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

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For Milliam and James

"Love bade me welcome"

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London, 7 April 2014

Abbreviations

BCAP	British Central African Protectorate
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CO	Colonial Office
DC	District Commissioner
GVH	Group Village Headman
KAR	Kings African Rifles
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MNA	Malawi National Archives
MYP	Malawi Young Pioneers
NA	Native Authority
NAC	Nyasaland African Congress
NNNA	North Nyasa Native Association
NRB	Natural Resources Board
NWDF	Native Welfare and Development Fund
PC	Provincial Commissioner
PGVH	Principal Group Village Headman
SGVH	Senior Group Village Headman
TA	Traditional Authority
VH	Village Headman

Orthography

Over the period with which this thesis is concerned the spelling of proper names has varied. I will be using the contemporary spelling of names, except where I am quoting directly from a written source; for example I will refer to *Rumphu District* throughout, even though it was written as *Rumpu* during the colonial period. *L* and *r* are often used interchangeably in Chitumbuka, as with other Bantu languages, and the letter *y* is sometimes added in later spellings; so the more commonly spelled *Chikulamayembe* may have been written as *Chikuramaembe* or *Chikulamaembe* in historical accounts. This accounts for the variety of spellings to be found throughout the thesis. In Tumbuka custom the prefix *Nya-* is added to the maiden name of a married woman; so if Milliam Chavula married James Khunga she would be known to everyone, including her husband, as Nyachavula.

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This then, I thought, as I looked round about me, is the representation of history. It requires a falsification of perspective. We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was.

W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*

Prologue

I 'found' Timothy Chawinga in the Malawi National Archives whilst investigating the sources that were available to write on quite a different topic, an agricultural history of the northern region of Malawi. Intrigued by this peripheral but active colonial Native Authority chief, who had attained demonstrable administrative authority, I decided to search for other strands in his story by following him to Hewe in order to discover how his leadership was understood and remembered there. Locally when people talk of Chawinga he goes by the expressive praise name of "*Kamangilira*"; this can be translated to mean "*what he has done (or said) cannot be untied*" and stands in reference to his famously dictatorial performance and practice of power in Hewe, an area of some 200 square miles in the north-western region of Malawi; it was here that Chawinga ruled as Chief Katumbi from 1942 to 1973. His reputation was amplified for me as more stories about him were recounted throughout my fieldwork. These stories challenged the ways in which I had thought about colonial chiefs in the past and encouraged me to explore further how presenting historical examples of individual chiefs might question the ways in which we look at and write about chieftaincy as an institution in Malawi.

Timothy Chawinga was not a man who gave orders from behind closed doors; he dominated Hewe using public performances which were of administrative use and moral reckoning. He was seen at the maternity ward on a regular basis ensuring that fathers provided well for their newborns, ordering them to do piecework to earn enough for a new blanket for their child if they hadn't already got one; he attended most of the funerals which took place in Hewe, however lowly the person had been; he paid school fees; he shot and killed lions that were threatening his people; and he regularly visited and encouraged his headmen who were located in even the most remote outlying areas. That he played the archetypal "Big Man" in a small place of apparently little consequence might not be seen as important enough subject matter to enrich the Malawian historiography; this could not be further from the truth.

Chawinga's story demonstrates that authority is not simply bestowed from on high, but that one has to reach in many different directions in order to produce it. It also shows that to understand the growth and consolidation of this authority in the colonial setting one must look not only at the customary or neo-traditional aspects engendered by indirect rule but also at the *territorial* opportunities it offered chiefs like Chawinga. What I mean by this is that colonial infrastructure and ideology helped to produce new *spaces*, not only new identities, which could be exploited by Africans in inventive ways regardless of their economic and political importance to the colonial state. Given the varied political geography of chieftainship throughout Malawi, it is unsurprising that the extent to which Native Authorities were able to exploit their newly defined customary areas for their own political and economic gain varied from place to place; this is why local studies and micro-histories provide such a crucial perspective.

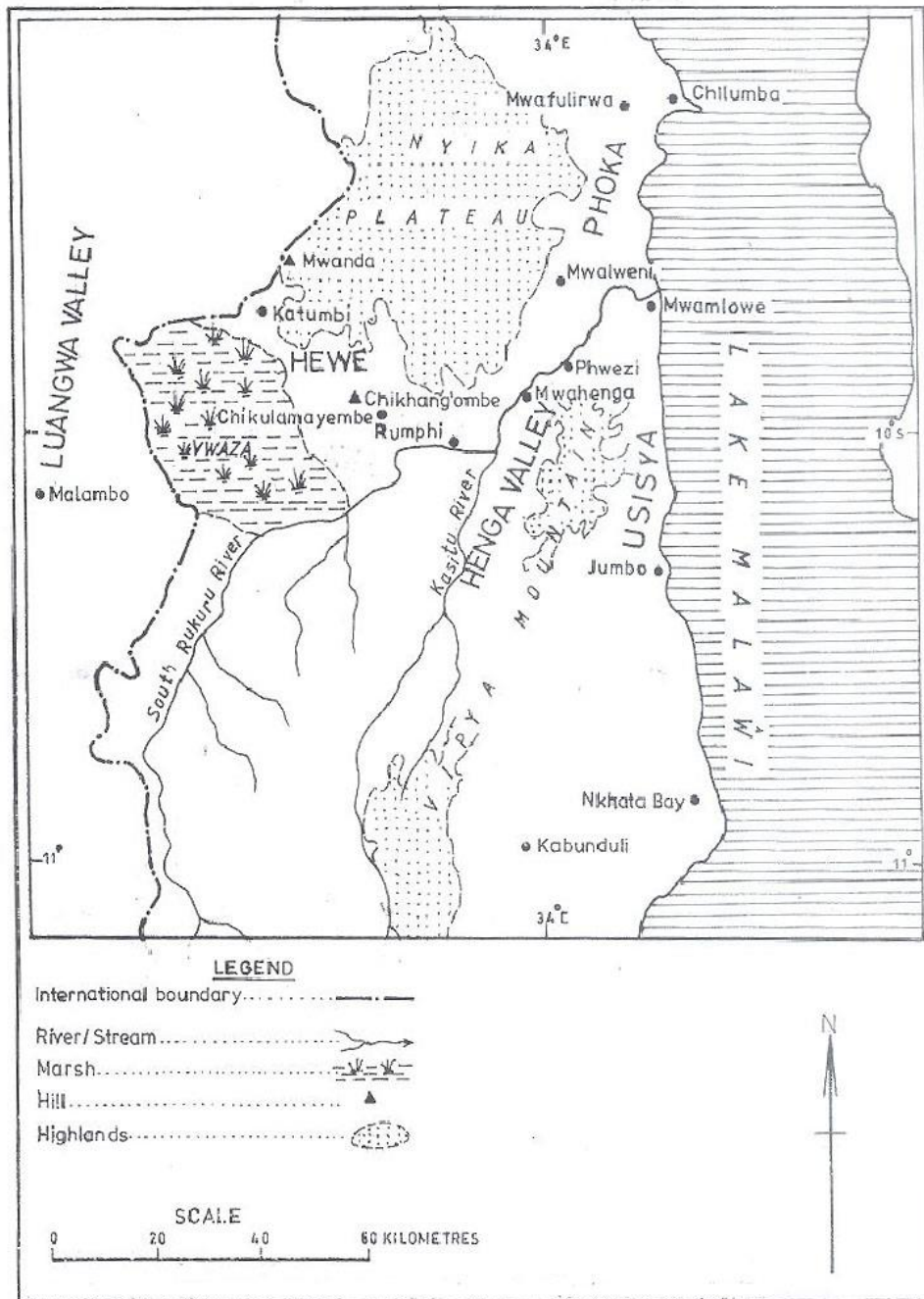
This "small" story of Timothy Chawinga and his community, numbering no more than 3,500 people in 1944, strives to confront some big questions about the limitations of colonial state power and the nature of traditional authority. Furthermore it seeks to contribute to the developing discussions about the historical transition which has taken place from economies based on wealth in people to those based on wealth in land; and what this means in light of contemporary struggles over natural resources in Africa. The territorialisation of Katumbi's chieftainship was, and remains, an ongoing process; it was a process which Chawinga learned to capture for his own benefit and an equally important factor in his eventual fall from grace less than ten years after Independence. This story may not be the most dramatic, but it is unique; and the people of Hewe deserve their story to be told as much as anyone. This represents a very small start.

Map 1.



Map 2.

Pre-colonial Northern Malawi



Adapted from Vail, "Suggestions towards a reinterpreted Tumbuka history", p.152

INTRODUCTION

Part one. Approaching the scene of chieftaincy

You cannot kill me, this is my land!

On March 3, 1959 a State of Emergency was declared in the Nyasaland Protectorate.¹ In the Hewe Valley, some 600 km to the north west of the colonial capital Zomba, the events following this declaration unfolded in their own way. As the final rains of the season fell and the beginning of the end of colonial rule took shape in this, one of the poorest of Britain's imperial possessions, the local narratives around one man's actions at this time emerge with some remarkable consistency. Timothy Chawinga, the possessor of many monikers, was the Native Authority (N.A.) Katumbi at the time, a position he had held since 1942. In popular recollections of this time, as soldiers searching for dissidents and "trouble-makers" beat down the door to his office, Chawinga is said to have prepared to sacrifice himself for his people.

