they handled indicates this. In 1893 the slave caravan of a Swahili trader, Abu Bekr, was captured by colonial forces on its way to Liwonde's headquarters, and the list of slaves incorporated in it demonstrates the wide sphere of slaving operations in which the Yao dealt, and the varied cultural contacts to which this gave rise. There were Chewa, Ngoni and Chikunda slaves from 'Angoniland;' Yao from Mponda's and Makanjira's, but also Bisa from the west and others from far north in Tanganyika territory.[63] Women and children far outnumbered men in this caravan, and it would have been usual for some of these slaves to have been purchased by Liwonde and absorbed into his own following.

Political and economic organization on the Chilwa-Phalombe plain remained rather more decentralised during this period. Once again, this area lay on important trade routes,[64] and possessed valuable economic resources of its own, in the forms of fish and salt. These commodities had been used as vital intermediary trading

items by long-distance caravans, and the salt industry of Lake Chilwa was famous.[65] However, with the expansion of the slave trade, this flat open land became highly vulnerable to raiding. A number of Nyanja groups moved westwards to take refuge on the highlands,[66] and those who remained lived in isolated population concentrations in the most secure places they could find. As we have seen, in the 1880s travellers passing through this area described it as a depopulated plain, criss-crossed by well beaten slave paths.[67] In 1889 the White Fathers missionaries crossed the plain from Mulanje to Kawinga's and reported that there was so little cultivation on the Chilwa plain that two to three days' supplies of food had to be procured at Mulanje.[68] As late as 1894 Alfred Sharpe was able to report to the Foreign Office that there was "no population between Zomba and Mulanje".[69] Oral testimonies imply that there were frequent population movements to avoid raids.[70] The Yaos raided from the north and the Ngoni, sometimes from the west and sometimes from east of Lake Chilwa.

Politically this area was marginal to a number of Yao chieftaincies but never fully incorporated into any of them. To the north were Kawinga and his son Mposa who, by the late 1870s, were both based on the Chikala hills. A number of Nyanja chiefs were nominally under their control but maintained different degrees of independence. One of these, Mpheta, had a large degree of autonomy. His ancestors had themselves migrated from Mozambique, probably in the late eighteenth century, and maintained independent contact with the coast, sending ivory, salt and tobacco there in exchange for cloth. They had settled along the fringes of the lake, displacing a group of 'indigenous' Milasi Nyanja in the process. Mpheta

received food tribute from the various Nyanja groups under his control, and, as with some other Nyanja leaders, exercised a degree of ritual authority over the fishing industry on the lake. During the Kawinga-Malemia war in the 1870s Mpheta was murdered by Kawinga's retreating forces, but the Nyanja did not retaliate and a relationship developed between Kawinga and Mpheta through which the latter's ritual authority was recognised and a degree of Nyanja autonomy retained. An intermediary was appointed between Kawinga and Mpheta, who was instrumental in persuading the latter to offer sacrifices when the rains failed or when fishing was poor. Part of Mpheta's success in maintaining a considerable degree of autonomy was due to his groups' avoidance of inter-marriage with the Yao, and thus retention of a Nyanja linguistic and cultural identity.71/

Mbando, who was related to Mpheta, occupied the northern part of the lake's fringes, beneath the Chikala hills, and in much closer geographical proximity to the Mbewe Yao chiefs, particularly Mposa. Yao and Nyanja intermarried here, and the common clan name of Milasi was used to invoke 'kinship' between the two groups. Mbando's group did not carry on any independent trade to the coast, but bought cloth from the Yao. Tribute was paid to Mposa, who also assumed many of the judicial rights formerly belonging to Mbando, the most important of which was control over the administration of the mwabvi ordeal.72/

It seems that the degree of economic dislocation and distortion of settlement were greater on the Chilwa plain than they were in the Upper Shire Valley, but for the region as a whole it

is possible to say that a significant proportion of the population was either scattered in insecure, often migratory groups, or concentrated into stockades belonging to one or other of the chiefs who possessed firearms and controlled trade. Those in the first group, who were predominantly of Nyanja origin, experienced only a very limited degree of economic and political control beyond the village level, and their economy was based on survival. As far as possible they seem to have married with similar groups, or with the more settled Nyanja on the Shire Highlands,[73] but the frequency of raids meant that these Chilwa Nyanja were unstable groups whose women folk in particular, were often removed by force. There are people alive today whose very limited knowledge of their origins and ancestry bears witness to this period of extreme instability.[74]

Life within the stockades was more permanent and, in a relative sense, more secure. Within some of these stockades there arose a considerable degree of economic specialisation and social stratification. The stockades were centres of privilege, whose inhabitants were protected by superior arms, and whose rulers exerted a crude form of control over the surrounding countryside. In 1889 the White Fathers described Kabuto's village in the Chikala hills as "an esplanade one kilometre long and fifty metres wide, covered with huts," where there was very little sign of agricultural activity and whose inhabitants relied on "trading" for their livelihood. The missionaries estimated that there were 1,000 huts in the neighbourhood, and commented on the prevalence of arms: "Ten year old children proudly bear rifles".[75]

Mponda's town on the southern end of Lake Malawi was perhaps the best example of a stockaded town within which a degree of distinctiveness in culture and social organisation had arisen. Mponda's had all the appearances of a 'town'. Approximately 5,000 people were crowded onto a narrow strip of land, and the settlement was heavily guarded by earthworks, moats, and gun positions. There was what the missionaries described as a 'town crier' who gave messages and orders to the populace, and a system of 'public health' regulations whereby those suffering from contagious diseases were isolated outside the town.[76] Within the town, distinctions of wealth and status were striking. "Mponda", the White Fathers commented, "is no petty chieftain," and the missionaries were expected to dress his many royal wives ("the principal expression of the sultan's wealth") in new beads, clothes, and cotton handkerchiefs.[77] The population was a mixture of Yao and Nyanja, "with the Machinga family forming a caste".[78] Although we need to be wary of the terminology used by the missionaries, it does appear that the Mponda family were, unlike their Mbewe cousins, attempting to reserve certain privileges and cultural distinctions for themselves, including the acquisition of both Swahili and European literacy. Mponda's privileges, however, were founded on an insecure base. The family was torn by inheritance disputes in which matrilineal and patrilineal heirs vied for power, and these disputes escalated into warfare involving rival Ngoni groups.[79] There were signs of social tension within the stockaded town, and frequent accusations of witchcraft. Mponda himself was not exempt from being administered the mwabvi ordeal.[80] Perhaps more seriously, the town had no secure economic base, relying on a

combination of trading and warfare, but little in the way of autonomous production. Warfare was in fact essential to the town's economic well-being as food was largely acquired through raiding. Famines were frequent within the town and only relieved by the exertion of force on the surrounding countryside - Mponda's efforts to monopolise certain forms of power and prestige were thus tempered by his dependence on external food supplies, and a constant recruitment to the town from outside its walls, as well as by his reliance on Nyanja ritual and war medicines.[81]

Political and economic structures in this region in the late nineteenth century thus ranged widely. At one extreme were the impermanent, mobile Nyanja groups on the Chilwa plain, whose strategy was to avoid the slave raiders, in-marry and survive. Then there were the structures of the Mbewe chiefdoms and the different degrees of incorporation within these, ranging from a relationship of ritual co-operation, to one which entailed a considerable degree of economic and political control which, however, was always achieved through the "assimilation" and involvement of as large a number of people as possible. Finally, there were stockaded towns in which social stratification was more marked and where the presence of inheritable material wealth began to give rise to attempts to retain privileges within the ruling groups. In the last two cases wealth was based on a monopoly over long-distance trade rather than on direct control over production, and ultimately this was a weakness in the economic structure of the Yao chieftaincies. 'Origins' were relatively unimportant, and the social system, operating within a framework of real or fictive 'kinship', allowed a large degree of fluidity and mobility.

'Kinship', however, did not encompass everybody. Involvement in a very wide-ranging trading network also meant that there were some people whose only value was as exchange commodities. Thus, although many Nyanja 'slaves' taken from this region became absorbed into Yao lineages close to their homes, there were others who changed hands several times or ended up at the coast, whose 'origins' were lost for ever. If any generalisation can be made about this area in the late nineteenth century it would be that all groups were involved in some way in a wide-ranging trading network, though in some cases their involvement consisted only of their attempts to avoid being taken as slaves.

As in the early nineteenth century, local and regional trade was still vitally important, but even the patterns of this trade had in some cases changed, and often it was now linked more closely with the flow of trade goods to and from the coast. The availability of these trade goods had increased, but their distribution was centralised and unequal. The unequal distribution of firearms to a large extent determined the distribution of political power, and the units of political control were larger and more highly organised than they had been in the early part of the century.

It must be remembered, however, that this centralisation of Yao political and economic control was taking place at the same time as European settlers and traders were beginning to exert an economic influence on the Shire Highlands and Upper Shire Valley.[82] There may have been some Nyanja groups who moved directly from their politically and economically decentralised state of the

early nineteenth century, to involvement in the beginnings of the colonial economy. On the Upper Shire, for instance, Sharrer had established by the late 1880s stores which sold imported salt and cloth, and people in this area were already being employed as <u>tenga-tenga</u> labour for the African Lakes Corporation.[83/] Thus, whilst the major distributors of trade goods were still the Yao chiefs, and whilst the prevailing direction of trade was still to and from the coast, a competing pull in the direction of the Shire Highlands was already making itself felt.

This process was of course, greatly extended in the 1890s, with the destruction of the power and trading monopoly of the major Yao chiefs, and the imposition of hut tax by Johnston's administration. The military defeat of the Yao chiefs such as Kawinga and Matapwiri took some time to achieve, and even when this had been accomplished (largely by 1896), the direction of trade did not automatically change, and slave trading continued for some time to come.

The methods of the small British force were crude but ultimately effective. Reporting on a raid on Mponda's in 1895 one participant remarked:

> "It is practically impossible to lay hands on a chief-they always get away. The only thing is to burn all the houses and grain so that they have to come in or starve. However, Mponda gave himself up the same night as we marched against him. A large haul was made from his villages - 300 or 400 captives, some ivory, 150 goats, 40 cows..."[84/]

'Captives' were set free, and this "slave-freeing business" did ultimately have important effects on social structure.[85/]
Liwonde was 'defeated' in 1893, fled into the hills, and in May 1894 was reportedly asking the Collector on

the Upper Shire, Chalmers Duff, if he could resettle near Fort Liwonde. Duff told him that he could not settle where he wished, but showed him another piece of land where he could build his village.86/ Around this time a Nyanja group fleeing from Chikusi's came to look for land in the Upper Shire Valley. They went to Liwonde who told them "that there was no need for fear since war was over now that a European, Whicker, was in the area. Liwonde took them to this European, Whicker, who allowed them to settle in this area."87/ In 1895 Kawinga, in league with some Lomwe chiefs, engineered an attack on Malemia and his European 'allies' in the Domasi Mission, but was defeated by a British force and fled for a while into Portuguese territory. In the same year Jalasi, Matapwiri and Makanjira were defeated, and in 1896 the Ngoni chief, Gomani, suffered the same fate.

As we have seen, the 1890s saw the repopulation of the Upper Shire Valley and the Chilwa plain, and this process can in part be seen as the result of the military defeat of the Yao chiefs and the curtailing of the slave trade. As has already been noted, there were sound agricultural reasons for the redistribution of population.88/ However, there was also a political perspective to this phenomenon as former 'captives' in some cases asserted their independence. In 1902 the missionaries at Domasi remarked on this process as it took place in Malemia's area:

> "As a result of Malemia's renunciation of his medicines and charms, several families have returned to this district. They have not, however, returned to their old position in the chief's village but have set up small villages of their own and are thus to a certain extent independent of him. Such is the tendency at present throughout the country. Large villages are being broken

> up, the more important individuals hiving off with their relations to set up an establishment of their own".89/

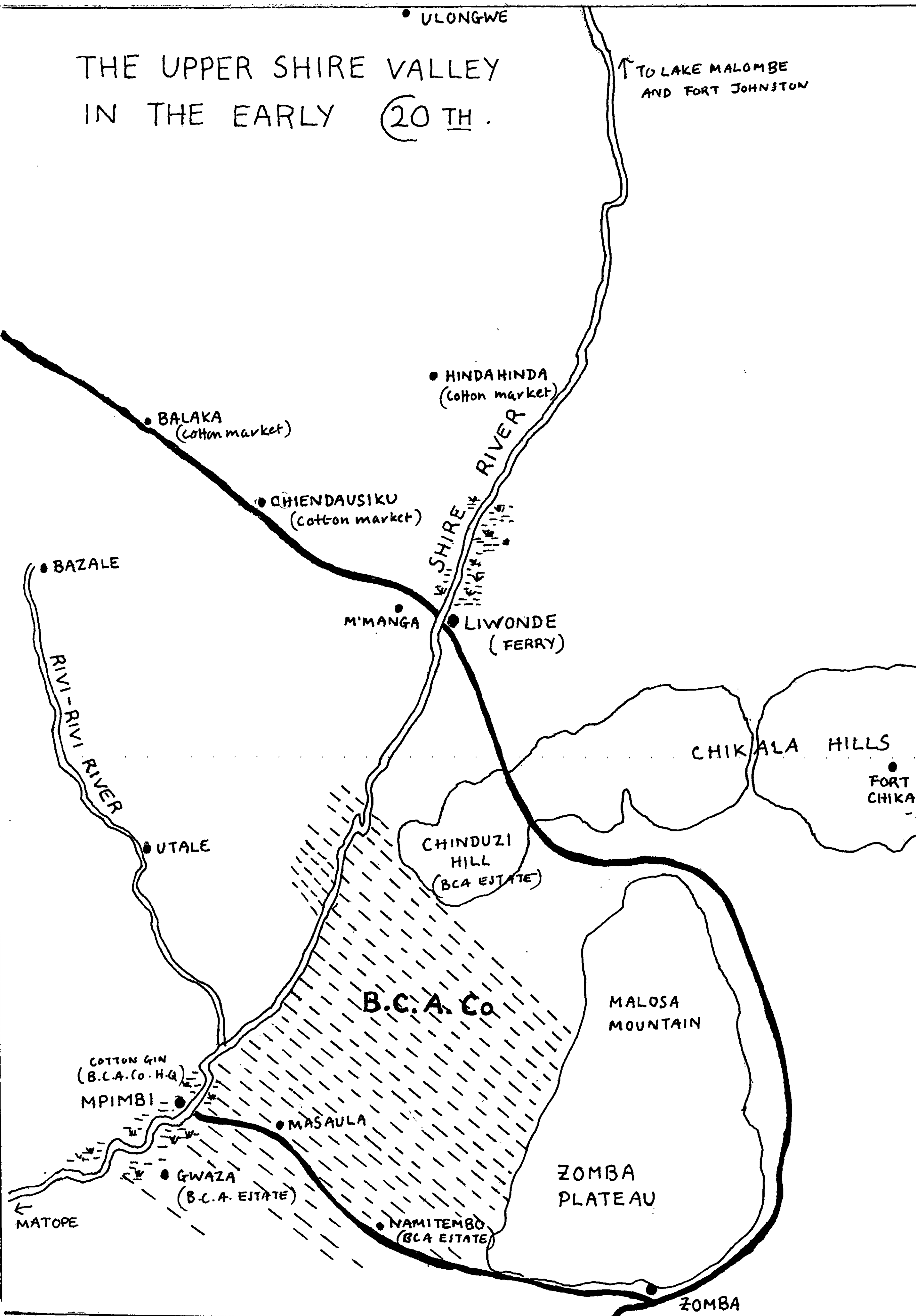
Although the Yao chiefly structures did not simply fall apart overnight, it is nevertheless the case that once the chiefs' monopoly over trade had been broken and their military advantage destroyed, they failed to attract the following that they had previously commanded. In some cases their powers were assumed by local colonial administrative officers. As we have seen, Whicker in the Upper Shire district assumed the right to distribute land to incoming groups, and in 1897 we find him being accused by the Scots missionaries of an over-zealousness in the performance of his duties - he was alleged to have coerced labour into road building and to have demanded two taxes from one person.90/ The Liwonde area of the Upper Shire was an important crossroads in the colonial infrastructure just as it had been for the Yao long-distance traders. Other areas, however, which had been 'central' in the late nineteenth century, now became very marginal - such as the former strongholds of the Yao chiefs on the Chikala hills. In these places the destruction of Yao chiefly power and economic control left a vacuum which the colonial administration failed to fill for a long time to come.

The next section of this Chapter attempts to survey these varied political and economic circumstances under which the people of the Upper Shire and Chilwa plain lived in the early colonial period.