Whilst Timothy Chawinga was not known to be a very active member of the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), his contribution to spreading the political message of the leading nationalist party of the time being more subtle than substantially supportive,² as Native Authority he was nevertheless the first person whom the soldiers had wanted to interrogate in order to garner who the political ringleaders in Hewe were, and where they could be found.³ Having told his people to run away and to hide in mountainous and bushy areas surrounding the Valley in order to avoid confrontation, arrest, or worse, the stories depict Chawinga more or less alone in this predicament. Faced with a group of soldiers who wanted to search *his* territory and arrest *his* people, he did not err. It was said that on refusing to assist the soldiers with their enquiries a line was drawn in the sand in front of him. Whether the line had been drawn by the chief or by the soldiers is unclear as different versions of the story circulate around the Valley, but in either case a warning was said to have been issued to the other party not to cross the line or be made to suffer the consequences.

The scenario where Timothy draws the line goes something along these lines:

"He remained in his office and when the soldiers came he drew a line and challenged them to step over it saying, 'if you want to kill me, kill me alone and not any people', he then took off his shirt in preparation and pointed at his chest, but the soldiers just left".⁴

And the scene describing the Federal soldiers drawing the line is recounted colourfully in the following two statements:

"Soldiers came to sit in his chair, [Chawinga] said 'no you shouldn't sit here, I am sitting here'. [...] [He] sent people to close roads, break bridges. I was young but I remember. He told everyone to run away, the soldiers drew a line saying you should not cross. He challenged them, and passed. 'You cannot kill me'. He took his child and said 'you will first kill my child and then me. You cannot kill me, this is my land'. These people were not to remain in his own home".⁵

"During the Emergency he told people to build ridges to plant cassava, beans, and block roads. The soldiers were coming from Zambia. He stayed in his office and stood saying 'just kill me'. The commander drew a line and said 'if you cross I will shoot', he crossed and nothing was done, he proved his power. This was right at the office in Katowo".⁶ The central image of this "line in the sand" has become legendary

and many people, even outside of Hewe, know one or other of the narratives surrounding it.⁷ It delivers a powerful depiction of a brave, uncompromising leader; someone who, under the pressures of military confrontation, demonstrated a fierce loyalty toward his people and his territory. It cannot be known whether the local memory of Timothy's statement, "*you cannot kill me, this is my land*" was captured verbatim or not; that it is commonly remembered in these terms, however, is significant. Chawinga's response sets in motion the articulation of one of the major local motifs of his leadership, and one that is continually recollected by people throughout the region:⁸ his was an authority set in territorial terms.

A local authority that was directly confronted during the Emergency, this was the first and only episode throughout the colonial period in which Hewe faced a direct threat of state-managed force. Understanding how, and why, Timothy Chawinga behaved in the way he did, when he was known neither to be a determined nationalist nor in outright opposition to the colonial administration, is one of the major focal points of this present study; it will lead to the conclusion that the "locality" of chieftainship was a crucial factor in determining colonial chiefly identity and enabling the production of a certain kind of authority. Simply put, the "space" in which authority was produced must be given a more prominent role in these histories.

To resist or not to resist, is that the question?

The State of Emergency, so the historiography suggests, was a key moment for many Nyasaland chiefs; the time had come for them to either make a stand for their people or face the consequences of 'abandoning' them to be arrested or worse, to die. By supporting government actions during the time of the Emergency, either overtly or simply by doing nothing, a chief was said to have been almost certainly be condemned to a post-colonial future of limited or no authority. Attempting to retain this local authority through acting as guardians of their people, on the other hand, came with its own risk of being imprisoned and formally deposed by government. "The manner in which [chiefs] resolved the problem" suggests one historian of the period, "tended to affect the internal power and social relations which the indirect rule system had already complicated decades earlier".⁹

The historical evidence suggests, contrary to this more usual illustration of chiefly politics in late colonial Nyasaland, that in fact Timothy Chawinga was able to accommodate both these positions. He "rescued us from the colonial government during the Emergency", remembers one man from Hewe, who says that Chawinga explained to them that they should not fear the whites at this time because "if they did anything we would get rid of them".¹⁰ Yet typically throughout this tense time he was spoken about by the colonial administrators in similarly co-operative terms. Knowing that bringing about order in the countryside around Hewe would be impossible without his presence, Chawinga's release from detention the day after this episode was immediately demanded by the District and Provincial Commissioner.¹¹ This "impossible" holding together of two apparently oppositional positions continued in the uncertain period in-between the Emergency of 1959 and the birth of Independent Malawi on the 6 July 1964; a time when a great question mark hung over the future role of traditional authorities throughout the British colonies.

This is not to say that Chawinga was unique. There no doubt exist many other examples of such chiefs who simply do not feature prominently in the narratives of late colonial Malawi; Mandala, Mulwafu, Kalinga and Power all make suggestions to this end. Remaining of parochial importance these customary leaders, and the area over which they ruled, generally fall rather between the historiographical cracks created by the dominant state-centred nationalist narratives which encourage viewing shifting forms of leadership somewhat statically only

through the lens of indirect rule, and descriptions of agricultural change which focus on communities that have most visibly taken part in, or resisted against, state endorsed transformative processes.

The accounts of Chawinga, and others, have been sifted out of the story as they do not fit with the questions which historians have typically tended to address of this period and with the political geography that has been favoured for contextualizing chiefly behaviour. This favoured political geography has rather drawn out examples from places where “things happen”: where significant cash crop schemes were implemented and radically transformed farmers lives for the better and worse; where co-operative movements politicised the local population; where conservation measures were harshly and violently enforced; and where chiefs rebelled and vocally took part in the nationalist struggles. The only scholar who has identified that Timothy Chawinga’s contribution may have intriguing implications on the way in which we understand Malawian history is Owen Kalinga. Even he, however, limits the assessment of Chawinga’s role as a ‘traditional intellectual’ to his influence on protest movements and subaltern struggles.¹²

Concentrating on highly visible areas, which were economically or politically “important” to the state leads into making wrong assumptions about the character of the colonial state and the patterns of state intervention in Nyasaland. It was not a single-minded “monolithic entity” basing its rule on a “coherent and tightly orchestrated set of policies that remained unaltered by the forces of necessity or contingency” and neither were colonial administrators divinely omnipotent.¹³ Rather the forms of rule and governance were multiple and reflected the dynamic association between administrative institutions and other institutional practices found in the everyday associational life of people. When reading the state in this way the apparently stark dilemma faced by colonial chiefs during decolonization, to nail their colours to the mast of either the nationalist camp or the incumbent colonial administration, is dissipated into a much more vague set of negotiations over access to resources, land and claims to legitimacy; it is one of the aims of this thesis to place these negotiations in better context, paying particular attention to the spatial and historical factors which shaped it and which have been previously rather unexamined in the discussions of colonial chieftainship.

Chiefly authority and the spatial turn in African history

Many subjects of historical investigation have undergone a treatment of spatial analysis since the “cultural” or “spatial” turn began reworking “the relationship between the social sciences and traditionally hermeneutic fields within the humanities”¹⁴ over thirty years ago. This shift in analytical lens has moved the emphasis away from grand narratives of history and “toward more culturally and geographically nuanced work, sensitive to difference and specificity, and thus to the contingencies of event and locale”.¹⁵ In Africanist historiography the spatial turn has enabled scholars to move away from political narratives of the nation-state towards discussions about the ways in which a wide range of actors contest different kinds of political, economic, social and religious space for their own gain.¹⁶ Surprisingly, however, the spatial turn is only beginning to have an impact on the way in which the production of chiefly authority in Africa is understood.

Discussions about colonial chieftaincy have tended to focus mainly upon the ways in which indirect rule structured and framed traditional authority in British colonial Africa. For the most part, the focus has remained upon how Lugard’s blueprint for effective “native administration”, *The Dual Mandate*,¹⁷ invented, shaped, and restructured *identity*; for the majority of contemporary historians the question is to what extent indirect rule *ethnised* and

tribalised African society.¹⁸ This is not a surprising question; by attempting to “preserve (or restore) stable systems of traditional social order”¹⁹ the policy of indirect rule institutionalised the notion that what was “customary” was necessarily implicit and unchanging. This body of work has rightly pointed out that this was not the case but that powerful actors, both European and African, were able to use the static presentation of “native law and custom” to their advantage. By interpreting and deploying “tradition” in the context of indirect rule they were able to ensure their continued hegemony and their continued access to resources.²⁰ The focus of this thesis, however, whilst acknowledging the importance of this neo-traditional perspective, is concentrated on the notion that indirect rule was as much a spatialising process as it was a tribalising one.

As colonial tools of territoriality began to map politics in geographically bounded ways associating power with place began to assume new importance in the ways in which African leadership was defined. By the time Chawinga had ascended the throne in 1942 the ways in which most African societies thought about and used space had already changed quite significantly. The somewhat inevitable shift from an economy based on wealth in people to one centred upon wealth in land began to have a more significant effect on local structures of governance in Africa once the European colonisers arrived in the later part of the Nineteenth Century. During the period of European expansion, newer *territorial* tools of control were used and new dimensions were added to the ways in which people related to space. Prior to this, claims to having a territorial identity hardly figured in the political imagination of African leaders who mainly grew their wealth and power by capturing people rather than gaining control over territory.²¹ With little use of, or need to reinforce boundaries, no reason to fight with neighbours over land, or indeed any aspiration to maintain close control over the agricultural activities of “their people”, the strategies which leaders had used to exert control over their domain was not focused on the materiality of the land but rather on the ability to extract the productive potential of the people. Having formal authority over people and the environment did not require having possession over the land on which such resources existed, and neither did its legitimacy rest upon its ability to be in control of the activities “their people” took part in.

*“Central governments were often not concerned about what outlying areas did as long as tribute was paid (sometimes in the form of slaves), and there were no imminent security threats emerging to challenge the center. This particular view of what control meant was made possible by the ability to separate ownership and control of land. Thus, a ruler might view a distant territory as owing some kind of tribute to him without any notion that he controlled the actions of the people in the outlying areas on a day-to-day basis”.*²²

Europeans “discovered” and appropriated land, named it, and with the assistance of African elites gave it boundaries and put people in charge of it.²³ At the same time as ethnicities and tribes were being named and categorised space was also being redefined. Yet the power to shape space, as with the power to shape tradition, was not driven solely by the colonisers. The power of colonial states may have “structured actors spatial possibilities” but they did not do so in “determinist ways”.²⁴ As Engel and Nugent make clear in a recent edited volume, “within various constraints, Africans continue to contest, order, and give meaning to places”.²⁵

In the context of indirect rule, which drew up geographical boundaries for chiefly jurisdictions where they had never existed before, opportunities were available for chiefs to exploit these bounded spaces in new, sometimes highly productive ways, useful for both their

authority and personal wealth. For as much as indirect rule enabled the reach of the Native Authority, through customary law, to gain authority over “previously autonomous social domains like the household, age sets, and gender associations”²⁶ it also gave many chiefs the opportunity to assert a territoriality over space, over land, and over fixed natural resources as they never had done before. As von Oppen suggests: “The appropriation of territoriality in the spatial and social sense generally appears much more to have led to an enlargement of the conceptual arsenal of the actors – adding to non-territorial ways of speaking and strategies of action”;²⁷ so whilst many chiefs’ former monopoly over labour and production (wealth in people) might have been affected detrimentally by the territorial ambitions and instrument(alisation)s, of the colonial state²⁸, there were also new opportunities available to exploit the resources under their control (wealth in land) in rather different ways to their pre-colonial forebears.

The prevailing concept of “custom” has vested in postcolonial chiefs as a group (and specifically the ones who win the disputes about boundaries) an almost uncontested ownership of land. This has been a particularly powerful device in the hands of chiefs who manage areas in which land has become a scarce resource, or in places where people are dependent upon agriculture; in this scenario the authority of traditional authorities has been bolstered as “most people would not [...] afford to antagonize their relations with the chiefs because doing so would jeopardize the very core of their livelihoods”.²⁹ Yet it is not only the grassroots who rely upon traditional authorities to ensure their access to land, as Chinsinga’s recent interview with the Malawian Chief Chikulamayembe shows, the colonial granting of rights over “native land” to chiefs has become a pervasive tool; “all people whether councilors, MPs or even the President” Chikulamayembe told Chinsinga, “are subjects of traditional leaders in which case we have to be primary institutions of leadership at local level otherwise nothing can happen on our land”.³⁰

However, whilst “indirect rule lent colonial authority to chiefly rent-seeking” by granting native authorities customary rights which allowed them to grant access to land to “natives” and potentially deny it to “strangers”,³¹ it also laid foundations for a post-colonial milieu in which “chiefs’ accountability for the rents they collected” were subject to fierce debate.³² This accountability has most often been achieved by their gaining hegemony in on-going and generally “irresolvable”³³ disputes about boundaries; in other words, the main sources of authority for chiefs in the post-colonial period have become centred on struggles over land and disputes over borders framed in the language of autochthony. However it is worth noting that in a contemporary political economy geared towards individual property rights and a litigious spirit where people desperate for security have been looking to claim rights to resources in new ways, it has not only been chiefs who tap into narratives of “indigeneity” and “autochthony”.³⁴ In order to gain advantage over one another “contestants” within these spaces, whether chief or commoner, variously wield narratives of “tradition”, use material wealth, and utilize wider networks of support in order to determine whose voice is most authentic at that point in time.³⁵

Timothy Chawinga’s reign spanned a period somewhere in the middle of this phase, where the dual processes of territorialisation and commoditisation of land were busy transforming the political economy of chieftaincy. Colonial rule was bringing to African leaders the novel option of claiming a territorial identity, heralding a new political culture where this territorial use of space intertwined with non-territorial (or pre-colonial) concepts of space.³⁶ Chawinga was in the vanguard when it came to understanding how a native authority might police his newly bounded political space and learn the language of custom to his advantage. Each native authority was positioned differently in terms of resources and relationships to the

state and whether or not the increased arsenal which the policy of indirect rule was able to be used by chiefs depended greatly upon this dynamic.³⁷ In spaces which were not considered core to their interests, for example, the colonial state did not always pursue control through formal means.³⁸ In those places in which “peasant society is neither threatening to the center nor, from the rulers’ perspective, worth trying to exploit [...] the regime is not interested in incorporating the region into the national political space”.³⁹ In such situations chiefs, and other elite figures, could find themselves in a position whereby they could take even greater economic advantage of the new geographically-bounded political landscape, and appropriate the model of the territorial community for their own interest.⁴⁰

Territorialisation of the local

A territorial ambition to “affect, influence, and control people, phenomena, and relationships”⁴¹ within its geographical boundaries is often ascribed to colonial states. However, as Sack points out, “circumscribing things in space, or on a map [...] does not by itself create a territory”; spaces become territories only if the boundaries – be they social or geographic – are actively used by some authority to pursue their political goals.⁴² Moreover, unlike “places” “territories” require considerable effort to establish and maintain. In some places it was often not worth the regime’s effort or resources to act territorially, particularly, as Boone highlights, if the area in question presented no serious threat to the state’s overall sovereignty. In this sense, it can be said that the consistently territorial character of the colonial state is overstated in much of the literature. Importantly, the ability to assert *territoriality*, the strategy used to control people and things by controlling an area, does not rest solely with the state. If given the opportunity, actors who preside over territories embedded *within* the state are also able to act territorially.⁴³ The mechanics of these sub-territories – carved out as they have been by indirect rule - are often ignored but should be considered as an important way of re-examining the practices of chieftainship in Africa.

The “territorialisation of the local”,⁴⁴ was not simply driven by a state seeking to administratively demarcate people and space in order to better control and govern.⁴⁵ Local actors appropriated these “new” territorial concepts of space for their own purposes in order to resist the state and build a retinue of “settled” followers. Evidence for this being that leaders and their people rarely contested the placing of boundaries and borders in and of themselves but, seeing what such boundaries enabled them to do, became increasingly interested in contesting *where* they ought to be located and *who* ought to be located within them.⁴⁶ However, the extent to which local leaders were able to influence and negotiate the meaning and use of their territory depended much upon the relationship which these local settings had with the other “scales of organization and control” within which they were embedded.⁴⁷

So whether one concentrates on the endogenous perspective of Boone who concludes that this relationship is driven from *within* local society,⁴⁸ the more explicitly exogenous perspective of Appadurai who focuses on the ability of “larger-scale social formations (nation-states, kingdoms, missionary empires and trading cartels) to determine the general shape of all the neighbourhoods within the reach of their powers”,⁴⁹ or the view of Lund who looks in both directions,⁵⁰ the same conclusion is reached: that the ability to assert territorial ambition is premised upon the *opportunity* that is available to do so. Re-locating the historiographical gaze upon “regional” and “local” landscapes can help in cataloguing the diversity in opportunity.

It was only on account of the physical, administrative, and imaginative distance between the Native Authority area of Katumbi and the central government headquarters that Chawinga was provided with so much room for manoeuvre in the local setting. This “distance” is

important to note, and will be interesting to examine further later on in this introduction; it provides the key to understanding how in the context of decolonisation chiefs like Timothy Chawinga were able to negotiate a path that was neither on side with nor against the colonial state but was rather more focused upon the maintenance of a local sovereignty. Before the focus turns towards modelling a new framework on which to examine the differences engendered by this state-periphery relationship, and its importance for understanding the production of chiefly authority, the historiography will be reconsidered in light of these insights.

Part two. Historiographical problems and conceptual solutions

Caught in an administrative identity

Richard Rathbone has emphasised that chieftaincy in Africa should be approached as an historical construction, one that is being made continually, “the product of constantly evolving and vividly contested imaginations”.⁵¹ This way of understanding colonial chieftaincy, as a product articulated by time, space and local politics, is indeed useful; unfortunately, much more ink has been spilled over the years by scholars trying to grapple with it in a somewhat more functionalist way. The obsession with “the typology of political systems”⁵² which anthropologists first set in motion back in the 1930s and 1940s has turned out ample studies of societies and their political organisation, most notably through the work of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.⁵³ The legibility, and order, which these ethnographic ventures gave to certain ethnic groupings was liberal anthropology’s self-confessed contribution to the “practical affairs” of the colonial project. “The policy of Indirect Rule is now generally accepted in British Africa”, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard wrote in the introduction of their famous *African Political Systems*, first published in 1940, “it can only prove advantageous in the long run if the principles of African political systems [...] are understood”.⁵⁴ Embedding chiefly politics firmly within a governmental sphere of action, this work has left a powerful legacy on the way in which historians have conceptualised chieftaincy from this period.⁵⁵

Chiefs and chieftaincy, in this approach to the reading of rural order, were given much attention; they were analysed and codified as a key aspect of the *administrative* structure of segmentary societies, something which these early anthropological studies primarily focused upon, and which the colonial architects of indirect rule tried to use to their advantage.⁵⁶ This functionalist approach, however, in failing to “relate that structure to its complementary *political* processes”,⁵⁷ could not easily understand chiefs as individual actors who defined and pursued their own political goals.⁵⁸ Whilst increasing attention was paid throughout the 1950s and 1960s to field methods that focused more on the agency of actors, “an anthropology that defined its subject matter as individuals making decisions rather than as social structures composed of interconnected social roles”,⁵⁹ the notion that traditional leaders might have a strong influence on people’s behaviour became a rather anachronistic one. In such accounts “norm, legitimacy and authority” were taken out of the equation altogether, with social action being “reduced to the satisfaction of individual needs”;⁶⁰ so whilst non-chiefly individuals were given prominence, there was limited attention paid to concomitant accounts of how the activities of these individuals might have been brought under differentiated forms of social control. Such an approach to social change concealed stories of local contestation and processes of power accumulation and ignored important historical factors in the production of authority.