Early Colonial Economic Structures

A large number of people in the Upper Shire Valley came under the direct or indirect economic influence of the British Central Africa Company during the early colonial period. The extent of their involvement with the company varied from occasionally buying salt from the Kabula stores, through an indirect dependence on the company as the government's cotton - buying agents, to a relationship of direct dependenee as tenants on company estates liable to thangata. The company originated with the land claims of Eugene Sharrer, whose wide-ranging economic activities have already been briefly discussed.[21] Sharrer had arrived in the area originally in the 1880s and obtained a large concession of land from the Yao chief, Mlumbe, on the west side of Zomba mountain. He returned in 1888, negotiated another land claim in the Upper Shire Valley, and set himself up as a rival to the African Lakes Corporation in the river transport business. In 1902 Sharrer's estates and his Zambesi Traffic Company became subsumed under the British Central Africa Company, of which Sharrer was a director and major shareholder.[22]

Sharrer's land claims were vast. The certificates of claim show that in the Valley south of Liwonde Sharrer claimed two areas of land - the Kupimbi estate was over 68,000 acres in extent, and the Chelumbe estate over 150,000 acres.[23] Together, these land claims in theory gave him control over a vast area of the east bank of the Shire, an area where authority had previously been divided between the Yao chiefs Mlumbe and Liwonde, and several Nyanja headmen. Nyanja-Yao rivalry in the area may in fact have


THE UPPER SHIRE VALLEY
IN THE EARLY 20 TH.
ULONGWE
TO LAKE MALOMBE AND FORT JOHNSTON
HINDAHINDA (Cotton market)
BALAKA (cotton market)
CHIENDAUSIKU (cotton market)
SHIRE RIVER
BAZALE
M'MANGA
LIWONDE (FERRY)
RIVI-RIVI RIVER
CHIKALA HILLS
FORT CHIKALA
UTALE
CHINDUZI HILL (BCA ESTATE)
B.C.A. Co
MALOSA MOUNTAIN
COTTON GIN (B.C.A.Co. H.Q.)
MPIMBI
MASAULA
GWAZA (B.C.A. ESTATE)
MATOPE
NAMITEMBO (BCA ESTATE)
ZOMBA PLATEAU
ZOMBA

aided him in acquiring land. Mpilisi was a Yao of the Msamala group, who had supplanted some of the Nyanja inhabitants of the Upper Shire Valley and had placed themselves on the river. Mpilisi was apparently one of the chiefs responsible for alienating the huge Kupimbi estate to Sharrer:

> "It was Sindler (Sinclair) who settled at Chindusi and had a large estate which was given to him by my uncle Mpilisi. We called him Mwashala (an employee of Sharrer's). He persuaded the chief to give him land with a bottle of gin, and he gave him a large piece of land. The Chindusi estate extended from Chindusi to the hill and from there to Mlumbe and down to the Shire. The price of all this land was a few strings of beads and a bottle of gin which he gave to chief Mpilisi. And when he settled on the land he proved to be a bad person. He used to beat workers..."24/

Alienating land to Europeans turned out not to be a popular political move, and today Yao blame Nyanja for it, and vice versa. Zinezo was a Nyanja chief living near Phimbi and, according to this Yao informant, warned against the alienation of land to Sharrer. But, so the tradition goes, Phimbi's son was persuaded to ignore this warning, and thus the Nyanja chief was ultimately responsible for the alienation of land on which both Yao and Nyanja lived:

> "Kumchela was the son of old Kuphimbi who moved to occupy this valley. At that time, Zinezo was at the confluence of the Lisanjala and the Shire. When the white-men wanted to buy the land, Zinezo warned my grandfather, Kambili, that he would suffer if he sold the land... Kambili directed the whites to Kunchela who, heeding Zinezo's warning directed them to his father, Kuphimbi. But Kuphimbi sent them back to his son Kunchela, who could act on his behalf. Kunchela told the whites of Zinezo's warning to explain why he did not want to sell the land. However, the

> whites assured him that he could not be enslaved, and bought the land. Zinezo was arrested and taken to Zomba prison. This was in the hot dry season (Chilimwe), but rain came that night, and Zinezo exploded like thunder in his cell, leaving behind his handcuffs and chains that had been tied on his legs. He arrived in his village, warned the people that they should not say he was alive, took his gun and left for his original home in Chikwawa."[25]

It is important to bear in mind that Sharrer obtained this land firstly, at a time when warfare and insecurity had led to the depopulation of much of the valley; and secondly, when the Yao chiefs were attempting to extend their control over this area, and when the remnant Nyanja groups, such as Phimbi's, were seeking alliances. In the 1890s, as we have seen, this area was being gradually repopulated. There is no evidence that Sharrer attempted to prevent settlement on his concession and indeed he may have seen that it was ultimately to his advantage to have a source of labour and rent close at hand. At this time, however, Sharrer was less interested in direct exploitation of the land he had acquired than in other economic endeavours, such as the railway construction business.[26] When it was formed in 1902, the British Central Africa Company was the second largest single landholder in Nyasaland, but in 1903 it had developed a total of only 5,000 acres out of 367,000.[27] As regards the land in the Upper Shire, this had become less attractive for direct exploitation because of the silting up of the river and the problems of transport which this posed. Furthermore, it was largely unsuitable for the first European cash crop in Nyasaland - coffee - and this was grown only on a small area of Sharrer's land, at Namitembo.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, then, the British Central Africa Company's major impact on this area was not as a landholder and employer of agricultural labour, but rather in its role as transport company in employing tenga-tenga, and also as a retailer of imported goods, for which "Bottomani" is well remembered.[28] In the meantime, the area was being repopulated and agricultural production was slowly returning to normal, although ecological distortions remained. The 'traditional' industries of fishing and salt-making continued along the river, but the cotton-growing and weaving industry, which had already declined in the last part of the nineteenth century, died out completely with competition from imported cloth which was often used as wage payment at this time.

Administrative control over the British Central Africa Company land was divided between the Collector (later termed 'Resident') at Zomba (to whom this must have been a marginal and somewhat inaccessible area) and the Collector at Liwonde. When tax was demanded of the people living here, they commonly paid with money earned from tenga-tenga employment:

> "The common job was carrying goods from one place to another... People carried bags of rice and maize from Liwonde to Zomba. Some carried the whites on a stretcher (machila) from Blantyre to Fort Johnston. They would spend two to three weeks on the way... or they carried boxes of salt, tins of paraffin, which they delivered to Mandala stores in Zomba."[29]

Initially, then, the alienation of land in the Upper Shire Valley did not have the same impact on the lives of people here as it had done in the Shire Highlands where, by the turn of the century, food production by Africans was already being disrupted by attempts

ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS, 1894

LAKE NYASA
CENTRAL ANGONILAND
FORT JOHNSTON
SOUTH NYASA
LAKE MALOMBE
MOZAMBIQUE
UPPER SHIRE
LIWONDE
FORT CHIKALA
MOZAMBIQUE
MPIMBI
MATOPE
LAKE CHILWA
ZOMBA
ZOMBA
WEST SHIRE
FORT ROBERTS
BLANTYRE
BLANTYRE
MLANJE
FORT ANDERSON

to limit the extent of the cultivation and to requisition their labour.

It was probably around 1906-07 that cotton and sisal production got underway on the British Central Africa Company estates in the Upper Shire. The company's land was divided into a number of estates - Phimbi, Matumbiri, Gwaza, Masaula, Chindusi and Chinkwezule's - and informants identify their different methods of exploitation by remembering the names of their managers. The latter seem to have had a considerable degree of independence in determining how to exploit the land under their control. In some, a system of _thangata_ was established, similar to that found on estates in the highlands:

> "We, the men, we forced to work in the estates for a month. Also unmarried girls were forced to do _thangata_, while adolescent children picked cotton for a shilling a month. The pay was according to age, ranging from nine pence to three shillings if one was an adult. This was the type of _thangata_ which was started by the B.C.A.: helping them on their estates only to be underpaid. Only the married women were not involved in this. If one refused to do _thangata_ they would burn your house. People were also forced to contribute money despite the fact that they also paid tax. There was no specific time for working or paying, one could be called at any time, one group following another..."[100]

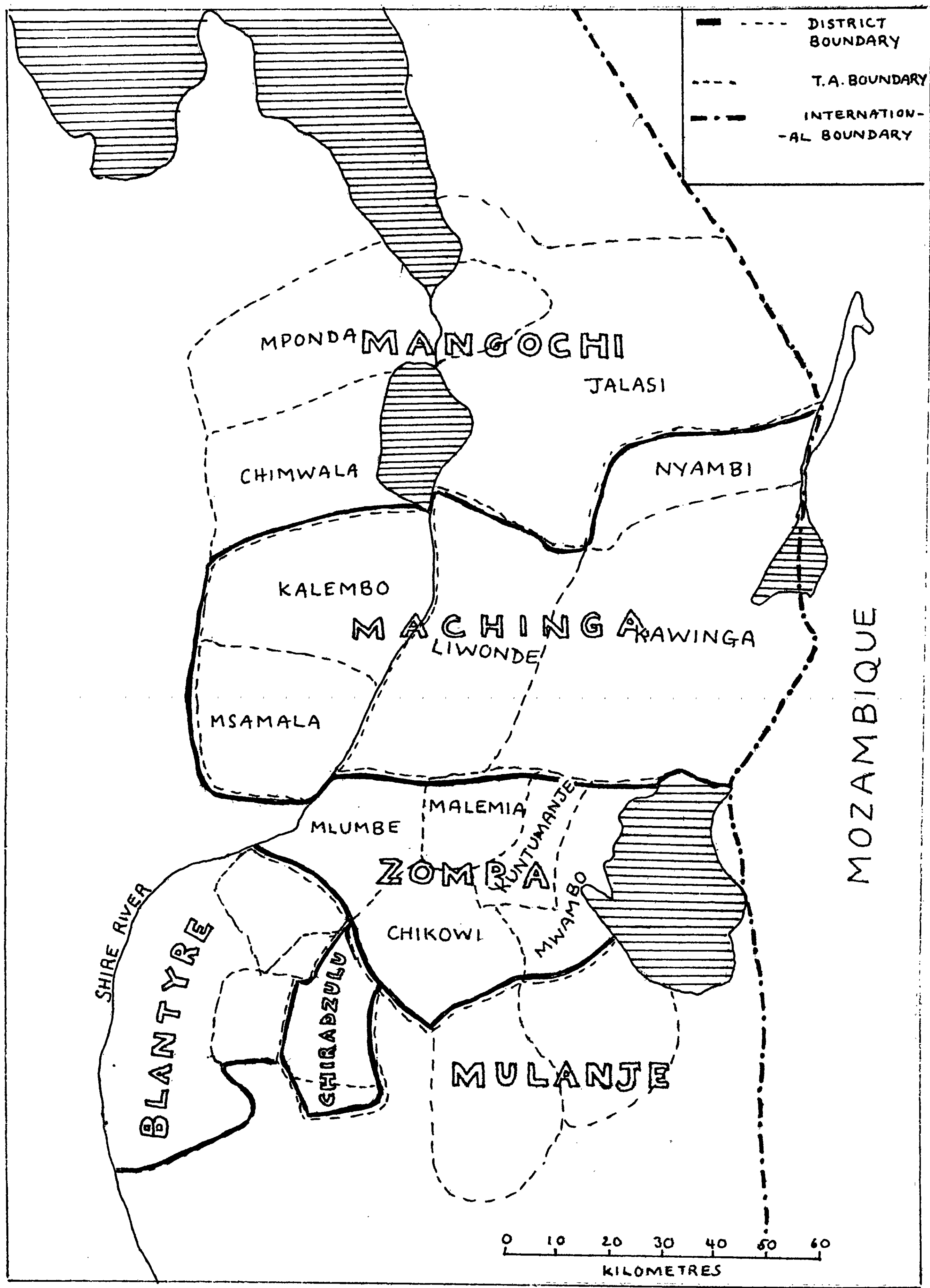
Some informants stated that _thangata_ was only called for on the Namitembo estate, and elsewhere money rent was demanded.[101] Certainly, some of the estates seem never to have demanded _thangata_. One of these was on the west bank of the Shire and was managed by Blair, who cultivated rubber and cotton and employed local Ngoni labour.[102]

Direct exploitation of this land in the Upper Shire seems never to have been a great success, and many informants commented on the failure of estate agriculture here.[103] One problem faced by the B.C.A. Company was that their estates were spread over such a wide area, the infrastructure was poor and transport made more difficult once the river had silted up. The ultimate solution to this was the dividing up and leasing of the land which took place after the First World War, but in the meantime, the company explored other methods of exploiting their assets and their position in the Upper Shire. These included introducing a tenant cotton-growing scheme, and acting as buying agents and ginners of cotton grown by 'independent' peasants not living on their land.

Tenant schemes for growing cotton and tobacco on B.C.A. Company land continued into the 1940s.[104] Unfortunately we know little about their introduction. One informant described cotton growing on the west bank of the Shire before the First World War. The size of cotton gardens varied, he said, with "one's strength" (available labour power) and there were no restrictions on the amount of land one could hold. Extra-household labour was obtained through the institution of the work-party when the cultivator brewed beer for participants. He knew of no instances where tenants employed labour for cash. Once harvested, the cotton was taken across the Shire to be sold to a European, "Vindula":

> "People would carry their cotton on the head, sometimes spending two days on the journey before getting there... I cannot estimate our yields in those days, but most people would get from 5 shillings to 8 shillings after selling their cotton... Big growers would get as much as one red pound. This was in the period before the Karonga war."[105]

PRESENT-DAY DISTRICT AND TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARIES



The use of a tenant growing scheme was especially appropriate in an area where there was no immediate land shortage. It ensured that the best land, which may have been widely scattered, was utilised, and it cut down on the company's production costs. The company then concentrated on ginning and exporting the crop. They established a ginnery in the valley, at Mtchera, and from there the crop was carried by head-load to Blantyre.

In the early colonial period, then, much of the southern part of the Upper Shire Valley was at least nominally owned and controlled by the British Central Africa Company. This was an area which had been on the fringes of the chiefdoms of both Mlumbe and Liwonde, and was populated by a mixture of Nyanja, Yao and Ngoni peoples. In some instances the economic life of these people was now under the direct control of the Company, which in some areas requisitioned their labour and controlled their access to land. As we have seen, however, in this period much of the Upper Shire Valley was still under-populated, and the existence of a land concession probably did not prevent people from continuing to grow their major crops, sorghum and millet, using extensive methods. Meanwhile, the river was silting up and attempts at direct exploitation of the land by the company tended to give way to tenant cotton-growing schemes, whereby individual families, scattered widely, cultivated cotton which they sold directly to the company, their 'rent' being extracted from the proceeds of the sale.

With the destruction of the military power of the Yao chiefs, any centralising tendencies were now focused on the embryonic

local colonial administration. Whilst the direction of much trade had previously been eastwards, it was now largely on a north-south axis from the Shire Highlands to the lake, and while the economic foci of this area had previously been the headquarters of the Mbewe Yao chiefs, a number of crucial economic transactions now took place on the river depots of the transport companies, and of the boma at Liwonde.

A little further upstream from the British Central Africa Company's land was an area where, early in the century, the growing of cotton as a cash crop by independent cultivators was promoted by the colonial authorities. The nineteenth-century political and economic structures here were very similar to those which existed in what became British Central Africa Company land. Here were 'indigenous' Nyanja groups fishing, cultivating, and growing and weaving cotton, under leaders such as Nyangu and Bimbi who over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, had progressively been absorbed into the chiefdoms of the immigrant Yao, and had experienced a period of extreme insecurity when warfare and famine had led to the depopulation of the valley and the disruption of production. By the late 1890s the area was being resettled again, and a number of immigrant groups, including Ngoni, settled on land here. As we have seen, however, the 1890s and 1900s were years when a considerable degree of economic and ecological distortion persisted here, and when famine was not uncommon.

Apart from some favourable agronomic features,[106] it is not clear why this area near Liwonde should have been chosen for the first experiment in a government-sponsored African cash-crop industry,

though one suspects that it might be connected with the enthusiasm of the first Collector here, Whicker.[107] The very amateur and haphazard nature of the industry's inception and early development is possibly related to the confusion which existed in the local colonial administration regarding the desirability of African cash crop production, and the question of whether Nyasaland should be developed as a fully-fledged settler colony, or one in which peasant production took primacy.[108]

As we have seen, in the Shire Highlands the voice of the European planters prevailed and independent peasant production was stifled.[109] The planters were less concerned about African cash-crop production which took place away from the Shire Highlands, indeed, they often perceived the possibility for profitable involvement in this as buyers and middlemen.

The earliest mention of the possibility of commercial cotton growing by Africans is found, interestingly, in the <u>Central African Times</u>, the voice of planter opinion, in 1899. As part of a general discussion on and search for economic crops to be grown in the Protectorate, the possibilities of cotton were discussed. The international price for ginned cotton at this time was 4½d per lb and, given the costs of ginning, baling and transportation, it was not generally regarded as profitable enough for European cultivation:

> "This price at once disposes of European cultivation. Europeans could not grow it and make sufficient profits at that price... Natives however could grow it in small patches and sell it to Europeans... a price would have to be fixed allowing the European buyer sufficient profit and margin for the rise and fall of the market to pay him for the trouble of ginning and exporting it."[110]

Nothing was done, it appears, to follow up this suggestion for a few years. The impetus eventually came from outside the country. At the beginning of the century raw cotton prices were rising steadily and the Lancashire manufacturers began to look for alternatives to American sources. In 1901 the Oldham Chamber of Commerce lobbied the Colonial Office, suggesting that cotton suitable for the industry might be grown in parts of the Empire. In 1902 the British Cotton Growing Association was formed with this aim in mind, and by 1904 the price of cotton lint had risen to 9d per lb.

In 1903, when cotton cultivation by Europeans on the Shire Highlands was already underway, the administration was given one ton of seed by the British Cotton Growing Association, which was then distributed by the District Collector of the Upper Shire District to "suitable Africans in the District". Despite late planting the results were not unsatisfactory, with twenty-five tons of seed cotton being purchased by the administration for 1d per lb and sold to the British Central Africa Company (authorised to act as agents for the B.C.G.A.) at the same price.[111/]

On distributing the cotton seed to chiefs and headmen in the Upper Shire, no allusion was made to the fact that this was not a new crop in the area, but for one group in particular there were some ironic continuities.

As has already been mentioned, there were some Nyanja and Chewa vassals of the Ngoni who, in the 1870s and 1880s, were sent to settle in the Upper Shire Valley to guard the borders of Ngoni country against the Yao, and one of whose functions had

been to grow cotton for their Ngoni overlords. This, however, had died out in the 1880s and 1890s due to extreme insecurity in the area and, presumably, in some cases because of the availability of imported cloth. The District Collector of the Upper Shire, Whicker, fixed on some of these immigrant villages as suitable areas for the introduction of his cotton seed. Amongst these was the village of Hindahinda, who had once been a Chewa captive of chief Chikusi's. For the people of Hindahinda, the first year of cotton seed distribution (1903) coincided with a year when their very survival was at stake:

> "On the day that cotton seed was distributed for the first time here, the chief Hindahinda had just returned with a less than half-filled basket of maize from msuma, a sojourn for food, whereby you work in the gardens of those who have food, for food... As a result Hindahinda was so frustrated when Whicker gave him cotton seed on his return from msuma. He said he wanted food, not cotton seed, and burnt the seed which he was given to distribute to his people... But in the second year of the introduction of cotton, people here, including the chief, accepted seed and started growing it."112/

Seed was distributed to the headmen by the District Collector who toured the area, and was then redistributed to growers on the spot by the headmen. The seed was free, and initially everyone received the same amount. If, after the first year, a grower wanted to expand his garden, he was given more seed. According to informants, the only constraint on expanding cotton acreages was the same as that cited for the tenant-growers, i.e. 'strength' or labour availability, because cotton-growing usually involved the clearing of new land, and having extra labour available during the sorghum-growing season. Cotton gardens were generally small, and oral testimony to the effect that they were around one acre

in extent is backed up by evidence from the Land Commission of 1921.[113] Except in a few isolated cases, only family labour was used, though occasionally, especially when there was a food shortage in the area, cotton growers could utilise the system of communal labour.[114] To some extent cotton was a man's crop, the women being left in charge of the food crops whilst the men tended the cotton, but there were peaks in the labour requirements of cotton during the weeding and picking stages, and at these times women and children participated.[115]

In the early years, although cotton was taken up fairly enthusiastically by many families in the Upper Shire, there was a degree of well-founded scepticism surrounding its introduction. As we have seen, at a time when food production was less than certain, expending family labour on an inedible crop was a considerable risk to take. Furthermore, in the early years the cotton seed was often defective and did not germinate at all.[116] Extension advice was extremely limited as Residents were not agricultural experts; and pests were a continual problem. Residents argued at this stage that, if he were not to be discouraged, the African grower would have to be assured of a fixed price, not subject to fluctuation, and this policy was pursued, the price remaining around 1d per lb for many years.[117] In its first years then, the industry was almost completely 'protected', seed being distributed by the Residents and the cotton purchased from the growers by the Residents, a price having already been agreed by the buyers who at this time were the British Central Africa Company and the African Lakes' Corporation, acting as agents of the B.C.G.A. A further apect of 'protection' was the

institution of a system whereby any grower who produced 36 lbs or more of seed cotton was granted a tax rebate, thus allowing him to pay the lower rate of tax without performing any wage labour. Predictably, the planters opposed this system and it was withdrawn in 1910.[118/] In the meantime, the Residents ceased to buy cotton directly and this function was now performed by a number of Europeans and Indian firms, some of whom were also ginners. The government reiterated that prices would have to be kept constant if the industry were to survive, and in general it does appear that the previous prices of 1d or ¾d per lb, were paid. However, the government had some misgivings about this system. In 1909, for instance, the Director of Agriculture appealed to buyers not to force the price up to a level that could not be maintained.[119/] In the Legislative Council comments were made to the effect that Europeans were exploiting African growers, buying the cotton from Africans for 1d or ¾d per lb and then expecting to sell it to the government for £25 a ton. These allegations were hotly denied in the Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce.[120/]