The emphasis upon indirect rule as the main purveyor of chiefly authority in the colonial period has persisted on into more recent histories despite the increasing focus which has been

given over to the observation of local political dynamics. It is true that this has led scholars to better understand how chiefs operated *within* the system; “Progressive chiefs were key figures in the policy of indirect rule” Eckert writes, and quoting Iliffe he concludes that “whether the new system strengthened or weakened an individual chief depended largely on how effectively he exploited it”.⁶¹ In this, the idea that chiefs could be political actors came to the fore; many examples emerged within these analyses of chiefs “working” the colonial system “as much as they were worked by it”.⁶² Primarily this manipulation is understood to have been executed through their, and the intellectual elites who surrounded them, considered use of traditional titles which, it is argued, had been “invented” at the onset of colonial rule.

Keeping its eyes firmly, and almost exclusively, upon the interaction between chiefs and the state this way of seeing chiefs, for all its nuance, has also perpetuated the notion that chieftaincy in this period was forged and framed solely by colonial “tools of territoriality”.⁶³ Eckert boldly states:

*“The creation of native authorities did not mean the integration of pre-colonial systems of power into a modern administrative apparatus, but mainly an imagined reconstruction of supposedly traditional power structures which the colonial administration held to be useful for the realisation of its interests”.*⁶⁴

Unfortunately, Eckert’s perspective surrenders too much power to the state in its ability to fabricate functional structures of authority at the local level. There may not have been an outright integration of pre-colonial *systems* of power into the administrative apparatus but it is likely, in many instances, that there was an integration of pre-colonial *imaginings* of power and *motifs* of authority, which had an influence during the (re)assemblance of these chiefly structures. The colonial state was in fact limited in its ability to “create wholly innovative kinds of local authority”, and “actions from below set limits to the invention of authority and tradition”.⁶⁵ Chiefly authority in Condominium Sudan, Justin Willis argues, was rather a product which “drew on local moral codes and colonial forms of authority, but was not fully part of either”.⁶⁶

Summarising the legacies of the dominant “invention of tradition” discourse, Spear provides a helpful critique of the effects that these perspectives have had on the representation of chieftaincy and tradition in the historiography. For all their conceptual insights, these neo-traditionalist perspectives have “led historians to neglect the historical development and complexity of the interpretative processes involved”.⁶⁷ By retaining the nation-state as the main lens through which analysis takes place the “economic, social and political factors that help shape identities and the complex processes of reinterpretation and reconstitution of historical myths and symbols to define them” have been seriously overlooked in discussions about how tradition is conceptualised and used by both state and local actors.⁶⁸ In this interpretation, where the hegemony of the colonial state is assumed, chieftainship remains as a largely unexamined categorization, a label for a group of government-sponsored actors who are shaped, even created, by external forces.

The historiography has generally failed to grapple with the position of particular chiefs within their communities more closely and more critically, rarely placing these manifestations of local authority throughout the colonial period within a deeper time-scale. John Tosh implored historians to look beyond the colonial era with which they were interested and to analyse it only “as an episode in the total historical development of the societies in question”.⁶⁹ However, almost thirty years later, different chieftaincies are still commonly thought of in terms of this

bounded, administrative identity, simply a bureaucratic part of a colonial machine of indirect rule which was thought to “break down [...] as soon as the British tried to use the chiefs to enforce unpopular agricultural measures”.⁷⁰ The discursive counter-narrative to this, of a political nationalism which seeks to liberate the colonial identifications, but in fact replaces them with equally state-oriented nationalist ones, is equally problematic; it subjects all chiefs to the same fate and tends to only consider as relevant the stories of those who either uphold or undermine this narrative.

Where do colonial chiefs draw their authority from?

Moving away from the endorsement which the colonial state gives or takes away, it is considered productive to observe and understand how chieftainships are constructed and contested within the context of rural histories and regional contestations, *as well as* through the eyes of the State. It ought not to be forgotten that chiefs in this period most often operated from at least three different positions, “as salaried functionaries of the colonial state, as chiefs among chiefs contending sometimes with struggles over ethnic or territorial limits, and as local rulers of hereditary status who could be popular or unpopular with their people”.⁷¹ All of these roles depended upon a combination of historical and contemporaneous positioning so as to ensure legitimacy and authority within each of these operational landscapes. Only by examining more historical examples of chieftaincies in this period, noting the ways in which chiefs understood and deployed both the discourses of both tradition and modernity, and examining the spaces they created to exploit resources, can better conclusions be made about the ambiguities, opportunities and tensions of “being” a Native Authority. Making statements as to what extent colonial chiefs were “invented” or “authentic”, “traditionalists” or “modernisers”, “collaborators” or “resisters” is largely ineffectual, instead questions should be posed which bring no structural or spatial assumptions. For this thesis it is thought that a more apt line of questioning revolves around the nature and use of authority rather than upon the structures in which authority supposedly operates: *Where do chiefs in the colonial period draw their authority from? What does this authority enable them to do? And what are the stakes involved in having it?*

By doing this the focus does not remain on the “social fact” that is the institution of chieftaincy, but rather on the “relations that inhere in it”.⁷² Public authority, for example, the “type” of authority commonly claimed to be legitimated through institutions of the state, or at least expressed by actors or institutions which are supported by government recognition, cannot be simply passed around as a traditional title might be, neither can it be possessed as a thing. If recognised by the state for example, a chiefly position could provide the holder of the title the potential to exercise a public authority. However the legitimacy given by the state to an institution is “not a fixed absolute quality”,⁷³ neither are the other avenues to status and power permanent, but they are “constantly under debate and must be negotiated”.⁷⁴ Specific institutions do not have an enduring monopoly over symbols of public authority, and whilst they might exercise such authority in one moment, at another moment in time they are much less significant.⁷⁵ Chiefly authority, much like that of the African state as described by Bayart, is therefore better understood as a *produced* event rather than as having an essential quality; “a plural space of interaction and enunciation [that] does not exist beyond the uses made of it by all social groups, including the most subordinated”.⁷⁶

Focusing upon one historical chiefly figure can help somewhat in the endeavour of better understanding the relations that make up, and possibilities that come with, using a chiefly identity. By also illuminating the many different spaces in which a chief is able to construct identities for himself, this focus can usefully ground chiefly authority, and the “tradition” that

seems to frame it, in locally relevant discourses; discourses that had historical importance,⁷⁷ were mediated by local political geographies, but that could be reinterpreted and reconstructed in the context of broader socio-economic changes.⁷⁸ If a chief was able to tap into these discourses, and influence them to his advantage, then a vital channel for accessing other sources of power and new spaces of exploitation that lay beyond the state could be opened up.

The chief ought to be understood not only as a representative of the primary institution through which he performed and sought legitimacy, but also as an individual ‘big man’, whose success was rather premised upon an ability to exploit as many “avenues to ‘bigness’” as he could by converting “social into economic and political ‘capital’, both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ (and vice versa)”.⁷⁹ If Lentz’s framework for capturing the ways ‘big men’ operate in Ghana is adopted for understanding Timothy Chawinga’s leadership and authority then his position as “traditional ruler” would be understood as his major “field of action”; legitimised through ‘custom’ and perhaps magic, as well as by the state this was his ‘role image’. However, other registers of power and alternative legitimating strategies do exist; “experience in education, vocational training, or performative qualities such as demonstrations of largesse, physical strength or higher morality. These avenues are ventured down whenever they are useful”.⁸⁰

Such a perspective provides a better foregrounding for the discussion around how “chiefly” authority, in all its composite parts, can be produced and used. However, it will be argued in the following chapters that whilst colonial chiefs could potentially reach in many directions in order to establish and continue to produce their often fragile authority, much depended upon an individual’s *opportunity* to do this. Such opportunity could arise if there was room to mold the formal authority on which chiefly legitimacy partially rested – this might include an ability to manipulate inheritance, adapt ritual, and access and use historical “raw materials” - and also, crucially, if there was a spatial context in which such opportunity might arise. Trying to understand the different opportunities that chiefs had requires a lens of analysis which looks beyond but does not exclude the spatial category of the state as an arena in which they gain legitimacy. It is to the historical development of the state and then the local arena of politics in Hewe that the introduction will turn.

Malawian historiography: a tale of two provinces

The Katumbi chieftainship of Timothy Chawinga must be placed in the specific historical context of a colonial state that developed certain regional characteristics, and that “broadcast power”⁸¹ in uneven ways. The historiography has tended to emphasise the emergence of two distinct regions within the colonial state of Nyasaland; the Bua River, which cuts the country almost in half, was taken as the border between an agriculturally productive and thriving “South” and what became known as “the Dead North”. This division had its roots in physical geography but was shaped to a large extent by “competing colonialisms”, where the interests of European settlers, missionary activities and colonial officials all played a part in creating these different patterns of administration within the Protectorate.⁸² The fashion in which the colonial state developed provides a crucial context for understanding the emergence of differences in local structures of authority both during the colonial period and indeed in the development of regional identities in the post-colonial era.