In 1910 a Cotton Ordinance was passed which made government policy more explicit.[121/] The stated aims of the Ordinance were to "distinguish between native and other cotton"; to regulate the issue of cotton seed to Africans as well as to regulate the planting, cultivation and harvesting of the crop; to regulate the sale of the crop; to deal with diseases affecting the crop, and in connection with this, to regulate the importation of cotton seed. Probably the most significant clauses in the Ordinance were those affecting the buying and selling of the crop. In order to protect the grower against "unscrupulous" Indian and European

traders, licences were required for any prospective buyer which could be obtained from the District Resident and were valid for the buying of cotton in that district only. Every month the licensee was required to make a return to the Resident showing the total weight of cotton he had bought and the price he had paid for it. It had already been argued by many that Africans were not yet mature enough to understand the workings of supply and demand, and that it was better to protect them from competition, even if this meant their not benefiting from price rises. The debate on the Ordinance in the Legislative Council gave rise to many expressions of this sort. Duff, then the Acting Governor, put the Government's attitude very clearly, saying that:

> "The measure was of course a restrictive one to some extent since it partially curtailed the normal liberties of exchange so far as the native was concerned... the native occupied a peculiar position with reference to our laws, in that he was not entirely sui juris - that is to say he was not in a contractual sense quite his own master... It was their (the government's) bounden duty to look into the future and in the honest exercise of their judgment to decide what appeared to be best for native interests."[122]

African cotton production continued to rise in this period, and by 1912 accounted for around 49% of total cotton production in the Protectorate, but an increasing proportion of this was applied by the growing industry in the Lower Shire Valley.[123] The cotton seed register in the Liwonde/Upper Shire Notebook shows that in the 1909-10 season 5,700 lbs of cotton seed were issued in the district, and by 1911-12, 12,207 lbs were issued.[124] By 1910 the newly established Department of Agriculture and Forestry was making a more concerted effort at extension advice to African producers,

teaching them to grade their cotton and to thin out the plants. The product was of the highest quality and some of the African crop purchased at Port Herald in the Lower Shire obtained 1s.1d per lb on the world market.[125]

In the Upper Shire Valley the problems of transport and marketing were an inhibiting factor on the industry's development which seem to have been partially solved in the Lower Shire with the building of the railway and the B.C.G.A. ginnery. The establishment of official cotton-buying markets at Balaka in 1913, and at Hindahinda, Chiendausiku, M'manga and Mvera in 1915,[126] coincided with the beginnings of the decline of the Upper Shire cotton industry. The drought of 1912-13 dealt the initial blow. Added to this was the increasing discrimination of buyers who left low-grade cotton in the cultivators' hands;[127] then the heavy recruitment of male labour during the First World War,[128] and marketing problems caused by the war. However, underlying these short-term causes of decline was the fact that returns on small-scale cotton growing were not sufficient to allow the industry to withstand these temporary problems, and compete with alternative cash-raising strategies. In 1914 the Assistant Agriculturalist of the South Nyasa District, a little to the north of the main area of study, reported on the decline in cotton output there:

> "The decreased cotton crops in South Nyasa district in the past season were mainly due to field mice, up to 80% of the crop being eaten in many places. With reference to future extensions in this district which has been under my more immediate charge, one might say in short that the prices paid are not sufficiently attractive when compared with other means of obtaining cash. The hut tax of 4-8 shillings can be earned by a native by tenga-tenga work

> any time throughout the year in a few weeks; occasionally in a few days... In many instances the District Residents have to use considerable persuasion in order to get certain tribes to come for cotton seed at the planting season. Many villages show a gradually decreasing number of cotton gardens from year to year, but as a rule the natives here attempt to grow cotton on poor soils or plant too late in the season. Even in such cases it is often evident that they do not wish to cease cultivating cotton, but that they would grow more if paid better."129/

Informants give a variety of reasons for the decline of the cotton industry here. Some say, like the Assistant Agriculturalist, that it was easier to make money through tenga-tenga or, in some cases, by mat-making.130/ Others said that they found it easier to sell a food surplus rather than cultivate cotton. Many mentioned the problems of transport and marketing:

> "I don't know when people stopped growing cotton, but it was after the Karonga war. People stopped growing cotton because they were cheated. For each bale that was put on the scale and sold, the buyers deducted five shillings for the transport lorry which came to the market to collect the cotton, and five shillings for the sack that the farmer had used, because the government supplied the sacks."131/

Another informant claimed that people stopped growing cotton soon after the First World War because there was a rise in taxes "and people realised that cotton had been introduced so that people should be able to get tax money",132/ a perceptive observation given that Residents on the whole did view African cotton-growing as a way of increasing their districts' revenues.

All in all, the African cotton industry in the Upper Shire Valley did not give rise to any great prosperity in the area, or constitute an economic revolution. Estimates as to the average

profits made by cotton growers are difficult to make and even contemporary reports are not always reliable. In 1910 the Director of Agriculture optimistically estimated that the African farmer could gain 18s - 23s per acre for his cotton, plus the remittance of half his hut tax.[133] In 1911, however, it was calculated that cotton growers in the Lower Shire received an average 10s per head for their crop, and out of this they had to pay a hut tax of 6s (once the rebate had been withdrawn).[134] This seems a more realistic estimate and accords better with information from oral testimony.[135]

The fact that the cotton scheme did not bring about an economic revolution in the area was partly due to government policies which restricted the degree of African involvement in the industry, and partly to the absence of much prior capital accumulation in the area. Very early on, European cotton growers had realised that, given the expense of transportation within and from Nyasaland, the crop could only be profitable if it were partially processed before export, so the African Lakes' Corporation and the British Central Africa Company ginned and baled their own cotton. Apart from a brief and unsuccessful experiment with hand gins, however, the African producer was never involved in the processing of his own crop, and was at the end of a line of buyers, middlemen, and government officials dealing with his product. Whether or not the government pursued a 'free trade' or 'protectionist' policy towards the African cotton producer,[136] he was unlikely to make any reasonable profit unless he had capital to invest in labour and transport, and in most cases this was not available. The destruction of

the Yao trading economies in this area meant that there was no continuity with nineteenth century capital accumulation or entrepreneurship. Added to this were some government policies, such as that exemplified in the Credit Ordinance of 1903 which, assuming the African to be economically naive, severely restricted his access to credit from European and Indian traders.[137] At a more informal level, District Residents could make life difficult for African entrepreneurs whom they felt were becoming too ambitious, and there is a documented case of this in Mulanje.[138]

However, a handful of relatively large-scale cotton producers did emerge in the Upper Shire, though they were mostly active in the 1920s rather than in the earlier period. In one village a man named Giresani was mentioned. He had married into the village and grew cotton on his wife's land. Giresani is said to have become quite rich, but to have 'consumed' rather than invested his profits.[139] Another relatively large-scale producer, Himani, had permanent labourers working on his cotton, and it is interesting to note that both he and Giresani had been labour migrants in Rhodesia, taking up cotton cultivation on their return.[140] Possibly they were able to open large gardens because they had enough capital to overcome the labour constraint.

It may be most accurate, then, to view cotton growing by Africans in the Upper Shire as just one of several strategies pursued by families here to raise the necessary cash to pay taxes and meet other requirements. Whilst the labour requirements of cotton necessitated alterations in the economic structure of households, it is probably not realistic to see the economic

structure of the area as a whole as being fundamentally altered by the crop.

There is, however, a valid contrast to be made between these 'independent' cotton cultivators and the tenant cotton-growers on the British Central Africa Company land. Although the fortunes of both growers were ultimately determined by forces beyond their control, and although the B.C.A. Co. managed to extend its 'informal empire' over independent as well as tenant growers, the latter were involved in a fundamentally different economic relationship in which their rights to land (and their means of subsistence) were dependent on their production of cotton, a portion of which was taken as rent. Whilst the independent cotton growers could, and did, move in and out of the industry, the tenants could only cease to grow cotton if they moved off the company's land altogether.

For those resident on Crown Land there were a number of alternatives to cotton growing as a means of meeting cash requirements. A very large number of adult males (unfortunately we have no figures) performed _tenga-tenga_ work, and the demand for carriers in this period actually increased as the river silted up. The advantages of _tenga-tenga_ work were that, whilst it was hard work, it involved a relatively short absence from home, and allowed a flexibility in the time of year in which the labour was performed, so that it did not necessarily involve the withdrawal of labour from agriculture at crucial times.

Another strategy was labour migrancy, and here again estimating the actual numbers involved is problematic. Informants give the impression that this became more common after the First World

War, but we know from other sources that 'Yaos' from this region were migrating south long before this.[141] It was perhaps a tendency which was more common a little further north, in South Nyasa district where, in 1926, there were an estimated 1,172 absentees, as compared with 360 in the Upper Shire district.[142] As early as 1906, Sharpe had reported to the Colonial Office that Yaos from the lakeshore were crossing into Portuguese territory in order to be recruited for work in Johannesburg.[143] The Liwonde/Upper Shire district notebook in 1926 recorded the ratio of adult males to females as 1000: 1939.[144] Labour migrancy was then a significant factor in the economy of the area, and in some cases, as we have seen, returned migrants invested their savings in other enterprises.

Connected with this, and possibly of more significance, was the tendency for men in this area, particularly those identified as 'Yaos', to seek employment in various capacities with the Administration. It is possibly as a result of this work experience from an early date, that many Yaos later became labour migrants.

In the First World War a staggering 76.6% of adult males in Liwonde district had been recruited as "military labourers", with 52.4% in the Upper Shire and 54.7% in South Nyasa.[145] There are several ways of accounting for this figure. In the first place, men around Liwonde had long been employed as civilian carriers and lived around an important axis of the colonial transportation system. Secondly, there seems to have been a tradition of strong local administration in Liwonde and the Upper Shire which made for effective recruitment.[146] Lastly

there was the propensity of the Yao to join military and semi-military professions. Because of their 'militaristic' tradition, the Yao were always considered to be suitable recruits to the armed forces and police. Certainly, though other groups in the area respected the show of resistance to the British put up by Yao chiefs such as Liwonde, they also stress that once resistance had failed, the Yao were active collaborators with the Administration.147/ Out of twenty-two 'native policemen' recorded in the police character record of the Upper Shire District Notebook between 1910 and 1913, seventeen were 'Yaos', two were Tongas, two were Nyanjas and one was Nguru.148/ The hut tax summary for S.E. section of the district at the same period shows that, out of a total of 453 huts, 291 were Nyanja-occupied and 144 were belonging to Yaos.149/ Thus it would appear that the Yao were heavily over-represented in the local police force, though we have to bear in mind the continuing tendency (reported as late as 1926) for "non-descript" peoples to identify themselves as 'Yaos', a tendency reinforced by the spread of Islam.150/

Although the parallel should not be pushed too far, it is nevertheless valid to comment that the experiences of Yao labour migrants and soldiers from this area represented some degree of continuity with their nineteenth-century trading exploits, though the circumstances were of course very different. Whilst the direction and nature of economic activity had changed, the people of the Upper Shire were still to some extent living on an axis of trade and important economic activity, and this distinguishes them from the people of the Chikala hills and Chilwa plain to whom we now turn.

The Chikala hills, which at various times came under the jurisdiction of the District Resident of the Upper Shire, of Zomba, and briefly of Chikala itself,[151/] was an area which, as we have seen, was central to the ivory and slave trades and where, in the late nineteenth century, population was heavily concentrated in 'towns' like Kawinga's and Mposa's. It was, however, an area of poor soils and few streams, and as soon as the military and trading monopolies of these Yao chiefs had been broken, and as agricultural production assumed primacy again, the population began to move down from the hills into the Chilwa plain and Upper Shire Valley. Furthermore, unlike the Upper Shire Valley, this area lay well off the colonial transportation network and became marginal to the colonial economy and administrative system.

The Chikala area was populated by Yao, Nyanja and, increasingly in the early colonial period, by Lomwe and Mpotola immigrants from Mozambique. The latter lived mostly around Lake Chiuta under their chief, Chikweo, but they intermarried with the Yao and to a large extent adopted the Yao language.[152/] The Yao themselves predominated to the north-west of Lake Chilwa in Kawinga's and Mposa's areas, whilst the Nyanja were both at Mposa's and at Changa's on the banks of the Domasi stream.[153/] Despite their economic decline, and the comparative weakness of their chiefs in the early colonial period, the Yao remained culturally aggressive in this area, and indeed still were so when Mitchell studied them in the 1940s.[154/]

In the early years of this century this area appears to have experienced wide short-term fluctuations in population levels. At the turn of the century the population of Chikala

district was established at only 3128, while by 1904 it was nearly 13,000, the increase being accounted for by immigrants from Mozambique.[155] In the same year (1904) however, the District Resident reported that, due to a severe shortage of drinking water, large numbers of people were moving away from the district.[156] To some extent then, this area was a staging-post for immigrants from Mozambique who moved on to inhabit areas of greater economic opportunity. Apart from cultivating millet and later maize, the people here fished in Lakes Chiuta and Chilwa, cultivated a 'traditional' cash-crop, tobacco, and some rice along the edges of the lakes. Early estimates of sex ratios here, however, indicate that large numbers of men migrated either within or outside the Protectorate for work.[157]

South of the Chikala hills, in the Chilwa basin which formed part of Zomba district, there were fewer Yaos and a greater concentration of Nyanja people, supplemented by Lomwe and Nyanja immigrants from Mozambique, from Mulanje and, increasingly, from the more crowded areas of the Shire Highlands. Missionary evidence from 1906 implies that to some extent these different groups had distinct areas of settlement - the Nyanja, who were the major fishermen, inhabited the edges of the lake and the river deltas; further upstream were Yao groups, and further up again (on the higher elevations) were Lomwe immigrants.[158] Certainly the tendency in this area was for a general movement of population westwards, though by 1914 this was being to some extent reversed as the highlands became more crowded. Taking Zomba district as a whole, the District Census summary in the District Notebooks shows a large increase in estimated population

between 1904 and 1914, after which it grew more slowly.[159] The densest population was on the higher elevations of Crown Land and on the estates, whilst the low-lying areas around the lake remained selectively settled. As has already been mentioned, economic activity in this area continued to be strongly influenced by ecological change, and in particular by the fluctuations in the level of Lake Chilwa, which is said to have dried up between 1900 and 1903, and then to have risen and flooded in 1904, causing further population movement westwards.[160]

In general this was an area of greater economic potential than the Chikala hills, and one where two 'traditional' industries - fishing and salt-making - survived, and in the case of fishing, grew, in the early colonial period. Because of the variability of soils in the Chilwa basin, this was an area where a free choice of settlement was vital to people's economic welfare, and the severe disruption of settlement patterns which had taken place here in the late nineteenth century had quickly resulted in famine and ill-health, as we have seen.[161] As population dispersed once more in the early colonial period, however, the better soils were settled - at the higher levels the loamy soils of the Phalombe plain supported good crops, and nearer the lake people settled selectively in areas of alluvial soil, for instance in the deltas of the Domasi, Likangala and Phalombe rivers.[162] Whilst the redistribution of population thus made subsistence production more certain, opportunities for raising cash here were not many. Both fish and salt (which continued to be manufactured into the 1930s)[163] were traded in the area, in much the same way as they had been in pre-colonial times, and to a large extent still through

barter. Poor communications limited the possibilities for marketing fish on a wider basis, and the market for traditional salt had in any case been eroded by the use of the imported variety which was sold widely by the beginning of the century. It is perhaps a measure of the poverty of this area (in terms of the availability of cash) that the salt industry survived at all. Equally telling is the fact that in the first few years of hut tax being raised in this area, it was largely paid in the form of limestone which people transported from Chisi island to Zomba for remission of tax.[164] Indeed, some parts of the Chilwa basin were so remote from the colonial administrative and economic networks that informants claim they rarely paid taxes at all.[165]

In addition to cereal crops, rice was grown along the fringes of the lake and in the river deltas, but not on a commercial scale.[166] In later years this land became more intensively utilised; the same land which was used for rice cultivation became a grazing ground for cattle when the water receded.[167] Similarly, by the 1920s the Lake Chilwa fishing industry had become vitally important to the whole economy of Southern Malawi, and the Yao began to take an active part in it as traders and middlemen.[168] In the period up to the First World War, however, the most important economic development in this area was the re-establishment of subsistence production.

Conclusions:

The preceding section has, I think, shown that there are no very easy generalisations to be made about the economic changes of the early colonial period in this area. Land alienation and

labour exploitation on the Shire Highlands caused relatively abrupt and clear-cut changes in peoples' circumstances there which can be easily related to similar situations in other parts of colonial Africa. The experiences of the inhabitants of the Upper Shire and Chilwa basin are, however, less easy to categorise and define, and they clearly have to be seen against the background of nineteenth-century economic and political formations here, taking into account the different responses of different strata within these. Oral testimonies, in particular, reveal a baffling variety of economic relationships which people were involved in this area during the early colonial period. On the one hand, there were a large number of people who gained at least part of their livelihood from involvement in 'traditional' industries such as fishing and salt-making, and some areas around Lake Chilwa continued to specialise in these. These goods were often transported to the highlands and bartered for foodstuffs in much the same way as they had been in the early nineteenth century. In the 1940s Gray witnessed salt from Lake Chilwa being traded for cassava and maize, as well as for cash. Furthermore, there is a quite considerable degree of continuity in the identity of the groups involved in these activities. Both fishing and salt-making continued to be most closely associated with the Nyanja, and salt-making was still to some extent the preserve of older women. The continuance of barter, however, does not preclude involvement in other, sometimes very new, forms of economic activity. The most radically new of these was perhaps the performance of <u>thangata</u> by tenants on some of the B.C.A. Company estates. As we have seen, societies in this region were not unused to losing some male labour at certain times of the year as a result of their

involvement in long-distance trade. _Thangata_, however, involved the requisitioning of a much larger amount of male, and sometimes female, labour at a crucial time in the agricultural year, as 'rent'. Although this labour was usually paid at the normal monthly rate, it is clear that most people regarded _thangata_ as constituting a net loss to their productivity and prosperity. Cotton producers were also involved in a new economic relationship in which a portion of their labour power was expended on the production of an export crop, for which they had no use themselves, and the price of which was externally determined. Furthermore, they were encouraged to produce this crop in a period when the production of sufficient foodstuffs was not always certain. It could be argued that the nineteenth century long-distance trade involved groups in this area in 'unequal exchange', that they had no control over the price of ivory, for instance, and that there was therefore little fundamental difference between these nineteenth century economic relationships and the production of cash crops in the colonial period. Unlike cotton, however, ivory and slaves had a 'social' value in the societies we are dealing with and could be 'stored' at no loss if prices were unfavourable. Furthermore, the Yao were primarily middlemen, and within certain limits were able to control where and when they sold their products in order to gain the best price for them. For some Nyanja groups, however, who had supplied slaves and intermediate trade goods to the Yao in the nineteenth century, the contrast between these economic relationships and colonial cash crop production was not so great.

The military conquest of the Yao chiefs virtually destroyed the existing economic hierarchy in this region, and because of

the very limited opportunities for capital accumulation here, new forms of economic stratification were very slow to develop. To some degree it would be true to say that the Yao continued to dominate the more lucrative economic activities, and to this extent there was some continuity with the nineteenth century. The Yao, as we have seen, were early recruits to the local army and police force, as well as being labour migrants, and also securing recognition as 'traditional' leaders. There is little evidence in this period, however, for their having developed into any kind of economic elite, although their experiences may have laid the foundations for economic advancement at a later date. If the remarks of European administrators are to be believed, the ranks of the Yao continued to swell into the 1920s as a result of inter-marriage and Yao cultural and linguistic domination. It would thus not be accurate to visualise the Yao as a small exclusive group monopolising certain activities. Despite this, and bearing in mind the fluidity of 'tribal' identities, it is possible to discern two basic patterns of social and economic behaviour in this area which, for convenience, we will label 'Yao' and 'Nyanja'. The 'Yao' pattern consisted in a relatively heavy involvement in the wider colonial economy and administrative system combined with a cultural confidence which kept them aloof from European education and Christianity. It would be inaccurate to see them, as many colonial administrators did, as 'traditionalists'. In terms of their economic behaviour they were innovative and 'modern'. Although ultimately their spurning European literacy may have placed them at an economic disadvantage, in the early years of the century there is no clear evidence that this was the case and indeed the opposite may have been true. Colonial

administrators in general approved of adherence to Islam (which spread at the turn of the century) as being an 'appropriate' and 'traditional' religion, and this may have helped them secure recognition as chiefs and headmen. The 'Nyanja' pattern, on the other hand, consisted in a greater involvement in Christianity and European culture, but a more marginal involvement in the colonial economy. Nyanja groups around Lake Chilwa, for instance, were heavily proselytized by the Church of Scotland missionaries but, more than any other group in the region, remained very 'marginal' to colonial economic and administrative structures. This may have been in part simply due to their geographical remoteness, but might also be connected with their experiences of the late nineteenth century which induced them to place great value on security and production for subsistence.

One problem which remains in a study which relies heavily on oral sources is how to relate the experiences of individual families to patterns in the colonial economy as a whole. This is less difficult on the Shire Highlands where the land and labour requirements of European agriculture directly undermined the self-sufficiency of African rural economies and suppressed African economic initiative. In the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa basin, however, there was no such clear-cut division of interests and the forms of economic control were generally less direct. There are certain themes in the economic history of the Protectorate as a whole, however, which can be seen 'on the ground' in this area. The most immediately obvious of these is the issue of transportation, the problems of which, as Vail has shown, continued to undermine the viability of the Nyasaland economy throughout the

Protectorate's history. Many families in the Upper Shire were directly involved in the provision of transportation services and gained their livelihood by them. As we have seen, large numbers of men were employed as porters, others sold charcoal to the river steamers, and yet others were involved in ferrying Ngoni labourers across the river.

There were other, less straightforward ways, in which the whole issue of transport affected the economy of this area. Firstly, tenga-tenga was an extremely expensive and labour-intensive form of transport which greatly increased the costs of production for export. As the Shire river silted up, so there was a greater reliance on human porterage, and so the proportion of total costs accounted for by transport rose even higher. The effects of this can be seen both on large-scale agriculture and on peasant production in the Upper Shire Valley. As we have seen, much of the B.C.A. Company land in this area was never directly exploited,and this can in part be explained by its increasing geographical remoteness and the expense of transporting crops from here to the railhead in Limbe. Given that transport costs could not easily be lowered, the company looked for other ways of cutting production costs. One outcome of this was the early use of a tenant cotton-growing scheme which, as we have seen, ensured efficient use of land and labour, and which placed some of the burden of transportation on the tenant himself. On other estates direct labour was used, and procured in the cheapest way possible - through thangata. Another consequence of the expense of transport was the company's involvement in the ginning of directly grown and tenant-produced cotton, as well as the buying

and ginning of cotton produced by independent peasants. Clearly, transport costs could be cut if the cotton was first ginned and baled on the spot by the company itself. In order to make ginning an economic enterprise a large supply of cotton was needed, and if insufficient cotton was produced on company land then this could be supplemented by that grown by peasants on Crown Land. Unlike in the Shire Highlands where planters saw independent peasant production as a threat to their labour supply and long-term viability, in the Upper Shire Valley the B.C.A. Company, as both a buyer and a ginner of peasant-produced cotton, had an interest in encouraging this industry.

For the African cotton-producers, however, the high costs of transport faced by the buyers was one reason why the prices paid to them remained low. Furthermore, their exclusion from the ginning and marketing processes meant that they were never able to 'cut-corners' as the large-scale producers did, in order to secure a greater return for their product. Ultimately this meant that the industry was highly vulnerable to any setback, and it foundered eventually on the drop in prices after the First World War.

The difficulties of transport, however, also limited the possibilities for other forms of profitable peasant production in this area, and ensured a continuing reliance on wage labour in order to meet cash requirements. Growing surplus foodstuffs was a less risky undertaking for a peasant household than growing cotton, but the local market for these was limited, and transportation to the markets of the Shire Highlands probably made the enterprise unprofitable. The same applies to the marketing of

fish from Lake Chilwa which only 'took off' when the advent of the bicycle brings the markets of Zomba and Blantyre nearer.

The issue of transport, therefore, connects with the problems of both large-scale agriculture and peasant production in this area, in a number of ways. Whilst individual families may have gained their livelihoods through involvement in an inefficient transportation system, ultimately its perpetuation decreased their chances of entering the cash economy on a favourable basis. At the other extreme was the British Central Africa Company with enough capital to diversify its operations and turn apparent disadvantages into advantages. Hence their involvement in buying and ginning cotton, and their timely switch from the river-steamer business to the railway-construction business.

Finally, what emerges very strongly from field-work in this region is an impression of the extreme variability in the effectiveness of the colonial administration during this period. In the Upper Shire in the late 1890s Collector Whicker embarked on an ambitious road-building programme, which entailed the repeated requisitioning of labour from headmen such as Chiendausiku. He was also an efficient tax collector and an enthusiastic cotton seed distributor, as we have seen. By contrast, when Pearce inspected the Fort Johnston boma in 1906 he found the Hut Tax records were not kept up, that the Resident was not even attempting to fulfil his judicial functions, and that these were delegated completely to certain chiefs in the district. The impression given by some informants living in the Chilwa basin was of extreme remoteness from the workings of the colonial administration as well as from the economic networks connected with it.

Footnotes

1/ See pages 43-46

2/ Upper Shire District Notebook Vol. I, p.134.

3/ H.H. Johnston, British Central Africa, London 1897, p.377.

4/ ZHP/KMD/16.

5/ Last, 'Journey', pp.178-80.

6/ ZHP/KMD/16.

7/ Hetherwick, 'Notes on a Journey', p.26; Henry Drummond, Tropical Africa, London, 1880, p.30.

8/ E.D. Young, 'A Recent Sojourn in Lake Nyasa, Central Africa', Royal Geographical Society Proceedings, V.21, 1876, p.229.

9/ See Chapter 1, p. 76

10/ Life and Work, May 1890, p.4.

11/ Life and Work, September, 1890, p.4.

12/ Life and Work, August, 1891, p.4.

13/ Life and Work, Blantyre Mission Supplement, August 1888, p.3.

14/ Life and Work, No.87, May 1895, p.7; Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. I, p.132.

15/ British Central Africa Gazette, Vol. III, No.21, 15/11/1896, p.3; British Central Africa Gazette, Vol. IV, No.4, 1/3/1897, p.4.

16/ Life and Work, No.90. August, 1895, p.7.

17/ Central African Planter, Vol. I, No.3. November 1895, p.38, reported that to avoid gun tax the Yaos of the Shire Highlands were selling their guns.

18/ H.H. Johnston, 'England's work in Central Africa', Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute 27, 1896-7, p.50.

19/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. III, No.19, 15/10/1896, p.1.

20/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. V, No.1, 15/1/1898, p.4.

21/ C.A.T. Vol. III, No.47, 18/8/1900, p.3.

22/ C.A.T., Vol. VII, No.8, 21/11/1903, p.13.

23/ Handbook of Nyasaland, 2nd edition, London, 1910, p.40.

24/ Nyasaland Times, Vol. XV, No.48, November, 1912, p.3.

25/ See John Ford, The Role of Trypanosomiases in African Ecology, Oxford, 1971, p.117. "One of the principal points that will emerge from this study is that much of the deterioration in the situation of the tsetse-borne diseases that has taken place during the last century has been a consequence of large-scale depopulation brought about by other diseases or by social disorganization followed by famines".

26/ D.D. Lyell, Nyasaland for the Hunter and Settler, London, H.Cox 1912, p.69.

27/ Handbook of Nyasaland, 1910, p.31.

28/ Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. II(b) (1910-1913)

29/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. IV, No.9, 15/5/1897, p.3 'Queen's Regulations for Preservation of Game, 1897'. The Lake Chilwa Game Reserve boundary ran from the source of river Phalombe in Mulanje district, east to the source of the most southerly affluent of the river Sombani, then to the Portuguese border and along the line of the lake. The western border ran up the Likangala river as far as the eastern boundary of Buchanan's Mulungusi estate, and from there to the left bank of the Thondwe river.

30/ Central African Planter, Vol. I, No.3, November, 1895, p.36. In 1900 rules were introduced to regulate the cutting of firewood on government lands, for which a fee of 12/- a quarter was charged.

31/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. IV, No.1, 1/1/1897, p.3, published the 'Regulations for the prevention of Rinderpest within British Central Africa', which, amongst other things, prevented the movement of cattle across the Shire River, and these regulations were activated in November, 1897. In October 1897, the disease was reported on the right bank of the Shire and also in Mpezeni's country: B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. IV, No.17, 18/10/1897.

32/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. IV, No.10, 1/6/1897, p.2.

33/ B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. V, No.1, 15/1/1898, p.4.

34/ Central African Times, Vol. III, No.16, 13/11/00, p.3.

35/ Central African Times, Vol. III, No.33, 12/5/00; Vol. III, No.41, 23/6/00, p.4; Vol. III No.42, 14/7/00, p.3;

ZHP/MV/46, Megan Vaughan with Gravelo Njala, Njala Village T.A. Kuntumanje, Zomba District, 15/9/78. In early 1901 the Scots missionaries reported severe famine on the lower reaches of the Phalombe river, and also on the Likangala river, and said that many people here had died of starvation. Life and Work, January-March, 1901.

36/ Life and Work, No.161, August, 1902, pp.4-6.

37/ Life and Work, No.172, July, 1903, p.14.

38/ Zomba District Notebook, (Chikala Sub-District), 1904-7 (not paged).

39/ C.A.T., Vol. VI, No.25, 21/3/03, p.10.

40/ Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. I, p.130 contains the report of a survey of the Shire River undertaken in 1937 which described the history of its fluctuations and silting-up.

41/ Informants in this area describe the changeover from sorghum and millet to maize as having occurred after the coming of the European, and in some cases coinciding with their own arrival in the area. They explain it by saying that maize was "more productive", and there is some evidence to show that whilst under conditions of plentiful land availability sorghum and maize produce similar yields, sorghum suffers when plant populations are dense.

ZHP/MV/37. Megan Vaughan with Dola Mwekwa, Chimbalanga Village, T.A. Chikowi, Zomba District, 6/9/78.

42/ Figures calculated from Blue Books, 1907-1918.

43/ Blue Book, 1920-1. Population density in Zomba District at this time was 51.93 per square mile.

44/ See footnote 2.

45/ Possibly connected with this was the increase in numbers of domestic animals kept in the Upper Shire district:

	Cattle	Sheep	Goats	Pigs
1907	679	3,000	10,000	-
1912	1,149	5,000	15,000	3,000
1921	4,307	4,705	17,148	3,010

Source: Blue Books.

46/ This description owes much to the fieldwork and analysis of other members of the Zomba History Project who concentrated on the political structure of the Upper Shire Yao chiefdoms. See Kumwembe, The Development of the Mbewe Chiefdoms; Makuluni, 'The Msamala kindred'.

47/ Kumwembe describes the formation of a dual chieftaincy between Liwonde and Kawinga, and the division of power between them. Kawinga's headquarters had originally been on the west bank of the Shire, at Kongwe, but he was displaced from there by the Ngoni in the 1870s and settled in the Chikala hills.

48/ The organisation of this trade has already been described in Chapter 1 and is detailed in a large number of interviews contained in Amachinga Yao Traditions Vol. I, (Chancellor College Library).

49/ Chapter 1. See also Webster, 'From Yao Hill to Mt. Mulanje', and Rashid, 'The Rise of the Mbewe Chiefdoms'.

50/ Liwonde Historical Texts Nos. 30, 23, 17, 15, 11, 10, 6, 1.

51/ Newby Kumwembe, "Development of the Mbewe Chiefdoms", p.11. Liwonde H.T. No.41, Kumwembe with Saisi, 17/8/77.

52/ See footnote 50.

53/ ZHP/KMD/9. Phiri, Vaughan and Makuluni, with Mbokwite.

54/ ZHP/KMD/12;

ZHP/KMD/2;

ZHP/KMD/9;

ZHP/KMD/5;

ZHP/KMD/1;

ZHP/KMD/24;

ZHP/KMD/3;

Last, 'Journey', p.181 described the Nyanja salt industry of the Shire and how the product was sold to both Yao and Ngoni.

55/ Kumwembe, "Development of the Mbewe Chiefdoms" pp.8-10.

56/ See Amanze, 'The Bimbi cult' p.7.

57/ Makuluni, 'The Msamala kindred', pp.15-16;

Kumwembe, 'Development of the Mbewe Chiefdoms', p.12.

58/ ZHP/KMD/12;

ZHP/KMD/13.

59/ ZHP/MV/54.

60/ J.A.K. Kandawire, "Thangata", pp.47-48.

ZHP/KMD/28;

ZHP/KMD/29.

61/ See Makuluni 'Msamala kindred', p.8.

62/ See map.III

63/ F.O. 2/55 Johnston to F.O. 1/9/1893. Inclosure I List of Abu Bekr's Slaves, Fort Liwonde.

64/ See map. III.

65/ Rowley, Story, p.179.

66/ These movements are detailed in the genealogies and testimonies of a number of Nyanja informants; including:

ZHP/MV/1;

ZHP/MV/2;

ZHP/MV/15;

ZHP/MV/23;

ZHP/MV/23;

ZHP/MV/24;

ZHP/MV/25.

67/ Drummond, Tropical Africa, p.31.

68/ Ian Linden (ed & trans.), 'Mponda Mission Diary, 1889-1891: Daily life in a Machinga Village' Part II, International Journal of African Historical Studies, VII, 3, 1975, p.493.

69/ F.O. 2/68. Acting Commissioner Sharpe to Kimberley, 6/11/94. Report of visit to Mulanje.

70/ Chingondo's 'Book of my Clan';

ZHP/MV/5;

ZHP/MV/29;

ZHP/MV/27;

ZHP/MV/30;

ZHP/MV/24;

ZHP/MV/31.

71/ ZHP/MV/19.

72/ ZHP/MV/22.

73/ The evidence for this comes from the genealogies of a number of informants: ZHP/MV/1. c.1860 Khanyoza (♂) from Chisi Island married Akulipinda (♀) in Zomba.

ZHP/MV/12 c.1880 Mitepa (♂) from Chilwa married Beatrice Sigalile who lived on the slopes of Zomba mountain. In the previous generation, Beatrice's mother, Akuminyanga, had married Kalonga who was from Chilwa.

ZHP/MV/2. Pambewo from Chisi Island married Achigwira (♀) who lived near Zomba mountain, in 1860-70.

ZHP/MV/3. In the 1880s Tom (♂) from Chilwa married Mwagona (♀) in Zomba.

ZHP/MV/4. Mapata (♂) from Chilwa married Azipaiwo (♀) in Zomba, probably in the 1890s. In the previous generation, Azipaiwo's mother, Mbajaleni, had married Phambewo, who was from Chilwa.

ZHP/MV/11. Ngomba (♂) from Phalombe married Asukuwasa in Zomba, in the 1890s.

ZHP/MV/23. In the 1890s Simeon (♂) from Chilwa married Grace, who lived on Zomba mountain. In the previous generation, Grace's mother, Akupendama, who had also lived on the mountain, married Chiwira from Chilwa.

74/ In Kapichi Village (ZHP/MV/27) I spoke to a woman who did not know the identity of either her father or her mother and had been taken as a child from one place to another on the Chilwa plain, in the care of different people. Several informants were only able to identify their parents and did not know their grandparents e.g. Awani Lichinga (♀) in ZHP/MV/27; Bita Mgumbala (♀) in ZHP/MV/44; Emma Sogoja (♀) in ZHP/MV/45.

75/ Linden (ed.), 'Mponda's Mission Diary' Part I, IJAHS VII, 2, 1974, p.300.

76/ Linden (ed) 'Mponda's Mission Diary', Part II, IJAHS VII, 3, 1975, p.509.

77/ Ibid. Part II, IJAHS VII, 3, 1975, p.494.

78/ Ibid. Part II, IJAHS, VII, 3, 1975, p.511.

79/ The Chingwalungwalu war. This began when Mponda irregularly succeeded his father, Msamala, and refused to give away to the 'legitimate' successor. A faction of the Mponda family including a man called Chingwalungwalu, broke away and settled near Ulongwe, where they formed alliances both with the Nyanja, under Nyangu, and with the Ngoni chief Chikusi. Mponda's faction likewise formed an alliance with a rival Ngoni chief, Chifisi, and the 'war' consisted of two battles between these groups in which both Mponda and Chingwalungwalu were killed.

Makuluni, 'The Msamala kindred' pp.12-17;

Johnston, British Central Africa, p.90.

80/ Linden, 'Mponda's Mission Diary', Part III: A Portuguese Mission in British Central Africa Part III IJAHS, VII, 4, 1975 p.707.

81/ Ibid., p.713.

82/ See Chapter 2, pp. 101-106

83/ See Chapter 2, p.125.

84/ Letters of Dr. Wordsworth Poole (N.A.M.). Wordsworth Poole to Father, November 13, 1895.

85/ See Chapter Five, p.292.

86/ F.O. 2/66 Sharpe to Rosebery, 9/5/1894.

87/ ZHP/KMD/26.

88/ See pages

89/ Life and Work, No.160, July 1902, p.13.

90/ Blantyre Mission Records (N.A.M.). Sharpe to Scott. 1/11/1897 and Whicker to Sharpe 13/11/1897.

91/ Chapter 2, p. 215.

92/ C.A. Crosby, 'Railway Development in Malawi: The Early Years, 1895-1915' in R. MacDonald (ed.) From Nyasaland to Malawi, p.127.

93/ See list of Certificates of Claim in Pachai, Land and Politics, p.37.