Whilst the argument put forth in these pages aims to demonstrate that such ways of seeing the state can hide stories of thriving local economies in the middle of “the Dead North”, it also acknowledges that there were significant differences between the north and south. The appellation “Dead North” had been “attributed in contrast” to the more productive south according to Barker, the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province in the 1940s, but

had much to do with the fact that the dominant Tumbuka and Ngoni areas were characterised in the first half of the twentieth century by heavy out-migration of the population to other countries for employment. This was said to have left a huge number of villages “denuded of the very people required to take such an important part in developing the potential agricultural resources and in conserving the natural resources” of the northern region.⁸³ By 1945 the areas south of the Bua had boasted tea, tobacco, tung and cotton industries “all flourishing under European and African enterprise”,⁸⁴ whilst the northern region was generally understood to be “an isolated area far removed from the country’s centres of production, trade, and industry”.⁸⁵ Prior to this period there had been only one permanent departmental officer stationed north of the Bua in Karonga, the European Agricultural Officer, and there was just one solitary European planter.

The roots of this bifurcated development have been traced back to before the colonial administration, however, when “the impact of commerce and Christianity” distinguished broadly separate paths for the people of north and south Nyasaland.⁸⁶ The differences which were inculcated at the end of the nineteenth century as European influence made its way onto the African landscape had certain implications for the way in which political culture developed in colonial Malawi. The impact of slavery and environmental disaster had wreaked havoc on local communities throughout the region. In the south, and especially in the fertile Shire Highlands, “the combined effect of the slave trade and famine had driven settlement literally to the hills”;⁸⁷ this left the once heavily populated lands “vacant”, and ready to be claimed by a combination of European settlers and Lomwe immigrants from Mozambique. Similar population movements took place in the northern region, especially in the areas where the Ngoni and Bemba raided Tumbuka settlements. However, in stark contrast to the south, no influx of European interest threatened African access to land in these areas.

The land grievances that had developed in the Shire Highlands were exacerbated at the turn of the twentieth century when the system of *thangata*, a form of coerced labour, began to be used in a widespread fashion by European estates as a way of dealing with the labour shortage they were facing. As Mulwafu points out whilst the newly established Protectorate administration had not encouraged the exploitation of Africans in this way, even legislating for the introduction of minimum working conditions through the Native Labour Ordinance of 1903, “in practice the government never enforced these regulations”, and it was left up to the discretion of individual planters to follow them.⁸⁸ The Africans who had been dispossessed of their land proved the most vulnerable to these practices, especially after the introduction of hut tax by the British in 1894 when *thangata* was used in lieu of cash payment. By 1910 the system was adapted again so that Africans who did not work on estates essentially paid twice as much in tax. All of these policies were designed so that an emerging colony might prove itself economically viable. Whilst in the north the African population continued to access and farm their land quite freely, the politics of southern Nyasaland became dominated by “the nature of the terms on which Africans would be permitted access to the mostly empty lands held by the European planters or the Crown Land that still remained under Yao chiefs”; dynamics which would underlie the terms of conflict throughout the colonial period.⁸⁹ By 1907 when the Colonial Office took over the reins of the British Central Africa Protectorate, “the struggle to capture the peasantry and its productive capacity” had become “a key theme of colonial administration in Nyasaland”.⁹⁰

The early years of colonial rule then were times of great tension and much negotiation between the new “landowners” and the African population whose labour they were trying to exploit; something which became particularly acute in the years immediately before World War

When the “establishment of labor-intensive plantation production” began to dominate the southern economy.⁹¹ At this stage, “3,705,255 acres, out of a protectorate total of 25,161,924 (or 15 percent of all land), were held in freehold by a handful of foreigners”, and the majority of that in the fertile southern highlands.⁹² As Power has noted, *this* was the reason why the infrastructure of the colonial administration was first established there and why, perhaps, the northern and central regions suffered in comparison. In the economic vision of British administrators the population in what they saw as an economically unproductive and environmentally denuded land north of the Bua could best serve the interests of the Protectorate as migrant labour.⁹³

There was some hope that little Nyasaland would continue to develop along the lines of settler states such as Southern Rhodesia, but any “residual optimism” left at the end of the 1920s for it to live up to an early labelling as “the Cinderella of Africa” was gone by the 1930s when the economic depression consigned the colony to become something of an “imperial slum”.⁹⁴ It was always going to be a challenge for this most marginal of areas to thrive in the context of colonialism. As Lee describes it, pre-colonial Malawi existed between the regional economies of East Africa and southern Africa “in a transient zone of trade and regional power”; and with no one major African polity dominating it came to “fundamentally [exist] on the margins of regional, colonial and world economies”.⁹⁵ Indeed, Power concurs; the cotton and coffee estates of southern Nyasaland may have been productive, experiencing some degree of financial success, but she argues that geographical isolation made plans to build the colonial economy on these activities difficult. “Nyasaland was not linked by rail to the coast until 1935, and reliance on river transport and human portage made its exports relatively expensive”.⁹⁶ As a consequence settler interests quickly became “subsumed under more viable long term African productive capacity”;⁹⁷ it is in this context that the colonial economy of Nyasaland had reoriented itself by the 1940s.

The “competing colonialisms” that existed within the Protectorate saw to it that alongside economic differentiation, the character of local administration was shaped not only by settler interests but by missionary influence. The most significant European presence in the Northern Province at the end of the nineteenth century, and for the first half of the twentieth century, was the Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland. The impact of this institution on the political culture of the north will be unpacked at some length in chapters one and two, and will indeed be referred to throughout the thesis, but for the purposes of comparison it should be noted that in contrast to the southern missions the Livingstonia Mission provided a space where Africans were given opportunities to gain an education; it comes as no surprise that the first tranche of indigenous clerks, teachers and preachers came overwhelmingly from this region. The introduction of the District Administration Native Ordinance (DANO) in 1912, and the choice of local headmen to run things in the rural areas, was therefore shaped on the ground in the Tumbuka and Ngoni areas where the influence of the Mission was most pronounced by these African “new men” who were able to collude with powerful indigenous leaders to gain the most.

The Chilembwe uprising, an “African revolt” that took place in 1915 in the context of crippling economic and social injustices that were taking place within the estates of the southern highlands, had a critical effect on the unfolding of native administration south of the Bua. This event has been dealt with at some length, and from a number of different perspectives, most notably by Shepperson and Price, but also Landeg White, and DD Phiri.⁹⁸ According to Vail and White the Chilembwe rising prompted the rapid imposition of indirect rule, a policy that had already been sketched out in the DANO of 1912. It was seen as a necessary attempt to

organise “the confusing tangle of African people in southern Nyasaland in an effort to check any possible disturbances by dissatisfied Africans through bolstering chiefly control”.⁹⁹ The choice to use the ostensibly anti-Chilembwe and conservative Muslim Yao as their indirect rule chiefs inevitably had implications; these stemmed from the fact that in contrast to the Northern Province, where ‘tribal order’ was “shaped from below”, in the Southern Province it was “largely imposed from above”.¹⁰⁰

As African grievances were given shape and direction in the nationalist campaigns of the 1940s and 50s these regional differences were articulated. The threat of Federation with Southern and Northern Rhodesia, for example, must be seen in the light of land shortage and *thangata* in the south where the idea of a new influx of European settlers “resuscitated African apprehensions about the oppressive labour system”.¹⁰¹ In the north, where the settler economy had not directly impacted on African populations, Federation posed a different threat which was articulated by nationalists in terms of possible reduction of indigenous chiefly freedom. The historical development of the colonial state of Nyasaland has, therefore, led to certain regional identifications that had implications on the nationalist struggle.

Whilst this present study will question how useful this overarching depiction of the “dead north” versus the settler south is when it comes to understanding the dynamics of local histories, it is considered essential to highlight the consequences that this discursive separateness has had on political culture, and hence customary politics, in the postcolonial period. The emergence of regional sensibilities, and their manipulation by political elites, in the democratic transition which took place in 1992 and ever since, justify the time spent trying to understand the historicity of regional politics in colonial Malawi. Whilst Banda outwardly emphasised nationalism over tribalism, the impact of colonialism in shaping difference and Banda’s own manipulation of it, meant that these identities quickly resurfaced as democracy dawned.¹⁰²

These differences are crucial to understand but should not lead us away from the “precise nature of local political topography”¹⁰³ in which chiefs operated, and in which they attempted to accumulate wealth and power. If it can possibly be imagined that differences were driven as much from *within* rural society as they were shaped by external dynamics, the importance of better understanding colonial chieftaincy – as a factor within this local context – assumes new meaning. It is paramount, therefore, that comparative and more closely observed examples are carefully unpacked for what they can reveal about the nature of colonial rule as well as the nature of leadership and power in Africa during this time. As Carswell notes the ways in which colonialism played out on the ground, and in the everyday details of peoples’ lives was highly differentiated, as such “the non-political factors that influenced the reception [of colonial policy] [...] need to be considered too”.¹⁰⁴

Approaching authority; constructing a local lens

Taking Catherine Boone’s conceptualisation of the African state as a departure it is possible to rethink the way in which both actor and institution are depicted in historical narratives. Whilst they clearly remain important, she shifts the emphasis away from the usually posed *exogenous* determinants of regional variations, for example the policy and structures from colonial metropolises, nationalist politicians’ political ideologies, and the impact of global economic events and opens up a new avenue of inquiry.¹⁰⁵ Boone suggests that regional variations, and the unevenness in the colonial experience, can be understood as rather being *endogenously* determined; on account of the political struggles and contestations which take place *within* African society “between rulers, their rural allies, and their provincial rivals”, and due to

differences in agrarian sociopolitical organization and rural modes of production.¹⁰⁶ It is the “political capacities and interests of rural societies and rural notables”,¹⁰⁷ she argues, that determine the various strategies which are used to govern the countryside. Boone’s framework presents the possibility that a colonial chief’s authority is neither completely determined by the state, nor geographically indistinct; the characteristics of chiefly institutions and performance of customary leaders are highly locally and regionally contextualised.