94/ ZHP/KMD/18.

95/ ZHP/KMD/9.

96/ Crosby, 'Railway Development' p.126-7.

97/ Evidence of 1903 Land Commission, quoted in Pachai, Land and Politics, p.84.

98/ Sharrer was known in the area by the name of 'Bottomani' or 'Boatman'.

99/ ZHP/KMD/5.

100/ ZHP/KMD/6.

101/ ZHP/KMD/17.

102/ ZHP/KMD/16.

103/ For instance ZHP/KMD/8. Both cotton and tobacco failed on Ankara's estate in the Upper Shire, and led to his departure. When asked if his departure was a good thing the informant replied, "it was the crops which failed him. We said nothing".

104/ Kandawire, Thangata, p.111.

105/ ZHP/MV/56.

106/ In particular the presence of 'grey soils' suitable for cotton.

107/ See footnote 92.

108/ J. McCracken, 'Production and Control', p.8.

109/ See Chapter 3, p.174

110/ Central African Times, V. II, No.9 25/11/1899, p.4.

111/ C.A.T. V. VII, No.3, 17/10/03, p.3.

112/ ZHP/MV/54.

113/ Nyasaland Protectorate, 'Report of Commission to Enquire into and Report Upon Certain matters connected with the Occupation of Land in Nyasaland Protectorate', 1921, p.7.

114/ ZHP/MV/53.

115/ ZHP/MV/53.

116/ P.T. Terry, 'The Rise of the African Cotton Industry in Nyasaland, 1902-18', Nyasaland Journal XV, July, 1962, p.61.

117/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report 1905-6, p.10.

118/ C.O. 626/2 Minutes of Proceedings of Executive Council, 30/10/11. 'Rebate of Hut Tax for growing economic products'.

119/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1910, p.5.

120/ Minutes of Nyasaland Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce; (N.A.M.) 30/12/1909.

121/ Published in Nyasaland Government Gazette V. XVII No.13, 31/8/1910, p.146.

122/ Summary of proceedings of the Legislative Council, 6th Session, November, 1910, p.8.

123/ In 1912 131 tons of unginned cotton were produced in Lower Shire district, 313 tons in Ruo district (also in the Lower Shire valley), and 82 tons in Upper Shire district. Blue Book , 1913.

124/ Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. II (b). 1910-1913. Cotton Seed Register.

125/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1910, p.5.

126/ Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. I, p.182.

127/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1912, p.6.

128/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1915, p.10. In Liwonde district an estimated 76.6% of the adult male population were recruited as military labour in the First World War. See Melvin Page, 'The Great War and Chewa Society in Malawi, Journal of Southern African Studies Vol. 6, No.2, April 1980, p.178.

129/ Extract from report of the Assistant Agriculturalist, South Nyasa district, quoted in Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1915, p.23.

130/ ZHP/MV/52.

ZHP/MV/54.

131/ ZHP/MV/55.

132/ ZHP/MV/153.

133/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1910, p.5.

134/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 31/3/1911, p.7.

135/ ZHP/MV/55.

136/ This question has been discussed by other writers on the African Cotton Industry. Myambo sees the paternalism of government policy towards African cotton growers as a front for 'official' exploitation. Chanock, on the other hand, when writing of African cash production in the inter-war years, criticises the colonial government for not having taken a more complete protectionist stance earlier in the history of the cotton industry.

S. Myambo, 'Socio-Economic History' pp. 75-76

M. Chanock, 'The Political Economy of Independent Agriculture', pp.129-133.

137/ Credit with Natives Ordinance No.5 of B.C.A. Protectorate, 1903, prohibited the sale on credit to Africans of goods valued at more than 20/-.

138/ Mulanje District Notebook Vol. II, p.123 under the heading "District Natives known to be bad characters", describes a running battle between successive Residents and an African named Makondeza, who was both a cotton grower and a trader in foodstuffs. In 1908 this man had opened a large cotton plantation on Crown Land near Fort Lister, and, lacking capital, he had been permitted to obtain credit from an Indian named Mussa. The Administration decided later, however, that the practical outcome of this arrangement was that "an Indian trader was making use of Crown Land for cotton growing". This arrangement was forbidden to continue, although Makondeza kept up his cotton field in 1909-10. In 1909 he was imprisoned for obtaining money by false pretences. By 1911, however, he was back in his trading operations, and had also opened a very large cotton garden, exciting the indignation of the Resident, who told him that once his crop had been gathered the garden would be divided into several smaller ones" as he had no permission to make a garden on this scale". Eventually, in 1912, no doubt exasperated by the harrassment of officials, Makondeza crossed the border to Portuguese Mulanje where he began work as a capitao and where his family joined him.

139/ ZHP/MV/55.

140/ ZHP/MV/55.

141/ Charles van Onselen, Chibaro, London, 1976 p.139, mentions the role of Yao migrants as compound policemen in Rhodesia in the early years of this century.

142/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Census Report, 1926, p.xxviii.

143/ C.O. 525/14. Commissioner's Tour No.285 17/10/06. Sharpe to C.O.

144/ Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. I, p.214.

145/ Page, 'The Great War', p.178, gives the following figures for recruitment extracted from file NSBI/2/5 in the National Archives of Malawi:

145/ Contd.

District	Total Adult Males	Military Labourers	%
Blantyre	25,056	6,542	26.1%
Chiradzulu	8,678	1,460	16.8%
Mulanje	16,214	149	.9%
Zomba	21,143	3,600	17 %
Upper Shire	15,520	8,135	52.4%
Liwonde	9,899	7,580	76.6%
South Nyasa	34017	18615	54.7%

146/ The first Collector of the Upper Shire District, F.J. Whicker was noted for his zealousness. In 1898 he reported that the revenue from hut tax collection in his district exceeded that collected in any other district of the Protectorate, including Blantyre. (B.C.A. Gazette, Vol. V, No.1, 15/1/1898, p.4) Whicker inundated the administrators in Zomba with reports of the great improvements taking place in his district. The Gazette for February 1898 noted that "Mr. Whicker has, as usual, a long report on native peace and progress", and also reported that the collector travelled widely in his district on an imported military tandem "with a native policeman in the back seat, holding a sunshade, and doing the driving, or the greater part of it". B.C.A. Gazette Vol. V, No.2, 5/2/1898.

This tradition of enthusiastic administration in the Upper Shire seems to have continued with C.A. Cardew who was commended in 1906 by Pearce in his report on his station inspection. Pearce to H.M. Commissioner, Zomba, 4/8/1906. Enclosure No.2 in C.O. 525/14/284.

147/ ZHP/KMD/21 with G.V.H. Phimbi: "Among us, the Mang'anja, no one was anxious to shower gifts on government messengers or officials whenever they came into our village. There was no-one who gave our women to these men. This being the case the whitemen and messengers never liked our villages so much. Msamala was just the man to give the whitemen a 'treat'".

148/ Upper Shire District Notebook Vol. II, 1910-1913, pp.145-149.

149/ Upper Shire District Notebook Vol. II(b) Hut Tax Summary.

150/ Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. I, p.214.

151/ Chikala District Notebook, Vol. 1, 1907.

152/ Zomba District Notebook, (no volume number) 1904-07: Chikala Sub-District.

153/ Ibid. Census of Chikala Sub-District. Kawinga's area: headmen:

Yao	=	74
Alolo	=	21
Mpotola	=	10

Lake Chiuta Area: headmen:

Yao	=	21
Mang'anja	=	3
Alolo	=	17
Mpotola	=	22
mixed Yao and Alolo	=	1

Mposa's Area: headmen:

Yao	=	70
Mang'anja	=	51
Mpotola	=	6
Alolo	=	1.

154/ Mitchell, Yao Village, p.92.

155/ Zomba District Notebook 1904-07: Chikala Sub-District. 'General Remarks'.

156/ Ibid.

157/ Zomba District Notebook, 1904-07: Chikala Sub-District: Census.

Lake Chiuta and Kawinga's area:

Men	Women	Boys	Girls
1,701	2,168	1,054	902

Chikweo's area:

Men	Women	Boys	Girls
580	722	391	301

Mposa's area:

Men	Women	Boys	Girls
561	700	320	337

Changa's area:

Men	Women	Boys	Girls
241	282	100	91.

158/ Life and Work, No.204, March, 1906, p.12.

159/ Zomba District Notebook, Vol. I, 1907. District Census Summary.

Estimated Population:

1904- 5	46,294
1907- 8	39,200
1908- 9	44,300
1914-15	72,504
1915-16	78,874
1916-17	80,339
1917-18	82,396

160/ Zomba District Notebook 1904-07: Chikala Sub-District: General remarks.

161/ See p. 213.

162/ For an account of the soils and settlement patterns of the Lake Chilwa area see Margaret Kalk, A.J. McLachlan, C. Howard-Williams (eds.) Lake Chilwa: Studies of Change in a tropical ecosystem. Hague, 1979, pp.21-45 and pp.313-317.

163/ ZHP/MV/17.

Ernest Gray observed salt being made on the banks of the Phalombe river in the 1930s. The industry had apparently revived during the depression when imported salt was in short supply: Ernest Gray, 'Notes on the salt-making industry of the Nyanja people near Lake Chirwa'. South African Journal of Science, Vol. XLI, February, 1945, pp.465-475.

164/ ZHP/MV/42.

ZHP/MV/43.

ZHP/MV/46.

ZHP/MV/49.

165/ ZHP/MV/17.

166/ Zomba District Notebook, Vol. I, 1907: Miscellaneous Notes on Botany and Agriculture, p.182.

167/ Kalk, et. al. (eds.) Lake Chilwa p.317. In the later colonial period Malawians from the north of the country who were civil servants in Zomba apparently bought cattle and sent them to be grazed near Lake Chilwa in the care of local people: Agnew in Kalk, op. cit., p.328.

168/ For a description of the organisation of this industry, see Pauline Phipps, 'The "Big" Fishermen of Lake Chilwa: A Preliminary Survey of Entrepreneurs in a Rural Economy'. Rural Africana No.21. Land and Labour in Rural Malawi, Part II, Summer 1973, pp. 37-49.

Chapter 5

Themes in the Rural History of Southern Malawi

In this concluding chapter I would like to spell out some of the themes which have emerged from this localised study of change in rural communities in Southern Malawi. These themes cannot be seen to stand by themselves, but connect to bring us back to the problem of analysis which was discussed in the Introduction.

Agricultural change and innovation:

One apparently straightforward and simple theme is that of agricultural change and innovation in the communities which have been described here. Central to this theme is the question of the allocation of labour within households and communities, and this unites the apparently very different experiences of peasant families in the Upper Shire valley, and tenants on the estates of the Highlands. In the case of the former group it is largely a question of the ability of families to respond to the introduction of a cash-crop - cotton. In the case of the latter it is a question of the necessity for agricultural change and the intensification of female labour in order to attain food security. There is also a third group comprising those families who lived on Crown Land in the highlands. In this case it is a question of how they were able to adapt and intensify their agricultural production in order to avoid having to spend long periods in wage labour.

Agricultural change, however, did not start with the colonial

period. Chapter 1 described agricultural production on the Shire Highlands and Upper Shire valley in the early nineteenth century. One striking aspect of this picture is the wide variety of crops grown and techniques used to make the most of different ecological zones, as well as the symbiotic relationships between these different zones. Also apparent is the fact that there was an internal dynamic to this system and that it responded to population increase and to the availability of new crops. This is not to imply the existence of a 'golden age' when famine was unknown, but it does imply an awareness of the characteristics of different plants and how they could be used in combination to minimise the risk of starvation. Thus perennial sorghums were grown in combination with dimba maize in the Upper Shire valley. It is also clear that communities in less agriculturally favourable areas relied on the exchange of goods such as fish and salt with foodcrops from areas which normally produced a surplus, and that their labour was allocated accordingly. In the agriculturally favoured areas of the highlands more intensive techniques were adopted in order to exploit the land to the full, and here it seems that both male and female labour were heavily concentrated on agricultural production. Hence it makes little sense to analyse the 'mode of production' of these communities in isolation from each other, as labour allocation in each of them was predicated not only on the natural potential of each area, but also on a knowledge of the possibilities for exchange between areas.

The early nineteenth century was a period in this region when there was probably a long-term trend towards population growth, enhanced by immigration into the area.[1] This may have

necessitated the adoption of more labour-intensive techniques more generally over the area, but the immigration of new groups and their involvement in a long-distance trading network also brought new crops and new agricultural techniques. This increased the possibilities for internal exchange of agricultural products, as well as encouraging the production of a surplus to sell to trading caravans in exchange for exotic goods. This was then a period of considerable agricultural change and dynamism, the point being that there was no such thing as a static 'traditional' agriculture upon which the changes of the colonial period were imposed. It was also a period of increasing specialisation and differentiation between groups, which laid the foundations for a number of long-lasting tribal stereotypes. Thus the Yao were depicted, and depicted themselves, as being uninterested in agriculture; the Nyanja of along the river and at Lake Chilwa were 'fishermen', and the Nyanja of the highlands were 'farmers'. Assessing the objective reality of these stereotypes is hazardous, but it is necessary to bear in mind the possible influence they had on economic realities when we come to analysing the different responses of different communities in the colonial period. The late-nineteenth century 'disturbance' period is crucial in this respect as the military advantages of one group over another led to greater political and economic differentiation, and the power of one group to impose a stereotype on another. Thus whilst many 'Yao' communities were agricultural communities, the ideal 'Yao' existence was one based on trade and the exaction of food from other groups. It seems that for a period in the Upper Shire chiefdoms of the Mbewe some Yao groups were indeed able to achieve something close to this ideal by exacting tribute from

passive Nyanja groups. In other areas, however, this was a period of severe dislocation of production when some groups were forced into a very marginal existence.

Lionel Cliffe has presented a simplified picture of this process of nineteenth-century differentiation with reference to East Africa, and with the premise that "a class analysis of contemporary states has to start from what were in the past distinct social formations".2/ The material presented in Chapter Four, however, points to a very complex picture of 'pre-colonial' formations, and the possibility that responses to colonial circumstances could be very 'local' indeed. Furthermore, the crucial factor in explaining differential responses seems not so much the political formations under which people lived in the pre-colonial period (as in general these had less effect on production than on distribution), but rather the actual labour profiles of these pre-colonial economies.

Gavin Kitching's work on Kenya concludes that "before 1930 the demands of the colonial economy for a redistribution of African labour time had hardly begun to utilise the 'spare capacity' inherent in the pre-colonial division of labour".3/ Kitching argues that it is only through understanding the extent of labour under-utilisation in pre-colonial economies that one can explain the expansion of African agricultural production in Kenya up to the 1930s. This model does not seem to apply so readily to the situation in Southern Malawi, partly because the pre-colonial economy here appears to have utilised labour more intensively, and partly because the early development of land shortage on the Shire Highlands required the use of more labour-

intensive agricultural techniques merely to ensure subsistence. Appendix 3 shows a tentative agricultural and non-agricultural calendar for this area.[4] Whilst there are definite labour peaks and slack periods in this calendar these are not as prominent as has sometimes been assumed. A farming family's main priority is to ensure food supply throughout the year, and according to the weather this might involve a great deal of agricultural activity outside the peak season. Working for subsistence did not just involve the production of one cereal crop a year, although this was the major task of labour; it also involved the production of vegetables and 'back-up' crops such as maize and cassava throughout the year in dimba gardens. Male labour in millet-and sorghum-growing areas was involved in extensive land preparation in August, September and October. Men and women then cooperated in the planting and care of the crop from November until the harvest in March and April. Child labour was also needed throughout the growing period in order to scare off birds. Once harvested, the women had to smoke and store the crop. A supplementary crop of maize would be grown using the same calendar, and this crop required weeding in the course of its growth. Cassava might be planted two or three times a year in off-peak labour periods. Around Lake Chilwa rice was grown which required intensive labour for weeding and harvesting. If one adds to this labour calendar non-agricultural activities, the slack season almost entirely fades away, for the majority of these activities were concentrated in the dry season. The peak period in fishing coincided, however, with the peak period for cereal production, and it is said that some chiefs around Lake Chilwa would periodically prohibit fishing at this time in order

to ensure that enough labour was spent on agriculture.[5] Women's labour in this society was almost without peaks. A recent study of peasant agriculture in the Lake Chilwa area shows that once their agricultural tasks slacken off, women's input into domestic activities rises sharply.[6] Whilst it is difficult to generalise from this contemporary data, there seems no immediately apparent reason why this should not also have applied to the pre-colonial period, given that no new women's industries have been introduced which could explain this phenomenon.

The withdrawal of male labour from such activities as hunting and iron-working in the early colonial period produced a certain amount of 'spare capacity' and enabled communities on the Shire Highlands to respond to new incentives to produce surplus agricultural produce. This 'spare capacity', however, was gradually eroded in two ways. Firstly, wage labour on estates for a minimum period of a month became virtually obligatory for all men if they were to fulfil their tax obligations. Secondly, the development of land shortage required the intensification of cultivation for subsistence. The land shortage precipitated the changeover from indigenous cereals to maize as the staple crop. Maize was more productive per acre, but also more prone to drought. Thus, in a bad year more labour was required in the production of 'back-up' crops, and this strategy was itself endangered by the withdrawal of male labour at the crucial time of the year. Something of a 'vicious circle' could then evolve, the necessary withdrawal of wage labour jeopardising the next year's food production and possibly making more families dependent on buying food at the end of the year. This is not to say that people consistently starved in this

period, but it does seem to indicate that subsistence was attained only through pushing female labour, in particular, to its limits. Tenants on estates were much more susceptible to famine. The practice of thangata removed male and some female labour from subsistence production for anything from two to six months. This labour for rent was performed mainly in the wet season when tobacco and cotton were planted and weeded. This was also the peak season for food crops, and thus subsistence was directly jeopardised. Many of these families appear to have adopted cassava as their main crop because it required less labour, but some would have become dependent on buying foodstuffs, at least at the end of the year. In a poor year the price of flour in local markets could rise spectacularly as the producers on Crown Land had little surplus to spare. Wages, however, remained constant and low, and thus in these years tenant families could suffer starvation.

Agricultural change on the Shire Highlands was thus a necessary response to new conditions if subsistence were to be guaranteed. The situation away from the highlands was somewhat different. A reversal of the pre-colonial situation took place as these areas became more food-secure than the previously surplus-producing highlands. In the Upper Shire valley and Chilwa plain there was no land pressure, and thus no immediate need to adopt more labour intensive methods of food production. Here the indigenous cereals persisted for much longer. However, because of the unreliability of rainfall in these areas, attaining food security required the input of family labour over much of the year. Indeed, it could be said that these economies became

more geared towards subsistence production in the early colonial period than they had been in the nineteenth century, as the opportunity for exchange of fish and salt for foodstuffs in a bad year was made more difficult. The increased need for food security thus has to be considered as well as the new needs of these families for cash to pay tax and buy new goods, and this affected their response to economic opportunities.