Taking the example of the Hewe Valley, the area over which Timothy Chawinga had formal administrative authority from 1942, the description of peripherality fits well: as late in the colonial period as 1946 the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province described the Valley as “for the most part remote from civilisation as represented by administrative *Bomas*, infested with game and tsetse fly, and as far as I can see at present, unlikely to be of any economic advantage to Nyasaland”.¹⁰⁸ As far as it was a political threat to the central government, no serious discontent was ever really registered in Hewe other than the “parochial battles” and “trivial jealousies” which district commissioners wrote about in their handover notes. There were no significant reports of organised protests against conservation rules, no boycotts and few outlets for considerable political agitation to be expressed through, unlike in other parts of the country which had developed co-operative networks and active native associations Hewe was much more tangential to the national economy; partly this was on account of physical distance from government *Bomas* and agricultural markets, and the logistical difficulty this brought, but it also had much to do with stronger historical regional connections across the colonial border which made the area more politically and economically independent.

The focus of colonial agricultural histories on areas of large-scale cash crop production so favoured during the “second colonial occupation”¹⁰⁹ has led us away from a better understanding of non-agricultural relations within rural communities at these regional levels and, as Carswell’s study of Kigezi brilliantly highlights, tends to write off as irrelevant the critical role that thriving local food crop markets had in peripheral areas. Carswell has shown that the farmers of Kigezi might have seemed irrelevant to the colonial economy, having “failed” to adopt the specified cash crops, but they were in fact producing great quantities of “food crops [...] for sale on a vibrant, regional market”;¹¹⁰ it was one of many regions “producing surplus foodstuffs for export to surrounding areas”.¹¹¹ Much like Hewe Kigezi was viewed as peripheral by colonial administrators; it relied on a labour intensive agricultural system which did not yield “cash” profit, and for tax money the population was dependent on wage labour. However, by ignoring the production and marketing of local foodstuffs a trick has been missed in the analysis of social and political change in these regional “back waters”.

Crucially if this complex regional system of exchange is understood in light of the historical interaction between certain areas which were bound together through non-agricultural relations, then it can be seen that local food markets did not simply reflect an exchange from food-deficit to food-surplus areas. As Mandala puts it, even if an area produced all the foodstuffs required for survival “pre-capitalist societies were more than agriculture and therefore could not be self-sustaining entities” they needed to maintain ties with other economies in order to reproduce their internal relationships.¹¹²

In places like Hewe and Kigezi interactions in the regional setting involved the trade in non-food items as well as with royal chiefly taxation flows. These external non-agricultural relations were important “mechanisms through which the flow of food from surplus-producing to food-deficit regions was made possible”;¹¹³ and Carswell argues that rather than becoming irrelevant in a colonial economy these peripheral local economies were in fact stimulated as it

became safer and easier to trade widely and as population growth increased the demand for foodstuffs. The reason why this is important in an analysis of local authority is that such vibrant food production systems, which “crossed colonial boundaries”,¹¹⁴ were resilient and, to a large extent, evaded colonial control through marketing.

According to Mandala, the general failure of the historiography “to relate” the “standard paradigm of the position of traditional leaders in the colonial administrative structure” to “peasant production” has resulted in incomplete analyses of chiefly authority.¹¹⁵ In the Lower Tchiri Valley, for example, the subject of Mandala’s research, cotton was the major cash crop but he goes to some length to demonstrate that “different chieftaincies felt the impact of the cotton economy differently”.¹¹⁶ Whilst areas not so involved with cotton production certainly did not see the rapid rise in population and swelling treasuries that the chieftaincies that had participated in cash cropping on a large scale did, what this meant was that when the collapse of cotton agriculture devastated these local economies the chiefdoms that had not the “opportunity” to get involved with cotton were largely unaffected by this significant shift in global trade. So, “the collapse of cotton agriculture shattered the economies of the southern chiefdoms and put an end to the euphoria of “indirect rule” for the Mang’anja mafumu” as his authority was secured primarily through frameworks controlled by the state.¹¹⁷ Other chieftaincies, whose successes were perhaps grounded in non-agricultural and regional networks, were not undermined in the same way.

In Hewe, as in Kigezi and the non-cotton growing parts of the Lower Tchiri, the functions and processes of the colonial state interacted with a regional political economy which ostensibly posed no economic or social threat to its sovereignty and was fine largely “left to its own devices”; “the regime” in these scenarios somewhat abdicated authority neither seeking “to engage or impose”.¹¹⁸ With an independently thriving local market of food stuffs seemingly irrelevant to the colonial administration, a significant amount of autonomy could however be maintained by traditional authorities in these peripheral zones.

Historical geographies of authority

The physical, administrative, and imaginative distance between less prominent chiefs like Timothy Chawinga and the central government headquarters provided much room for maneuver in the local setting. Linking the opportunities which these contemporaneous political geographies gave with historical landscapes of authority can be even more illuminating. As a chiefly successor of the *Balowoka* migrant traders, the tradition from which much of the dominant leadership in these northern Tumbuka area stems and the history of which will be explored in chapter one, Timothy Chawinga inherited a title which was loaded with certain meanings but was an economic and political leadership that was flexible in its inheritance structures and rested upon an authority that could be easily co-opted by charismatic individuals. Unlike neighbouring chieftaincies to the south where chiefs ruled over more defined areas and authority was framed in more ritual terms,¹¹⁹ the legitimacy which personality alone could evoke was relatively strong amongst the Tumbuka chieftaincies.

Less marked by centralised ritual authorities and more by mobility, interdependence and varied involvement in trading networks, these chieftaincies had been highly adaptable even in the pre-colonial period. Disruption and reorganization provoked by Ngoni and Bemba invasion and, latterly, a strong association with the Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland (later to become the Central Church of Africa Presbyterian when it merged with the Church of Scotland in 1929) meant that further specific distinctiveness, especially the importance of education, was layered in to the form that political leadership took in this region

and the spaces in which it performed. The distinctiveness between the different regions is nicely illustrated by a comment made by District Commissioner Cosmo Haskard in the 1951 Rumphu Annual Report, the district in which NA Katumbi was administered. He observed that there was no longer any strong hereditary organisation of chiefs and headmen in this Tumbuka region. With little historical evidence to go on and a general period of raiding and partial subjugation to the Angoni in the latter part of the nineteenth century events had not, he writes, enabled “the development of an indigenous administrative organisation such as exists in the Ngoni areas to the south”. Haskard concludes by suggesting that the “troubled history” of the area has rather “developed in them strong individualistic tendencies”.¹²⁰

Wielding only a loose grasp on ritual authority, as they did and still do, the fight to grab a more formal authority is therefore a constant feature of the chiefly political landscape of these Tumbuka communities. Chieftaincy in this area is a particularly porous and plastic institution;¹²¹ the rules which constitute it change easily and can be manipulated from ‘below’ as well as invaded into from ‘above’.¹²² With each chiefly succession, authority has needed to be reasserted and maintained, stories of authentically glorious and extraordinary arrival needed to be adapted, and claims to seniority inserted to compete with challenges from both external chiefly dynasties, and internal royal clan disputes. Since these chieftainships had been established with new royal lineages which “lacked any significant depth or span”¹²³ there was plenty of room in these types of chieftaincy for new interpretations of authority and more spaces in which individual people with power could challenge the tradition. Apter describes a matrix of factors which, given this flexible context of chiefly power in Hewe, might enable a reappraisal of its history of authority:

*“If authority regulates power, power also reproduces, revises, and in revolutionary situations subverts authority structures. It does so by changing the rules of the game – the depth and span of the royal lineage, the prerogatives of high office, the ranking of chiefs, the influence of Big Men – and can do so because authority is not simply given or imposed, but it is constructed, negotiated, and reconstructed by actors, myths and rituals that can uphold the status quo, but they can also be invoked and performed to oppose it”.*¹²⁴

The proliferation in non-authentic elements penetrating chiefly institutions increased as their potential to access power, economically and socially, grew with the onset of colonial rule; they were able to challenge the lineage “rules” in this flexible chiefly landscape and create “customary resources” for themselves with which they could contest power. The Yoruba chieftaincies’ mechanisms for transforming authority which Apter presents have some applicability for the situation in Hewe and Nkamanga; “competitions for office generate [...] factions in which powerful rivals can uphold or modify rules of succession and condition of eligibility and can transform authority by appropriating it”.¹²⁵ As authority became more easily sanctioned through performance than heritable privilege, at least by the beginning of the twentieth century, personality politics thrived amongst the *Balowoka* chieftainships. Just as personality had been a key factor in the establishment of the dynasties, so now the ability to carry and control the historical narrative of their own legitimacy did hinge somewhat on individual personhood rather than what that person was seen to sovereignly represent. In these Tumbuka chieftainships, it is clearly demonstrable that personality played, and continues to play, a key role in capturing the “formal authority” which Apter speaks of.