As Chapter Four has shown, the introduction of cotton into the Upper Shire valley was not everywhere greeted with great enthusiasm. The cropping calendar for cotton coincided with that for food crops and thus if food security were to be obtained the farming family was required to expend a great deal more labour altogether. Colonial agricultural officials argued that as food production was largely the work of women, the 'spare capacity' of male labour could be used for cotton cultivation.[7] However, knowing what we do about the strategies of households in areas of poor rainfall, as well as the fact that shifting cultivation (requiring considerable male labour in land clearing) persisted here until the 1930s, this argument seems to have limited validity. Given the hazards involved in cotton production in this period, the unreliability of seed, its susceptibility to pests, the problems of transport and marketing, it seems that the returns on cotton production here did not warrant the diversion of labour from food production.[8] Only when (in a very few cases) there was capital available to extend production and overcome marketing restraints, did cotton production pay. Thus in any assessment of agricultural change in the colonial period we need to look at the ability of families to reject as well as adopt new cash crops. Where small-scale cotton production was

carried on for a period, it involved an extra burden on female labour in particular, and also an increased input of child labour in picking and sorting the crop. Some communal labour was used to overcome the labour constraint, but most informants emphasised that this was possible only in a year when food production was poor. The host then had to provide food for the labourers, and by implication the host family was thus one of the better off who could afford to produce a food surplus as well as a cotton crop. In this period, then, most families in the area preferred to surrender a certain amount of male labour for tenga-tenga work (which could be performed in 'off-peak' labour periods), rather than to cultivate an inedible, unprofitable cash crop. That this cannot be accounted for by 'peasant conservatism' is apparent when one considers that this area later became a large groundnut-producing area - a crop much better suited to cultivation in combination with staple food crops.[9]

In the more marginal areas of the Chilwa plain, cash-raising strategies seem to have involved the intensification of agricultural production and the fishing industry, or where this was not possible, the migration of men to centres of employment. On the edges of the lake, rice-production was increased, and men spent time expanding fish-production, this industry being inhibited mainly by transportation problems, but responding to a growing urban market.

Family, kinship and 'tribe'

The discussion of the intensification of labour in the early colonial period, and particularly the extension of female

labour, hinges on some notion of the unit of production in these communities, and to the problem of possible changes in the structure of family and kinship, as well as the ideology of 'tribe'.

In Chapter 3 I have postulated that in the course of the late nineteenth century the institution of marriage was weakened and the matrilineage strengthened as women sought security and economic cooperation in a wider group.[10] Changes in family and kinship structures resulting from the imposition of colonial rule and the effects of the colonial economy are difficult to disentangle, and this must necessarily be a very tentative analysis. Amongst the most important factors affecting social structures are the ending of slavery, the imposition of hut tax, the development of labour migration in some areas and land shortage in others, and the intensification of labour discussed in the previous section.

The society which Clyde Mitchell described in his book The Yao Village was not a 'traditional' Yao society, but one radically altered by twentieth-century change. With the ending of the slave trade and the eventual decline of domestic slavery, there may have been a decline in polygamy and an increase in the degree of uxorilocality imn Yao society.[11] Mary Douglas has argued that with the ending of the system of pawnship which had enabled men to build up their own virilocal lineages, an extreme form of the matrilineal system develops.[12] When Mitchell studied the Yao in the 1940s he found a very high rate of divorce, possibly arising from what he saw as the conflict between uxorilocal marriage and the principle of male leadership.[13] The husband was portrayed as the visiting 'billy-goat'

to the village, whose only function was the procreation of children over whom he would have little control.

The effects of labour migration on the society which Mitchell studied may also account for this extreme form of matrilineality, though there is some ambiguity in this. If men migrated for long periods (as seems to have been the case with the 'Yao' who mostly found skilled employment), then women were likely to fall back on their matrilineages for security and economic cooperation, as they had done in the nineteenth century. However, other studies of matrilineal societies seem to indicate that the injection of wealth into such communities can lead to the strengthening of the primary family and the weakening of 'extended family' cooperation.[14]

The factors at work on the highlands were rather different. Here again an extra burden was placed on female labour, in this case by the absence of men performing thangata or wage labour. Women may thus have been propelled to cooperate more with their sisters and other matrilineal relations. This was hinted at in some oral testimonies. One woman was questioned on her economic activities in the colonial period when she had regularly sold foodstuffs in Zomba Market. Asked whether she had kept the proceeds of these sales for herself, or given them to her husband, she replied "No, we gave the money to our mothers".[15]

Although the principle unit of production was the household, cooperation within the matrilineage, especially on the part of women, may have aided families to maintain their economic independence and allowed production to increase. Whilst most informants

claimed that communal labour was rare, this kind of intra-matrilineage cooperation was probably taken for granted.[16]

Some colonial policies worked towards the weakening of the 'natural' functioning of matrilineality, however. The imposition of hut tax, for instance, may have strengthened the authority of men over their immediate families, and by its nature it treated the household, rather than any matrilineally-based group, as the fundamental economic unit of society. In extreme cases the imposition of hut tax could even alter the nature of marriage. In 1911 a missionary of the Nyasa Industrial Mission in Thyolo complained that the local Resident was acting without proper authority in the matter of tax collection. His askaris were apparently trying to exact money from women and children:

> "... one outcome of it is, that it forces very young girls, under the age of puberty, into untimely marriages. Men in the village mentioned have paid taxes for these children and now claim them for themselves."[17]

The development of land shortage in the Shire Highlands could make villages more permanent and thus affect kinship ties. The fission of villages and matrilineages, which Mitchell saw as a 'traditional' device to resolve tensions, became less possible on the Shire Highlands. The initial dispersal of population noted in the 1890s was a short-lived phenomenon soon to be counteracted by the enforced permanence which resulted from land shortage. The matrilineage could apparently thus become a more permanent structure.

The tendency for the reconcentration of population was increased by the Lomwe immigration and by certain colonial measures. Already by 1903 colonial officials were concerned

about the "decline of chiefly authority" and dispersal of population, and began encouraging the growth of larger villages. Until land shortage became acute (which was probably not until the 1920s), this meant that Lomwe immigrants were sought after and competed for, and 'kinship' with them invoked by Nyanja headmen on Crown Land. A Native Villages Regulation Ordinance was placed before the Legislative Council in 1910, and brought many responses indicating the concern felt by Europeans at the 'breakdown of native authority' and 'Law and order':

> "The new Native Villages Ordinance is quite a necessary piece of legislation, as there are always serious reasons for natives settling in isolated spots away from villages, as it is unnatural; besides, those who select this sort of seclusion are usually vagrants or very bad characters from some other tribes, Chikunda, Atonga, or such like men who have not returned to their country after a spell in the planting districts, but have married into some local family and sit down some distance away from the village, just far enough to terrorise the villagers by witchcraft etc."18/

It is not clear how far colonial measures actually affected the concentration of villages. The Native Villages Ordinance met vociferous opposition from the missionaries, represented in the Legislative Council by Alexander Hetherwick. The Ordinance was never enacted, and although there were clauses in the Native Administration Ordinance of 1912 relating to the size of villages, this Ordinance was not enforced on the Shire Highlands due to settler opposition. However, some oral evidence implies that the growth of large villages was encouraged by Residents and that it was a common concern of headmen who used the clan as a vehicle for the recruitment of new followers. One informant in Zomba district stated that when he was young his village had

consisted of an mbumba group - his maternal uncle, his mother, and their respective spouses and children. Around the First World War the Europeans told them that each village must consist of at least one hundred huts, and so they "started canvassing for Mwales to come and stay with them".[19]

One way in which a headman could increase the size of his village was to invite in Lomwe immigrants. Hector Duff, the Resident in Mulanje in 1907, indicated that Lomwe immigrants were being absorbed into the Nyanja population through a combination of 'domestic slavery' and 'free' marriage.[20] The Nyasaland Protectorate Annual Report of 1904 noted that a practice had built up whereby Lomwe immigrants were competed for amongst Yao and Nyanja village headmen, and the person who was instrumental in bringing them into the village was given a present by the village headman. The associations of this with 'slavery' led the authorities to attempt to outlaw this practice.[21]

Incorporation of strangers was nothing new to the societies of the Shire Highlands. Just as in the nineteenth century 'Yao' immigrants had assimilated many Nyanja, so in the twentieth century many Lomwe became 'lost' amongst the Nyanja, for the offspring of a Lomwe-Nyanja marriage were generally considered Nyanja, even when this went against the rules of the matrilineal system common to both groups. The most far-reaching social effects probably occurred at a later date when land shortage made this process of assimilation less possible, and when Lomwe immigrants were increasingly confined to the estates as tenants.

The assimilation of Lomwe immigrants onto Crown Land at first sight appears a rather irrational strategy for the indigenous

inhabitants to adopt. It would seem that by doing so they were eroding their main economic advantage over the tenantry - that is their relatively free access to land. However, there are two factors to be considered when explaining this phenomenon. Firstly, the proximity of much unexploited estate land may have affected their perception of land shortage and possibly have implied that there was no long-term problem. Secondly, the necessity to increase agricultural production, and the importance accorded to 'labour' in this period, meant that the pre-colonial concepts of more people equalling more wealth probably persisted. Accretions to a village were thus perceived as added 'strength' rather than liabilities.

The instability of marriage in the area was remarked upon frequently by colonial officers, who tended to regard it as a symptom of the decline of 'authority' and of 'detribalisation'. District Residents, in their capacity as judicial authorities, were instructed to discourage women from leaving their husbands:

> "Generally speaking, native women should not be encouraged to leave their husbands for any but really serious reasons e.g. gross physical ill-treatment (in which case the woman should always be able to show marks of violence on her person), or desertion. Unless some such serious grievance be established a native woman should always be compelled to remain with her husband. On the whole native wives are much more inclined to leave their homes on trivial pretexts than was the case under tribal government which powerfully upheld the rights of the husband, and it is undoubtedly the case that this habit of appealing for separations, or running away without just cause, has a deleterious effect and greatly increases the number of conjugal cases among natives."22/

The effectiveness of this policy towards marriage must have varied widely with the commitment of invididual Residents to pursue it.

Hector Duff obviously took his judicial (and what he regarded as his 'moral') duties seriously. Elsewhere, as in the case of Fort Johnston district noted in Chapter Four,[23] the colonial judicial system hardly impinged on African society. Marriage instability may have been a structural feature of these matrilineal societies, but it is also possible that the new enforced permanence of matrilineally-based villages intensified tensions within them, especially where new wealth was present, and thus jeopardised the stability of marriages.

To sum up, as far as one can discern a trend in changes in family and kinship structures in this period, it would appear to have been a conservative one, reinforcing 'traditional' structures. This is probably deceptive, however, for beneath the surface real changes were taking place, as in the case of the matrilineage described above. The main factor making for the continuance of such traditional institutions as the matrilineage and the assimilation of strangers through intermarriage, was the need for extra labour in order to increase agricultural production. The pre-colonial values associated with labour thus continued into the colonial period and were enhanced by the fear of depopulation which was current at this time.[24]

'Objective' and 'Subjective' stratification:

The welfare of the people of this region, and the survival of the peasantry in particular, hinged on their ability to intensify labour. Control over labour was thus the major factor making for real economic stratification, although this was in some areas closely related to control over land. The 'objective reality' of stratification based on the relations of production

is, however, extremely difficult to obtain from the sources, and what emerges more clearly are the more 'subjective' measures of stratification based on 'tribe', education, and cultural differences. In order not to entangle these two very different measures of stratification, I will treat them separately, though it seems to me that there may be interaction between them. Both are an essential part of the history of the people of this region in the twentieth century.

The first problematical category is that of 'tribe'. The nineteenth-century history of this region makes it clear that at this time 'tribe' was a fluid concept, and much confusion about this period has arisen from the early colonial writers' anxiety to place people in solid, unchanging categories. Indeed, it could be argued that the 'tribe' as perceived by them was largely a colonial invention and the product of colonial stereotyping, and as such should not be taken as a social reality at all. However, the pervasiveness of these colonial stereotypes, and the important decisions which were based on them, make it necessary for us to consider the extent of their impact on African life. Furthermore, by the end of our period there were other factors, most notably the increasing land shortage on the Shire Highlands, which may have independently contributed to the solidification of tribal identities.

Colonial administrators were quick to form opinions of the different groups with which they came into contact. However, the 'tribal' groups which they so readily identified, and whose different qualities they attributed to 'race', were in fact fluid cultural groups whose composition changed according to circumstance.

Thus the Lomwe chiefs, Kawinga and Liwonde, whose ancestors had been culturally assimilated by the Yao in the seventeenth century, were in the colonial period regarded as Yaos par excellence. This kind of process was still at work in the twentieth century. Chapter Four described how 'non-descript' persons in the Upper Shire valley identified themselves as 'Yaos', and Chapter Three, how Lomwe immigrants on the Shire Highlands were busily identifying themselves with whichever group seemed most appropriate in order to gain access to Crown Land. Some colonial officials recognised that this process was at work, but it does not seem to have inhibited them from making bold generalisations about the qualities of different 'tribes'.

The most apparently militaristic of the people of this region were generally the first to receive acclaim and the first to be readily accorded both 'traditional' and 'modern' status. The 'Yao', once 'pacified', were the most frequently admired of the groups. Hector Duff's opinion of them was a typical one:

> "The WaYao are unquestionably one of the best native races of the Protectorate and have probably more intelligence, self-respect and initiative than any other tribe in the country. Nearly all our native clerks, interpreters and capitaos are drawn from among these people and so are most of our civil and military armed forces. The chief fault of the WaYao is an occasional tendency to be over-bearing, and they need at times severe correction".[25]

The missionaries shared the same view of the Yao, calling them "a splendid race, brave, dignified, well made, capable of endurance, and capital travellers".[26] On the missions in the 1890s Yaos, or those who identified themselves as such, formed the majority of the skilled labourers and half the mission teachers.[27] On the private estates the Yao also dominated as capitaos and

skilled labourers.[28] Moslem Yaos in particular were respected by administrators for their 'traditionalism', their distinctive dress identifying them as Africans without European pretensions. Nyanja informants also frequently comment on the 'cleverness' of the Yao who were quick to establish contact with the newly arrived Europeans and to be accorded recognition as legitimate chiefly rulers.[29]

European observers delighted in the changes in tribal rank which sometimes resulted from the imposition of colonial rule. This was particularly the case with the Ngoni who, though formerly the terror of the Shire Highlands, were amongst the first to offer their labour to the coffee estates. The missionaries commented that:

> "... it is strange to find the radical element in civilization becoming indebted to conservative tendencies of custom, and government habit and precedent".[30]

At the bottom of the colonial hierarchy of tribes were the recent Lomwe immigrants whose 'racial inferiority' was widely accepted and who were "held in contempt" by other Africans. The 1935 Report on Emigrant Labour commented that the immigration of the Lomwe into the Shire Highlands had been one cause of labour emigration, not only through the land shortage which it helped to create, but also because:

> "... the appearance of foreigners prepared to work harder has induced a superiority complex among local natives... where Nguru labour is available native public opinion appears to frown on manual labour for wages".[31]

Tribal stereotypes did then have some reflection in real life. The despised 'Nguru' were indeed desperate for any employment and even their "physical inferiority" was to some extent real,

for many had been suffering from malnutrition and disease when they entered the Protectorate.[32] The cultural confidence of the 'Yao', which they had carried over from the nineteenth century, was interpreted as 'superiority' by the colonial administrators, and their spurning of manual labour considered to be to some extent justified.

The Native Administration Ordinance of 1912 was not applied to the Shire Highlands, but the District Notebooks make it clear that District Residents worked through an informal network of trusted chiefs and headmen, most of whom were identified as 'Yaos'.[33] Although the status accorded these 'traditional' leaders was minimal, it was nevertheless sufficient to mark them off from others. On the estates it seems that tenants were deliberately organised into 'tribal' villages, while various tasks were allocated to different 'tribal' groups.[34]

Despite all this, the oral evidence shows that 'tribal' categories remained fluid in this period, and that, as in the nineteenth century, the clan was used as a vehicle for assimilation across tribal boundaries.[35] The explanation for this seems to lie in the perception of the inhabitants of the Shire Highlands that added labour was vital to their welfare, and that this offset the growing problem of land shortage. All this casts some doubt on Shepperson and Price's interpretation of the Chilembwe Rising as a brief alliance of 'self-conscious tribes'.[36]

Colonial writers were much troubled by what they saw as the development of a 'class structure' amongst Africans on the Shire Highlands, 'class' being considered a function of education and identification with European culture. Nine years before the

Chilembwe Rising, the editor of the Central African Times published this leader:

> "It cannot be denied that the educated natives will sooner or later become aware of their power, their legal rights, and last but not least, that the Europeans throughout Central Africa cannot exist without their cooperation... The question still remains - will the European be inclined to associate with the educated African? No!... will the educated native associate himself with the ordinary natives? No! Such cannot possibly be the case. The time will come when they will have their own clubs, newspapers, top-hats and stiff collars, and above all, their great desire to convince the common native that they, with the exception of their skins, are equal to Europeans... It is the dangerous imitation of European habits, combined with their knowledge of the English language and English methods of educated, that will bring the development of Central Africa to a full stop... Would anyone say that the Central African native is not extremely happy? He has no class or rank, and is equal to any other native wherever he may be... European education will bring about the creation of classes, and a further desire to go forward, which, as already stated, will lead not only to their own misery, but also to that of the country in general".37/

European education and the culture associated with it did indeed produce a distinct identity for mission-trained Africans. Whilst the assimilation of European dress and culture may not be the most significant indices of social change and stratification,38/ they nevertheless assumed an importance for this group and contributed to some of the frustrations which resulted in their participation in the Chilembwe Rising. Here I would like to look briefly at the experiences of this group who had most contact with the new European administration - the soldiers, government employees and mission teachers.

The first group to have sustained contact with non-mission

Europeans were the soldiers of the first Administration. In this area the arrival of Johnston with his elaborately dressed Sikhs, left a lasting memory, and the European military tradition was later internalised in the Beni dance. The majority of the first African recruits into the army were Yaos and Tongas. There is an apparent contradiction here. The success of the Yao in particular in finding themselves a secure niche in the colonial hierarchy seems to have stemmed from their ability to identify with European tradition, but at the same time to retain a distinctive culture of their own. Dress played an important part in this. Whilst 'on duty' these Yao colonial servants wore the exotic dress of fez and knickerbockers[39/] which awed the local population and gave them considerable status. 'Off duty' they dressed as Moslems rather than in imitation of Europeans, and this seemed to make them a lesser threat to the status quo than mission-educated Africans.