Bearing this milieu in mind, alongside Boone’s suggestion of spatial re-orientation, it is interesting to observe the emergence of Timothy Chawinga as a regionally significant,

charismatic personality. This thesis will document how his concern lay primarily with the protection of his position within the regional political and moral economy; his personal vision did not extend much beyond the pursuit and production of authority within his own and his immediately neighbouring territories. That he was able to pursue this agenda, and develop a strong territorial claim over the Hewe Valley, as a geography and a place of social relations, with such a free hand has much to do with the limited geographical and economic significance which Hewe had, if we “see” it as the colonial state might have;¹²⁶ its position in the eyes of the administration inevitably enabled this regional locality to emerge as it did, and as such enabled Timothy Chawinga to practice a territoriality that served, in various ways, to augment his chiefly authority.¹²⁷

Part three. A different lens of analysis

Constructing and using locality

Just as there were limitations to how far the colonial government could wholly invent structures of authority, there were limitations too on how far chiefs could manage and manipulate social and geographical boundaries for their own benefit. To understand why this might have been more possible requires the introduction of the spatial concept of locality.

Much like the nation-state, or other large-scale identities, “the local community, as a socially and usually also territorially bound unit, distinct from its neighbours and with some degree of autonomy” also has to be “‘constructed’ and ‘imagined’”;¹²⁸ it is not, and never can be a static “container of historicity”.¹²⁹ This spatial construction, much like that of the chiefly institutions which have been discussed above, is in perpetual transformation,¹³⁰ being “constantly created anew by social interactions and imaginations”,¹³¹ and the forces which carve out this space interact with it in a dynamic way. Finding an appropriate spatial concept in which to observe the activities of Timothy Chawinga which is flexible enough to accommodate all the influences that make and continue to recreate it becomes paramount for this study. The Hewe Valley as a “local” place was, and is, maintained through its connection to “non-local” contexts,¹³² understanding the ways in which Chawinga contributed to the shaping of “Hewe”, in collusion with, and counter to, colonial forces forms the major part of this work. In order to do this most effectively it is decided that the more flexible concept of *locality* will be employed as it reflects the continual production of a space and can accommodate both the historicity and spatial specificity of chieftainship.

Whilst it has characteristics driven from within a specific geography, ecology and politics, a “locality” is shaped most significantly by *relational* factors: with regard to neighbouring localities, in relation to the state, and through processes that are global. Importantly for this thesis, locality can provide a useful lens which accommodates the dynamic forces which shape it, as well as being presented as a forceful arena which compels change itself. The production of locality, in the succinct words of Appadurai, is both “context-driven and context-generating”;¹³³ an elastic concept which can be used in a variety of ways and which is able to be re-shaped again and again by “the contingencies of history, environment and imagination”.¹³⁴ Bearing this in mind, the research seeks to move away from treating Timothy Chawinga’s Hewe, the place of his chieftainship, as merely a conventional geographical space.¹³⁵ Rather, that it represented a set of relations between things as well as a space which contained and dissimulated social relations.¹³⁶ At the height of his powers, this thesis will argue, Chawinga contributed significantly to the production of Hewe as a locality, by constructing as a structure

of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of a “situated community”¹³⁷ for his own purposes; primarily the extraction of wealth and power. The result being that in between 1942-1974 *the space* in which Timothy Chawinga practiced his authority was used by him as a powerful “tool of thought and of action”,¹³⁸ not simply as a place in which he could perform his administrative, and formal, role as Native Authority.

Whilst Chawinga reshaped the political geography of Hewe in a number of different ways, which will be drawn out more thoroughly in chapters three and four, the increasingly centralised character of the chieftaincy, and the visibility which the Royal Family of Chawinga¹³⁹ had within the area by the time Timothy came to the throne, was greatly influenced by certain former Katumbi chiefs. The petitioning of the government, and the activities of Timothy’s predecessors within Hewe which helped to reposition their family locally, are dealt with at some length in chapter two, but it should be noted here that the material – and particularly infrastructural – elements which had been introduced into the Valley in the couple of decades before he himself was crowned, such as the road (in 1932) and the labour recruitment camp (1937), created an economic and social space in which the Katumbi chiefs could act publicly for the first time. Once Chief Katumbi had been officially recognised by the government as a Native Authority in 1933, and a chiefs house and office had been constructed in this more ‘appropriate’ public place, at the new crossroads where shops, small resthouses and restaurants had begun to emerge, the chieftaincy which had formerly been a scattered collection of families settled in more remote areas, found a new place in the landscape; one that was economically well positioned and more visibly powerful. Von Oppen too has noted the significance which the demarcations of new “political centers” have for the people in these places. Whereas before centres of authority might be unknown or hidden – this spatial invisibility adding a mystery to their role – increasingly public gathering places, administrative buildings, court rooms, missionary stations and schools vied amongst one another as “rival centers within the locality”.¹⁴⁰

The spatial concentration and reinforcement of the institutional structure and geographical boundaries of the Katumbi Chieftainship was a process continued by Timothy Chawinga who used various other resources available to him in order to produce a sense of place and ensure his claim to ruling Hewe was continually legitimised. Assembling a story about, boundaries around and relationships within, a particular locality can be done in a number of ways but one of the most significant of these activities in the history of Timothy’s chieftainship was through hunting. It is perhaps too great a leap of the imagination to suggest that when he became chief he consciously used the symbolic power of hunting as an activity to demarcate and give form to his territory. There is no doubt, however, that he worked this to his advantage, especially after seeing the effect that both his killing of dangerous game and management of garden pests had upon his authority. Both protective and – through the provision of meat – clientelistic, hunting did play some role in his claim to the area and perhaps enabled him to link his authority over a space with a right in managing the natural resources within it; this is especially so after the government “formalized” this resource management role by making him an honorary game warden of the game rich area to the south of the Valley. Hunting had the effect of reinforcing the boundaries containing these resources, keeping animals in, and keeping other potential exploiters out; an official role and right to prosecute anyone contravening these boundaries bolstered this claim to territory.

The successful production and reproduction of a local identity is commonly done most successfully with the formulation of a distinct local history.¹⁴¹ Such use and referencing of history, in this spatially re-ordered landscape where claims to autochthony and belonging

became key aspects of legitimation, more effectively wed identity to place. The useable past could be more easily “commemorated or commiserated with reference to space”.¹⁴² Furthermore history could be used to develop a strong local identity in contrast to other neighbouring localities, an important technique for reinforcing, and potentially extending, its own boundaries, it is able to “enhance a community’s prestige in relation to its neighbours, by stressing difference and even conflict with competitors”.¹⁴³ In Hewe, Timothy Chawinga did not only prioritise a discursive idea of his territory, through an annual performance of the history of his ancestral arrival, he also practiced this contemporaneously with regular tours of his area, visiting his people in every far-reaching place. This was a practice considered a most crucial instrument of colonial territoriality. Fields points out that “the symbolic aspect of touring” was an important element of colonial control.¹⁴⁴ Chawinga himself knew the benefits of visiting the far-flung places of his territory, and his practicing of this is often attributed to D.C. Cosmo Haskard, who as the first district official based in Rumphu itself, had a big influence on the administrative style of Timothy Chawinga.

Limitations to Territoriality

If the possibility is set out, as it is here, that territories are able to be contained *within* territory then it is also important however to note the territories that existed within Hewe. These spaces were forged by other trans-local relationships and institutions, for example the introduction of the Catholic Church within Hewe, or indeed the base of the Witwatersrand Labour Native Association (WNLA), and could potentially work as territories. These new types of community model which had never existed before or which had never before been highly territorially oriented – the religious congregation, which developed in the vicinity of the local evangelical mission station; the economic cooperative (“society”), a union of merchants or producers; local branches and wards of political parties – which developed with the struggle for independence and later converged with other models of communal locality which had been developing since 1940s (parishes, village groups, wards).¹⁴⁵ At times, these organizations might have been enabled to work more effectively as territories than at others. Much depended upon the ways in which Timothy Chawinga practiced his own territorial ambition and as such suppressed the ambitions of these places within his area. Observing how Chawinga dealt with these places within Hewe is interesting as they provided some of the only major threats to his sources of authority. No more easily is it to see how Chawinga’s territorial activities were fundamental to his grip on legitimacy and authority than when a new territorial order emerged in the post-colonial period.

Timothy Chawinga was arrested in 1974; ten years after the coming of Independence. A number of incidents he had been involved with saw him fall out of favour with the Malawi Congress Party government of Hastings Banda. From 1966, when Banda adopted a republican constitution and Malawi became a one-party state, the place of the Hewe Valley – and the Katumbi Chieftainship – was, in effect, redefined. In this new context Hewe became much less peripheral in the eyes of the state. Its proximity to the Zambian border transformed it from “remote” place to “threatening” border-zone and as such was monitored heavily by state agents. This shift, which encompassed many other changes, transformed the opportunities which Timothy Chawinga had to accumulate authority through territoriality, and it could be argued that the tension which this produced between this chief and the post-colonial state ultimately led to his downfall.

The importance of a historical example

This introduction has discussed the opportunities that the new geographical order offered chiefs. These opportunities are only notable, in all their specificity, if a spatial analysis is used rather than a neo-traditional one which has focused the debates on custom and its use and manipulation. Understanding the ways in which Timothy Chawinga shaped the place of Hewe, in collusion with, and counter to, colonial forces forms the major part of this work. Using the notion of locality as the main spatial framework, rather than state, it is easier to observe the techniques that Timothy Chawinga employed to enable his rule over this territory.