From very early on certain African groups were encouraged to play a role in European pomp and ceremony. The Queen's Birthday celebrations of 1890 consisted of a party hosted by the Acting Consul, John Buchanan. 'Mission boys' played a small role in this by arranging the table "most tastefully" in a booth of green branches specially built for the occasion, and seven African soldiers fired three volleys as a 'feu de joie' in the course of the afternoon.[40/] By the time of the 1902 Coronation both 'mission' Africans and 'traditional' leaders were encouraged to take a part. Europeans persuaded themselves of the similarity between European and African tradition on this point. Life and Work reported that "there was no difficulty in

making the native understand the meaning of the ceremony of the coronation. In native life there is a ceremony that is, in some measure, a corresponding one".[41] The Commissioner's Annual Report, however, outlined some of the implications of this apparent correspondence and the distrust of European motives which existed in the minds of Africans invited to participate:

> "There was considerable hesitation, even amongst natives living near the larger European centres, lest the auspicious occasion of the Coronation might be conveniently utilised for getting rid of the present chiefs, in accordance with the old native custom".[42]

The King's Birthday of 1906 was an even more impressive occasion, and by now educated Africans were familiar enough with European ceremony to play their parts convincingly. A crowd of Europeans and Africans assembled at the parade ground of the K.A.R. in Zomba where they were entertained by a brass band. Life and Work remarked that "the smartness of the native soldiers and the intelligence they displayed throughout their manoeuvres is astonishing when one remembers how recently they were recruited from the villages".[43]

A "native deputation" assembled to pay their respects to Sir Alfred Sharpe as the representative of King Edward. The deputation was arranged into a huge procession and ordered into ranks:

> "About 1,000 school children, many of them carrying flags, led the way. Then followed about 50 of the chiefs and headmen along with their followers. Next to them came a large body of young men comprising Christians, Moslems and villagers. And lastly a considerable number of young women, mostly members of the church classes, joined in the rear."[44]

Lastly, Chief Malemia, representing 'traditional authority', and Paton Somanje, representing the Christian elders, gave loyal speeches.[45]

Recruitment to the Christian church involved familiarity with another set of mysterious institutions and ceremonies. Lewis Bandawe describes vividly the impression made on a new schoolboy in the 1890s by the Blantyre Mission, and illustrates the kind of treatment given by Europeans to prized new recruits. On arrival at the Mission, Bandawe, a 'raw Nguru', was met by Dr. Norris who led him into his sitting room, signalled to him to sit on the carpet, and then began speaking to him in English. His further initiation into mission life began with a kitting out:

> Miss Beck gave me six short-sleeved shirts and the same number of loin-cloths to match. A small wooden box was made at the carpenter's shop for my clothes. The doctor then asked me to put on one of the shirts and cloth. I was very proud of myself.[46]

The size of the mission buildings, and in particular the new church, made a lasting impression on the new recruit, who saw the mission as a 'paradise' reflected in Biblical imagery:

> When we used to sing the hymn, "There is a city bright", we often said that the Mission was just like that city".[47]

The educated African's partial participation in European culture did not, however, ensure his loyalty. As the reactionary letter writers in the Central African Times pointed out, the ambitions of the African once educated, knew no bounds. In particular, the mission-educated were quick to recognise European hypocrisy and to resent their very partial inclusion in European

culture. Dress was a particularly sore point as all Europeans, but particularly non-mission Europeans, had strong prejudices against Africans in European dress. Hector Duff rationalised it in this way:

> Personally, I think that it is a grave mistake to encourage any of the natives to wear superfluous garments, and above all articles of European attire, not only on the account just mentioned ("hygiene"), but also because of its deplorable effect from the point of view of aesthetics, and still more because it undoubtedly tends to impair their natural hardiness".48/

Some Africans clung to their determination to wear European dress. After all, the missionaries had themselves encouraged this tendency and, at one time had seen it as central to their success. When, in the early 1890s, there had been a dearth of cloth for sale to Africans, Life and Work remarked that "African politics is the science of clothes", and that "Africa must be clothed and kept clean".49/ Later, when ex-mission boys turned up for work, or indeed, to church, in shoes and trousers, they were admonished.50/

The popularity of Beni dancing after the First World War can to an extent be explained by the frustrations felt by educated Africans at their exclusion from European culture. Beni in Zomba of the 1920s was described to Mitchell as a pantomime of the local European social structure, and dress was central to this.51/

The educated African faced with the European community was dealing with an exclusive caste which he found impossible to penetrate, but whose internal contradictions were clear to him.

These contradictions were particularly obvious in the case of sexual behaviour. Kambuwa notes that whilst European men looked down upon African women, they nevertheless took them as their mistresses. The incidence of miscegenation in early colonial Nyasaland seems not to have been great, but there were enough instances of it to come to the notice of Africans around European centres.[52]

The 'cultural' frustrations of the African soldier, teacher, clerk or capitao, were paralleled by economic frustrations. The class of ex-mission entrepreneurs, to which Somanje belonged, had reached its height in the 1890s and early 1900s, and thereafter seems to have declined until the 1920s. As we have seen, this decline can to a large extent be explained by the discriminatory policies of the Administration which worked against this group. The smallness of this group of entereprenreurs after the 1890s can only be surmised from their absence from statistics and other government records. The page set aside in the District Notebooks for notes on African economic enterprise is pathetically empty in most cases. The Zomba District Notebook for 1910 noted ten "native traders", two dealing in furniture, the rest growing and selling tobacco and cotton.[53] The "skilled labour" register for Zomba in 1910 (which however did not include Africans in permanent employment with the Administration) was nine names long and comprised one tailor, one capitao, one bricklayer, one gardener and one 'Swahili teacher'.[54] In the Mulanje District Notebook for 1910-13 there are notes on two "native stores" in the district.[55] Two men, one a capitao with the Church of Scotland Mission, were given permission to

erect stores under certain clearly defined conditions: firstly, that this permission could be revoked at any time; secondly, that they were to trade on their own account only and not as agents of any European or Asian; thirdly, that they would build a store; fourthly, that they purchase all goods in their own money; and fifthly, that they report all stolen goods offered to them. A revealing story is that of one African trader, Makondeza, who is listed as being a "native of bad character" in the same Mulanje District Notebook, and whose main crime seems to have been ambition. In 1908 he had obtained credit from an Indian, embarked on large-scale cotton farming, and traded widely in foodstuffs. On more than one occasion he was jailed, and so persecuted by successive District Residents that he finally sought refuge in Portuguese territory.[56]

The two groups from which a class of African capitalists was most likely to emerge was that of permanent employees of the Administration, and that of labour migrants. These groups overlapped to some extent and drew from the same source of mission educated men. Occasionally we hear of ex-Administration employees setting themselves up in business on their retirement,[57] but in general they are remarkably absent from the documentation, as are the returned migrants, though this group does feature in oral testimony as being entrepreneurial.[58] It is significant to contrast this with the picture of the 1920s which emerges from the District Notebooks, and which features a large number of African small trading and business enterprises.[59]

If the cotton industry can be taken as representative of African cash-crop production in the early period, then it would

appear that the potential entrepreneurs came from amongst returned labour migrants. But labour migration was not a common occurrence on the Shire Highlands, and we are forced to conclude, with Myambo, that a large number of educated Shire Highlanders went into manual employment.[60]

In 1901 Life and Work published a table showing the occupational stratification of the adults baptised at Blantyre and Domasi in 1899.[61] Out of a total of 340 individuals, 136 were in mission employment, mostly in out-stations, 130 were in "outside European employment", largely on estates, and only 40 were "working on their own account", 21 of these "living native fashion in their villages". Relatively few had gone into the service of the colonial administration. One was an Assistant Collector, seven were interpreters, six were clerks in the Post Office, and four were Sergeant-Interpreters in the Central African Rifles. Some of those listed as carpenters and builders may also have been employed by the government, as were some of the 'overseers', but government service was certainly not the major opening for mission graduates. Those who worked in 'outside European employment' seemed to have moved around frequently. Denis Matukuta, for instance, worked as a capitao on the building of the Secretariat in 1903, then on a series of European estates, and briefly in government employment as a medical orderly, a job he left when ordered to go to Karonga in 1914.[62]

The significance of this structure of employment is that generally the mission-educated were not identified with the Administration, nor were they removed from the economic realities

facing the majority of the population. They, together with the returned migrants, formed a potential rural elite, but one whose ambitions were frequently frustrated. Of course, their positions as _capitaos_ and skilled labourers gave them an economic advantage over the majority of African farmers and tenants, but a good _capitao_ in 1910 was paid only 10/- to 15/- a month, which hardly placed him in a remote economic category.[63]

Whilst of limited real economic significance, stratification based on 'tribe' and on educational attainment, did interact to some extent with economic reality.

Whilst in the long term the economic significance of stratification based on 'tribe' and on educational attainment was limited, there were nevertheless some interactions between this kind of differentiation and economic reality. Identification as a 'Yao', for instance, conferred some economic benefits, as did 'mission-boy' status. In the latter case, however, it was economic frustrations rather than privileges which ultimately proved most significant.

The kind of 'objective' stratification based on relations of production, which is much more difficult to discern in our evidence, is probably of more lasting importance to an economic and social history of this area, and relates more closely to the problems of analysis discussed in the Introduction.

Economic stratification in the pre-colonial period was based more on control over distribution and exchange than on production. Whilst some communities may have intensified labour and utilised 'domestic slaves' in order to increase production,

evidence for this is very sparse. The 'rich' of the late nineteenth century were those political leaders who controlled the trade in luxury goods, and their limited control over the production of foodstuffs by their subjects was a concomitant to their main concern with trade. Consequently, once this trade had been taken out of their hands as a result of military defeat, they had few economic advantages over the rest of the population.

Although the imposition of colonial rule thus had a general levelling effect on the African population, there were nevertheless some communities who entered the colonial period with certain economic advantages over others. In spite of land alienation, some groups retained access to fairly good land and to dambo land, which they could utilise to produce vegetables and off-season maize for sale, whilst other groups had been forced into very marginal agricultural areas during the late nineteenth century and never regained a foothold on the better land. Lomwe immigrants were also generally at a disadvantage as they entered the country without food, and had less freedom of choice as to where they would settle. Initially the first stream of Lomwe immigrants consisted largely of men alone, and until their families arrived they were thus deprived of labour required to become self-sufficient in food. There is some indication that some of these immigrants were accorded 'slave' status in the societies in which they settled and this also placed them at a disadvantage in labour terms, as only in the second generation would they be able to build up their own lineages and 'labour strength'. Some groups were thus more prone to being drawn into the wage labour force than others, from the very beginning.

European capitalist enterprises in Nyasaland operated by appropriating the labour of the African population and by keeping the cost of this labour very low. The cost to African communities of selling this labour was very high as it jeopardised their food production, and only in the case of skilled labour were wages high enough to permit the employment of wage labour on their own holdings, in order to make up for the lost manpower. In general, then, communities attempted to make up for this labour loss by 'traditional' means, i.e. by recruiting new groups to come and stay with them and increase the labour power of their lineages. For this reason, polygamy and 'domestic slavery' retained an economic significance in the early colonial period. The group which prospered in this period, then, was that which was able to retain the maximum control over their labour power, enabling them to produce sufficient food, and a surplus, to allow them to spurn wage labour. Thus in the 1890s we see that in general the 'indigenous' Yao and Nyanja of the Shire Highlands were reluctant to sell their labour to the European trading companies and estates, and instead hired some of the migrant labour already present on the highlands, to increase their own production.[64] To some extent, this group can be identified with those who entered the colonial period relatively unscathed by the disruptions of the 1860s-1890s, although this was supplemented by those who, through access to education, also acquired an economic advantage.

Whilst the more ambitious capitalist African farmers, such as Somanje, suffered a decline in the 1900s, stratification at a more modest level continued. By 1915 it is possible to

distinguish several different groups, though there is considerable overlap between these.

Firstly, there were the labour tenants on European estates on the Shire Highlands, whose control over both their labour and land was extremely limited. These were generally not self-sufficient in food, and relied on buying foodstuffs on the market. Only migrant labour was fed on the estates[65] and was thus protected from the inflation in food prices which could occur in a poor agricultural season. The tenants were thus the first to suffer in a famine year, and their position was made worse by the fact that in such a year European farming could also suffer and thus render them without steady employment. Their very limited access to land for food production meant that they were unable to increase this production by inviting their relatives to come and stay with them.

Secondly, there were the tenants on the British Central Africa Company land in the Upper Shire Valley, and on some Blantyre and East Africa Company estates in the highlands, whose tenancies were secured, not so much through the sale of their labour, as through the production of cotton or tobacco which they sold to the landowners. In these areas land shortage was not such a problem, although the land was generally not of the best. These families could therefore remain self-sufficient in food and also cultivate their cash crop, provided they could intensify their family labour sufficiently. In these areas families cooperated in communal labour in order to overcome some of the constraints on their production. Some of their cash crop would be taken in lieu of rent, and the rest they sold to

the landowner who had complete control over the price paid to them. In some years we can expect that these families made a net loss on cash-crop production (when one considers the amount of labour expended on these crops). They could only stop producing the cash-crop, however, by forfeiting their right to land and by vacating the estate.

The third group consists of those 'independent' peasants on Crown Land, both on the highlands and in the Upper Shire Valley and Chilwa plain. This is a somewhat heterogeneous group, but distinguished by the ability of its members to be self-sufficient in foodstuffs in all but the worst years. After 1901, the male members of this group, on the Shire Highlands in particular, would generally have had to perform at least a month's wage labour in order to obtain a tax certificate, but it was their ability to limit their involvement in the wage economy which distinguished this group from the tenants, and their freedom of choice in their own farming decisions which distinguished them from the share-croppers. Within this group there was considerable variation in the ways in which they raised cash, and also in terms of overall prosperity, and there was probably a limited labour market between them. In the Upper Shire Valley some families became involved in the production of cotton which they sold indirectly to the colonial government, and which they were encouraged to grow by local officials. The evidence makes clear, however, that they were not prepared to grow this crop when it jeopardised their production of foodstuffs, or when low prices or disease made it unprofitable. They therefore had a flexibility which was denied the share-croppers. Living on an

important cross-roads of the transport system, they were able to raise some cash by selling food to porters, or by performing porterage themselves (an activity which did not interfere too much with agricultural production). Even within this area, however, there was some variation in control over their labour power which resulted directly from the energy of certain colonial officials in such work as road-building. Around Liwonde boma, male labour was frequently requisitioned for this purpose, and later for service in the First World War.[66]

On the Chilwa plain, communities sometimes raised cash through the sale of foodstuffs which they transported to the highlands, or through the sale of fish and salt, though in some of the more remote areas they were drawn more heavily into wage labour. On the Shire Highlands this group produced foodstuffs to sell to wage labourers and became involved in petty marketing of agriculturally related products. In a poor agricultural year they would not have prospered, but neither would they have starved. Differentiation within this group occurred initially on the basis of the amount of labour available to each farming family, but as time wore on access to land increasingly became a significant factor. This group maintained its right to mobility, and could decide to move off the highlands to areas where land was more plentiful.

The fourth group overlaps considerably with the third, and consists of those families a member of which had obtained skilled employment in the Administration or on European estates, or was a labour migrant outside the country. Depending on the level of wages and remittances, this group ensured its families' food

supply by employing local wage labour, which may have come from within the third group, or in some instances from the group of tenants and sharecroppers. Where the level of remittances was high, or where the man was an ex-government employee receiving a pension, this group invested both in increased agricultural production for sale, and in non-agricultural enterprises such as retailing. Although our evidence points to this group having been small in this period, it was nonetheless important as it built up capital which provided it with an advantage in the 1920s and 1930s when the opportunities for cash-crop production and trading increased. There were of course some labour migrants who earned little, or were 'lost' to their families either through death or marriage outside the country, and in these cases the families left behind were actually at an economic disadvantage compared to others.[67]

This is obviously an over-simplified picture. Within the third group, for instance, there may have been families who sold their labour at one time of year in order to meet an immediate cash need, and hired labour at another time. Similarly, there were those who sold foodstuffs which may not have been surplus to their needs, in order to raise cash, and who later bought food at a higher price. Nevertheless, it seems valid to attempt to distinguish these groups on the basis of their access both to family and hired labour, as this was of lasting significance.

It is apparent that the question of stratification is closely linked to that of agricultural innovation discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and also to any analysis of 'underdevelopment'. At the highest level of generalisation it

could be said that all societies in this region were 'under-developed' in some way during the early colonial period, in terms of the opportunities denied them and the restrictions placed on their economic activities, as well as the low price placed on their labour. If however, we wish to understand the history of the people of this area, we need to go beyond broad generalisations, to look at some of the internal dynamics of the society which, along with the larger, international structures, shaped the economic and social history of this region, and continues to shape Malawian society today. I suggested in the Introduction that a refinement of the under-development thesis, as applied to this part of Africa, would have to be based on an attempt to measure trends in living standards, and it is clear that an understanding of stratification within this society is crucial to any such analysis. This thesis has not gone far in measuring these differential trends in living standards, but it has indicated that by looking closely at changes in agricultural production, and particularly at the changing labour requirements of peasant economies, we can begin to identify those groups who were, for instance, more prone to famine and disease than others, and this is a crude measure of their welfare.

Footnotes

1/ Although by the 1870s and 1880s this trend towards population growth had probably been halted by warfare and the disruption of agricultural production.

2/ Lionel Cliffe, 'Rural Class Formation in East Africa', Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.4, No.2, January 1977, pp.195-225.

3/ Kitching, Class and Economic Change, p.19.

4/ This calendar is of limited use, relating as it does to an undetermined period, but it does provide some insight into the labour demands of subsistence production over the year.

5/ ZHP/MV/8.

ZHP/MV/19.

ZHP/MV/5.

6/ Malawi Government, Agro-Economic Survey, Lake Chilwa: A farm management survey among rice and maize growers at the northern end of Lake Chilwa in Kasupe District, Malawi. Government Printer, Zomba, 1972.

A graph for female labour derived from the above report is found in Biplab Dasgupta, Village Society and Labour Use, Institute of Development Studies, Village Studies Programmes, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1977, p.34.

7/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry for year ended 31 March 1911, p.6.

8/ Cotton had been grown in this area in the nineteenth century but the 'traditional' cotton plant was a hardy perennial shrub, adapted to the conditions of the Shire Valley and requiring little care.

9/ Liwonde District Notebook, Vol. III, April 1923 - March 1928. Section entitled 'Native Economic Agriculture'.

10/ See pages 146-147

11/ Mitchell sees the ending of the slave trade resulting in the decline of chiefly power and the dispersal of population, but does not comment on its possible effects on the matrilineal system. Mitchell, Yao Village, p.39.

12/ Mary Douglas, 'Matriliny and Pawnship in Central Africa'. Africa Vol. XXXIV, No.4, October 1964, p.310.

13/ J. Clyde Mitchell, 'Marriage among the Machinga Yao of Southern Nyasaland.' University of Zambia, 1970. Unpublished manuscript.

14/ Karl A. Poewe, 'Regional and Village Economic Activities: Prosperity and Stagnation in Luapula, Zambia. 'African Studies Review'. Vol. XXII, No.2, 1979, p.77.

15/ ZHP/MV/4.

16/ See for instance, the sharing of work and food between sisters in another matrilineal society: Betty Preston Thomson, Two Studies in African Nutrition: An urban and a rural community in Northern Rhodesia. Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No.24, Manchester University Press, 1968. (first published in 1954), p.46.

17/ Day (Nyasa Industrial Mission) to Hetherwick, 22/2/1911 in Blantyre Mission Papers, N.A.M.

18/ C.A.T. Vol. XIV, No.8, 23/2/1911. 'Letter from Planter', p.6.

19/ ZHP/MV/1.

20/ Mulanje District Notebook, Vol. I, p.76.

21/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for 1904-05, p.21.

22/ Hector Duff in Blantyre District Notebook, Vol. I, p.217.

23/ See page 265.

24/ See Chapter Three.

25/ Mulanje District Notebook, Vol. I, p.76.

26/ _Life and Work_, May 1894, p.3.

27/ _Ibid_.

28/ _B.C.A. Gazette_, Vol. IV, No.14, 15/8/1894, p.6.

29/ ZHP/KMD/16.

30/ _Life and Work_, April, 1891, p.3.

31/ _Report on Emigrant Labour_, 1935, p.23.

32/ _Life and Work_, January 1905. List of patients treated in Blantyre Mission Hospital in 1904, by tribe, p.4.

33/ Lists of chiefs and headmen in Liwonde/Upper Shire District Notebook, Vol. I, and Zomba District Notebook, Vol. I.

34/ Blantyre District Notebook, Vol. II, Hut Tax Register for Blantyre and East Africa Company Estate, Michiru, showing the 'tribal' organisation of villages on this estate.

35/ ZHP/MV/16.

ZHP/MV/51.

36/ Shepperson and Price, _Independent African_, p.402.

37/ _C.A.T._ Vol. IX, No.30, 28/4/06, p.5.

38/ See Bernard Magubane's attack on the colonial anthropologists for their extensive use of these indices: Current Anthropology, Vol. 12, No.4-5, October-December 1971, pp.419-431.

39/ H. Moyse-Bartlett, The King's African Rifles: a study in the military history of East and Central Africa, 1890-1945, Aldershot, Gale and Polden, 1956, p.689, Appendix A.

40/ Life and Work, June 1890, p.1.

41/ Life and Work, September 1902, p.4.

42/ Nyasaland Protectorate, Report on the Trade and General Conditions of the British Central Africa Protectorate for 1902-03, p.33.

43/ Life and Work, December 1906, p.9.

44/ Ibid., p.9.

45/ The occas ion was marred only by the resistance of even the educated Africans to participate in the inevitable 'sports' with the correct attitude:

> "Although these sports have been held many years, the true sporting instinct does not seem to make much headway. It it not the winner who receives applause, but the man who is left behind".

Ibid., p.9.

46/ Bandawe, Memoirs, p.37.

47/ Ibid., p.69.

48/ Hector Duff, Nyasaland under the Foreign Office, 2nd Edition. London, G. Bell, 1906, p.214.

49/ Life and Work, September, 1891, p.3.

50/ Kirk (Kabula Stores) to Scott (Blantyre Mission), 30/7/1897, in Blantyre Mission Papers:

> "He (Bertie) passed Mr. Metcalfe and Mrs. and Miss Kirk walking on Tuesday evening and did not salute them. Next morning he passed Mr. Metcalfe again just outside the store and quite close without raising his cap. Mr. Metcalfe struck him and told him why... Besides this I hear that he came to the office while I was away in trousers and boots, and I had already told him we could not have him here in such dress".

51/ J. Clyde Mitchell, The Kalela Dance, published on behalf of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute by Manchester University Press, 1966, pp 11-12.

52/ A. Kambuwa, Papers.

53/ Zomba District Notebook, Vol. I, p.181.

54/ Zomba District Notebook, Vol. I, p.205.

55/ Mulanje District Notebook, Vol. I, p.186.

56/ See Chapter Four, footnote 56

57/ As in the case of Chilungulo, an ex-government interpreter ZPH/MV/6.

58/ ZHP/MV/54.

59/ See Introduction, footnote 29.

60/ Myambo, 'Socio-Economic Change', p.37.

61/ Life and Work, January-March, 1901, p.13.

62/ ZHP/MV/1.

63/ The only measure we have of the economic importance of this nascent 'middle class' is the crude one of the value of imported items most likely to be destined for them. Unfortunately the statistics of imports for the pre-1914 period are not sufficiently itemised for one to be able to isolate those products most commonly bought by Africans. It is not until the 1920s that these statistics become available, possibly in itself reflecting the growth of African trade. Those statistics which we do possess do not indicate the growth of any large economic elite. Sugar imports, for instance, began in 1914, with 1368 cwts imported, reached a peak in 1918 with 6393 cwts (presumably reflecting soldiers' pay) and by 1925 had only reached 5461 cwts. The figures for the imports of boots and shoes (some of which were of course destined for European buyers) begin with 1517 pairs in 1915, reaching a peak of 4065 pairs in 1922, but by 1925 there were only 2703 pairs imported. The importation of sewing machines, however, shows a steady rise in the 1920s, reflecting the growth of the tailoring industry, especially in Blantyre.

It is difficult to draw any conclusions from these figures, except to say that, even in the 1920s, they were small in volume and do not indicate the growth of a prosperous elite.

64/ See Chapter Three.

65/ The issue of the feeding of labourers on estates recurred throughout this period. The Native Labour Regulations of 1903 stipulated that all labourers should receive daily rations of food and water. This was a famine year, and planters complained that if they were required to feed all labour they would in effect be taking on the role of famine relief. (C.A.T. Vol. VI, No.29, 18/4/03, p.4). The planters usually claimed that labourers preferred not to be fed directly, but to be paid a food allowance instead:

> "The native in fact comes down for a few months to work and tries in that time to make as much as he can, not only by working, but by starving himself". (C.A.T. Vol. III, No.7, 11/11/99, p.3).

In 1910 the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture decided that 'local labour' - defined as those workers who were settled in the district - should not be paid a food allowance. (Minutes of the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, 4/11/1890).

66/ See Chapter Four.

67/ This also illuminates the problem of accounting for the long-term 'social' effects of migration, as well as its effects on the

67/Contd.

health of the community. Labour migrants might return home with some capital, but if they had been working as miners, their life expectancies had probably been reduced. The pulmonary diseases from which many returned migrants suffered, caused a long, slow deterioration in their health, and in their ability to perform manual agricultural labour, which to some extent off-set the benefits to their families of short-term increase in cash availability.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 1 TOTAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE 1900-1918

YEAR	TOTAL LOCAL REVENUE (£s)	B.S.A. CO. SUBSIDY (£s)	IMPERIAL GRANTS IN AID (£s)	TOTAL REVENUE (£s)	TOTAL EXPEND-ITURE (£s)	SURPLUS (DEFICIT) (£s)
1900- 1	49,212			49,212	78,366	(24,156)
1901- 2	51,704			51,704	107,439	(55,735)
1902- 3	67,477			67,477	107,257	(39,780)
1903- 4	65,460	10,435	48,000	123,895	102,526	21,369
1904- 5	62,203	5,350	36,800	104,353	122,771	(18,418)
1905- 6	69,388	7,350	32,000	108,738	108,682	56
1906- 7	74,756	7,350	37,000	119,106	111,564	7,542
1907- 8	67,197	8,000	25,000	100,197	105,197	(5,340)
1908- 9	70,534	10,000	15,000	95,534	103,022	(7,498)
1909-10	68,647	8,000	30,000	106,647	108,728	(2,081)
1910-11	86,980	8,000	31,500	102,980	112,369	(9,389)
1911-12	97,356		31,500	128,856	118,070	10,786
1912-13	128,272		5,000	133,272	116,360	16,912
1913-14	124,849			124,849	135,105	(10,256)
1914-15	118,523			118,523	143,161	(24,638)
1915-16	137,911			137,911	125,666	12,245
1916-17	148,284		10,150	158,434	128,272	30,162
1917-18	144,240			144,240	143,640	600

SOURCE: Blue Books, 1906-1918.

B.C.A. Gazettes.

Annual Reports.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 2 HUT-TAX RECEIPTS AS PROPORTION OF TOTAL LOCALLY-RAISED REVENUE 1900-1918

YEAR	TOTAL LOCALLY-RAISED REVENUE (£s)	TOTAL HUT TAX RECEIPTS (£s)	HUT TAX AS % OF TOTAL LOCALLY-RAISED REVENUE
1900- 1	49,212	16,756	34%
1901- 2	51,704	21,235	41%
1902- 3	67,477	26,145	39%
1903- 4	65,460	26,276	40%
1904- 5	62,203	29,024	47%
1905- 6	69,388	31,074	45%
1906- 7	74,756	35,169	47%
1907- 8	67,197	36,605	54%
1908- 9	70,534	38,389	54%
1909-10	68,647	41,534	60%
1910-11	86,980	46,534	53%
1911-12	97,356	50,984	52%
1912-13	128,272	65,684	n.a.
1913-14	124,849	69,809	n.a.
1914-15	118,523	71,754	61%
1915-16	137,911	76,679	56%
1916-17	148,284	78,478	53%
1917-18	144,240	75,448	52%

SOURCE: Figures derived from *Annual Reports* and *Blue Books*.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 3 VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS[1] OF TOTAL EXPORTS, 1905-1922

YEAR	VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS (£s)	VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS (£s)	AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS AS % OF TOTAL EXPORTS
1905	87,384	38,170	44%
1906	10,505	38,151	43%
1907	91,745	42,553	46%
1908	142,819	70,834	49%
1909	131,225	86,164	66%
1910	189,528	135,209	71%
1911	231,642	137,931	60%
1912	248,514	n.a.	n.a.
1913	266,088	n.a.	n.a.
1914	235,679	180,147	76%
1915	263,668	193,375	73%
1916	344,262	282,422	82%
1917	156,915	139,451	89%
1918	531,821	500,125	94%
1919	485,212	421,193	87%
1920	551,215	508,505	92%
1921	496,698	475,594	96%
1922	560,654	482,239	86%

[1] Agricultural exports: coffee, rubber, oilseeds, chillies, tobacco, cotton, maize and maize flour, groundnuts, tea rice, fibres, cattle, cotton, cotton seed, potatoes.

SOURCE: Blue Books.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 4 EUROPEAN AND ASIAN POPULATION AND EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT, 1902-1920

YEAR	TOTAL ASIAN POP.	TOTAL EUROP. POP.	EUROPEANS		EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT		
			MALE	FEMALE	AGRIC.	MANUF.	COMMERCE
1902	242	538	n.a.	n.a.	75	-	120
1905	409	611	464	147	107	56	88
1906	518	583	452	131	109	56	137
1907	515	587	449	138	86	30	127
1908	457	594	435	159	93	15	114
1909	435	587	409	178	93	14	78
1910	481	766	531	235	108	3	103
1911	463	773	539	234	161	17	91
1912	356	758	518	240	166	19	102
1913	408	799	540	259	183	8	107
1914	410	831	587	244	154	6	106
1915	379	785	523	262	121	4	119
1916	391	731	474	257	98	5	146
1917	422	715	463	252	71	-	122
1918	407	724	492	232	124	3	89
1919	515	1,015	729	286	325	7	117
1920	550	1,431	977	454	372	3	460

SOURCE: Blue Books.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 5 EXPENDITURE 1906-07, WITH PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER CHARGES

	PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS	OTHER CHARGES	TOTAL
Pensions	£ 1,047.17. 7	£ -	£ 1,057.17. 7
Commissioner	2,282. 5. 1	333. 7. 0	2,615.12. 2
Colonial Secretary's Department	4,401.18.10	686. 0.10	5,087.19. 8
District Administration	15,498.15. 6	3,595.12. 5	19,094. 7.11
Treasury	2,482. 9. 7	550.14. 4	3,033. 3.11
Customs	1,417.14. 2	442. 1. 1	1,859.15. 3
Audit	708. 0.11	415. 5. 3	1,123. 6. 2
Marine Transport	2,983. 7. 2	1,058.16. 6	4,042. 3. 8
Legal Department	1,974. 9. 3	295. 9. 7	2,269.18.10
Prisons	-	695.17.11	695.17.11
Medical Department	4,716.15. 5	1,536. 4.11	6,253. 0. 4
Transport	880. 6.11	1,821. 4. 6	2,701.11. 5
Military Expenditure	20,210. 4. 6	15,431. 8.10	35,641.13. 4
Miscellaneous	175. 0. 0	5,258. 9. 2	5,443. 9. 2
Post Office	2,971.12. 9	1,328.17.11	4,300.10. 8
Agriculture, Forestry and Botanical Departments	1,441. 8. 2	675.15. 9	2,117. 3.11
Public Works Dept.	3,792. 8. 7	1,032. 4. 2	4,824.12. 9
Public Works (Annually Recurrent)		2,547. 5. 7	2,547. 5. 7
Public Works (Extra-ordinary)	825. 7. 0	5,364. 6.10	6,189.13.10
Bombay and London Agencies	331. 8. 7	352.19. 2	684. 7. 9
	£68,141.10. 1	£43,422. 1. 9	£111,563.11.10

Personal emoluments as % of total expenditure = 61%

SOURCE: Blue Book, 1906-07.

APPENDIX 2

Mr. Israel's Coffee estate - from B.C.A. Gazette Vol. IV No.15, 7/9/1897

Balance Sheet 1893-1897 (3 years and 3 months)

EXPENDITURE		RECEIPTS	
500 acres land	£ 175. 0. 0	Sales of plants	£ 25. 0. 0
Wages - labour and transport	996.17. 6	Sale of timber	35. 0. 0
Tools	75. 0. 0	20 tons of coffee delivered at river port	1,400. 0. 0
Pulper and pumps	70. 0. 0		
Nursery plants and seeds	85. 0. 0		
80 head of cattle	150. 0. 0		
Dwelling house	90. 0. 0		
Baskets and mats	5. 0. 0		
Permanent buildings	650. 0. 0		
Brick well and vats	125. 0. 0		
Gun living expenses	200. 0. 0		
	£2,621.17. 6		£1,161.17. 6

Valuation of Chipande Estate August 1st 1897

60 acres planted with coffee 4 years old 20/-/-	£1,200. 0. 0
60 acres planted with coffee 3 years old 17/-/-	1,020. 0. 0
60 acres planted with coffee 2 years old 14/-/-	820. 0. 0
320 acres uncultivated land 7/-	112. 0. 0
Cattle	250. 0. 0
Buildings	1,000. 0. 0
Pulper and sundries	98. 0. 0
	£4,500. 0. 0

Estimate of expenditure and returns (to July 31st 1899)

Expenditure		Returns	
1897 expenditure	£2,621.17. 6	1897 returns	£1,460. 0. 0
1898 expenditure	540. 0. 0	1898 60 acres coming into bearing	1,400. 0. 0
1899 expenditure	540. 0. 0	60 acres old coffee	700. 0. 0
		1899 New coffee	1,400. 0. 0
		60 acres first year	900. 0. 0
		60 acres second year	700. 0. 0
	£2,858. 2. 6		£6,560. 0. 0

An Average Nyasaland Tobacco Estate

(starting from undeveloped land)

From: Nyasaland Planters' Association Minutes 8/3/1927

Total Acreage:	800 acres
Tobacco:	80 acres
Rotation:	80 acres

Capital Expenditure:

Land:	£2,000
Buildings:	£ 750
Implements:	£ 100
Livestock:	£ 150
	£3,000

Capital Expenditure on Development:

Clearing 80 acres	£ 160
Roads and drains	£ 40
	£ 200

Interest on Capital etc.:

Interest on £3,200 at 8% =	£256
Depreciation of buildings=	£ 85
	£341

Cost per annum:

Supervision	£ 400	
Labour	450	
Implements	25	
String, medicine, land tax	25	
Petro, etc.	50	
Insurance	25	
Fertilisers	80	
	£1,050	per acre = £13. 3. 0d

Total annual cost per acre:

Interest on capital	£ 4. 5. 0
Cost of working	£13. 3. 0
	£17. 8. 0

Average yield per acre 336 lbs
Value of crop per acre (1926 - at 1/2 per lb) = £19.12. 0
Profit per acre = £2. 4. 0d.

APPENDIX 3

Agricultural Calendar

	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul
	land prep				bird scaring				winnowing etc.			
millets and sorgh				plant		weed		harvest		store		
maize	land prep			plant		weed	green maize	harvest				
beans				plant			harvest					
cassava		plant	plant				plant					
sweet pots						plant				harvest	store	
rice			plant	plant		weed	weed			harvest		
cotton					plant		weed			pick sort and sell		
tobacco:												
flue			plant			pick						
sun-air					plant	plant		pick				
dark-fired					plant	plant		pick				
								grading...		grading		
Dimba crops												
maize			plant			harvest	plant				harvest	
beans			plant			harvest						
vegetables												

food deficit in some years

Non-agricultural activities

	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.
fishing					peak season					slack season		
beer-making		peak period										
basket work									peak period			
salt-making	peak											peak
iron-work ...	peak										peak	...
pottery		peak...										

Adapted from: Mike Collinson, Nchеu Diagnostic Survey Report
February, 1980.

and, Collinson, 'Understanding Small Farmers'. Paper presented at the Rapid Rural Appraisal Conference. I.D.S., Sussex 1979.

Notes

Millets and sorghum

Both bullrush millet (pennisetum typhoides) and finger millet (eleusine coracana) were grown. Bullrush millet is quick-maturing and drought resistant. It also produces tillers so vigorously that it requires relatively little weeding. Finger-millet requires more labour in weeding, but has the advantage of storing safely for much longer. Both varieties, however, require a large amount of labour (mostly child labour?) during their growing periods in scaring off birds. They also require a great deal of post-harvest preparation - threshing, winnowing and grinding.

Sorghum is drought-resistant, but like the millets requires labour for bird-scaring, threshing and winnowing.

Maize Requires more land preparation than the traditional cereals, and also weeding if high yields are to be obtained. It has the advantage of being relatively immune to attack by birds and locusts, and thus requires less labour at some stages. Post-harvest preparation is probably less arduous. Maize can also be eaten green in February to March. It is however more dependent on good rainfall. Farmers with dimba gardens could plant maize in these early in the season (October) and harvest this crop in December or January. If the upland crop looked poor in January they could plant an insurance crop of maize then, which could be harvested in June.

Cassava Is drought resistant and has no labour peaks. It is resistant to pests and can store in the ground. A number of varieties were used, some quicker to mature than others. Cassava does, however, require more labour in its preparation than both maize and the indigenous cereals.

Cotton The calendar here is for both estate-grown and peasant cotton. It is a labour intensive crop requiring a great deal of weeding (at the same time as the food crops), and has another labour peak in the picking and sorting season.

Tobacco Flue-cured tobacco was grown only on estates. Labour was required for this crop almost all year round, for land preparation, planting, picking and grading.

Sun-air cured and dark-fired tobacco were grown by peasants and tenants on estates.

Non-agricultural activities:

The labour peaks for these activities are not obvious, but generally would coincide with the slack agricultural season. The peak in basket-making (a male activity) in April and May is due to the necessity to construct grain-bins for the new harvest.

This would apply mostly to communities growing maize, as the traditional cereal crops were usually stored inside the hut. However, these crops would also have required a certain amount of basket work for winnowing.

In the case of fishing in Lake Chilwa there is a natural slack-season in the cold weather when the fish go into deep waters. Fishing in the rivers, however, would probably continue at this time.

Both salt-making and iron-making went on all year round but peaked in the dry season.

Food deficit period:

In a bad year this could extend from September to March, and in many years it would extend from December to February. In areas with unreliable rainfall farmers would adopt the strategy of planting a second crop of maize in January. However, in these areas millets and sorghum remained the staple for much longer than on the highlands.

In a bad year men would look for work in December and January in order to buy food. In a good year they would not look for work until after the harvest.

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