Acknowledging that whilst there are commonalities within the colonial chieftaincy there are also “important variations in [their] functional and territorial scope, legitimacy, and embeddedness”, these include “differences attributable to preexisting forms of political authority [...] such as lineage structure, land tenure relations, and religion”.¹⁴⁶ A holder of a chiefly title will always, therefore, depend upon a combination of sources of authority - spiritual, moral, economic – and most tend to rely more on one source than another. The space in which one accumulates authority, and active exploitation of the opportunities which this space offers, also matters greatly to the success of a chief.

In the context of an uneven colonial administration, Chawinga established and enhanced his own position. He did this through writing and performing “the” local historical narrative, by developing a strong local identity in contrast to other neighbouring localities, through contesting territorial boundaries, asserting control over and exploiting natural resources, and maintaining strong regional economic and social ties; together these all had the effect of spatially concentrating and reinforcing the institutional structure and geographical boundaries of the Katumbi’s Chieftainship. He was in a strong position to contribute significantly to the dialogue between textual and physical space that produced the hegemonic constructions of native authority boundaries. Building this locality and being able to assert territoriality over it enabled new path ways for Chawinga to accumulate wealth and power. His was an authority that was set very definitely in territorial terms.

Unlike some of the Native Authority chiefs more well-known to the Malawian historiography the freedom Chawinga had to act within the area under his jurisdiction was considerable. The lack of obvious economic opportunities for the government – on account of the seemingly poor connectivity of the Hewe Valley within the colony – and the low political threat it posed to the regime with Chawinga at the helm,¹⁴⁷ all contributed to the need for only a limited interaction with colonial agents. Chawinga regularly fulfilled the somewhat limited expectations which the government had of him, and with these most basic of boxes ticked they left his area relatively un-examined. This comparative independence combined with Hewe’s position as a border-zone comprising strong regional connections to people and markets in Northern Rhodesia were major factors contributing to Chawinga’s more successful money-making and power-accumulating activities. Whilst he did take advantage of the position which the state enabled to use tradition and custom, perhaps most important was his ability to build his authority through a material exploitation of his land; this had not been a main pathway to power in the past. The fact that Native Authority chiefs contested borders and boundaries in ways their forebears had never considered useful speaks to how the transition from wealth in people to wealth in land was already well under way.

Part four. Methodology and sources

Historiography and sources

That this story is a detailed local study comes as a result of an early commitment to collecting oral historical knowledge and doing situational analysis in “the field”. Whilst the more usual archival research was undertaken over the course of eight months in Malawi and Zambia, as well as London and Edinburgh, seven months of fieldwork in northern Malawi formed a critical aspect of the data collection. During this time over 120 interviews were conducted, most of which took place in the vernacular language of the region, Chitumbuka. Research assistants helped to locate and conduct these semi-structured exchanges and some of the informants were visited two or three times during the fieldwork period. The recording of people’s life histories was an aspect of the research which built up a general picture of the struggles, both quotidian and extraordinary, that were experienced in Hewe. The contribution of these discussions is reflected in the general picture, as well as the specific quotations, painted in this thesis.

Oral historical methodologies are not, however, without their problems. In fact it quickly became clear that the *processes* behind the production of knowledge which was taking place in the encounter between researcher and informant, and in the context of local political tensions about chiefly successions, were more interesting to analyse than the oral texts themselves. As chiefs and headmen told their clan histories it became clear how important the performative element was in producing authority; something which became a key aspect underlying the argument of this thesis. Aside from the empirical information collected during the interviews, which is central to the analysis, the time spent in Hewe was enlightening in a variety of other ways. As Moore and Vaughan emphasized in their study of the Bemba in Zambia, everyday “practices” are revealing in what they can tell us about the ways Africans constitute their own agency. Furthermore, spending an extended period of time in the place one writes about enables the location of structures of feeling, geographical insight, as well as visceral understanding of distance and landscape that cannot be found in written accounts.

The written source material was found mostly in archives. In the Public Records Office in London Colonial and Foreign Office files were consulted, and in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh relevant papers from the Livingstonia Mission held in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) archive were read. It was, however, in Malawi and to a lesser extent Zambia, where the majority of written material was consulted. The Malawi National Archives hold the provincial and district records which were central to the “discovery” of Timothy Chawinga and the administrative context in which he ruled as Chief Katumbi. Archived newspapers, colonial information pamphlets and vernacular literature were also available here, as well as some additional material from missionaries and leading African nationalists. Material from the post-colonial period was less well catalogued and therefore proved harder to consistently find but it was an insightful source of information about the Malawi Congress Party government nevertheless. Potentially important missing files, from the late colonial period, were lost through fire and insect infestation and others had been misfiled or removed. Statistical records were patchy and the absence of local court records, a possible casualty of these unfortunate circumstances, disabled certain pathways of knowledge about the chieftaincy of Chawinga.

The limited historiography on northern Malawi posed its own challenges. Much excellent history has been written on the region; the work of John McCracken, Owen Kalinga, Joey Power, Leroy Vail and Wapu Mulwafu, has contributed in a wide variety of ways to understanding the economic and political changes that took place in this area over the past

couple of hundred years. There is no doubt, however, that the emphasis on political nationalism, the impact of labour migration and the role of the Scottish missionaries, have remained the most common research concerns. The legacy of Hasting Banda's thirty year rule on the production of knowledge in the country must be mentioned. With access to the archives tightly controlled and the development of Malawian academics severely hampered during this time it is clear that historians of Malawi faced many difficulties; this has had an impact on the breadth and depth of the historiography. This can be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity for new researchers. A challenge because one has to orient oneself in a field with fewer reference points, but a definite opportunity in as much as the wealth of subjects and sources that remain unearthed and untapped enable truly original histories to be written; histories which can challenge the chronological and geographical orthodoxies that have framed the historiography for so long.

The boundaries of research

Before going on to discuss what this thesis hopes to challenge in its own way, it is perhaps important to indicate what is not addressed, and why. Regrettably a more rigorously gendered approach to chiefly power will not be found within these pages. On reflection this is possibly one of its most glaring of faults, especially given the embedded patriarchal nature of both pre-colonial and colonial chiefly institutions, but it is one that to adequately redress would require rebooting the whole project. Gender *has* to be applied from the outset: to run through data collection methods, to fashion questions, and to rethink categories of analysis. Such a perspective would likely have rendered visible many aspects of chiefly power and authority that could have informed perspectives on: the relationship between Chawinga and the livelihood strategies of his people; the social and economic implications of Chawinga's own interpretations of "customary law"; and the varying extent of authority which Chawinga extended over the household level and how this changed over time. As such new conclusions about the daily struggles of people, especially women, and how these struggles interact with and inform chiefly authority could have been reached. That said there are crucial threads throughout the work that indicate the importance of women in shaping Chawinga's continuing authority. That he tried to assert power over his rivals through attempting to gain control over their wives is telling; furthermore, the gendered responses given to questions about his leadership highlight the fact that the "commoners" of Hewe cannot be understood as one homogenous group.

As has been mentioned, local court records exist for only the first few years of Chawinga's leadership. Since these constitute one of the most regularly tapped sources for understanding the relationship between the institutionalized patriarchal authority of chiefs and the women under their jurisdiction this has been a disappointing discovery. Chanock's still unsurpassed survey of customary law and social order in colonial Malawi and Zambia shows in some detail how people used native authority courts, which were by no means all powerful during the colonial period. With "a lack of ability to enforce judgement of civil compensation" as well as "the co-existence of unofficial courts both in village and town",¹⁴⁸ the decision which many made to take a case to these courts is intriguing. It is shown again and again that when it came to the control of women, at a time when traditional structures of social order were being transformed in the colonial economy and "a foreign legalized form of defining and enforcing rights was becoming dominant",¹⁴⁹ these courts were used by large numbers. Court fees did not deter those bringing cases of matrimonial breakdown in particular as people could see that they could benefit from having "these kinds of rights enforced in this way".¹⁵⁰

These examples have illustrated how members of the African patriarchal elite allied with colonial officials in order to establish “a mode of control of women and marriage suited to new conditions”.¹⁵¹ The way in which this was done, through the “criminalization of adultery and the legalization of customary marriage”,¹⁵² certainly had implications for the ways in which local authorities could control domestic reproduction. As would be expected the court records that do exist are overwhelmingly concerned with marital disputes in Hewe too. A closer reading of a set of data over a longer period of time from Chawinga’s native courts could possibly have shown some more specific ways in which he used customary law to his advantage; or indeed present cases where less powerful actors, especially women, were able to wrestle some control themselves.

It was an early decision to spend time looking at the pre-colonial institutions in the region; thinking before and beyond the colonial timeframe has been crucial to this research and the understanding of chiefly authority it enables. Looking beyond the nation state boundaries was also paramount to this study of what amounts to a border-zone chieftaincy. The fieldwork undertaken for this thesis made a definite start by collecting oral narratives and written sources from the Zambian as well as the Malawian side of the border, however the merest of scratches revealed how much more needs to be done in this regard. Clan histories from chiefly families located across the border in Malambo and Muyombe need to be more rigorously collected, and a fuller investigation into the economic and social connections between these communities and those in Hewe would add great richness to the ongoing debates about colonial chieftaincy in southern Africa more generally.

Inevitably there are leads which one gets in the process of research which are not followed up on, either due to a lack of time or as a consequence of limited evidence. The life histories of individuals around Timothy Chawinga – his councillors, the messengers, the local African agricultural assistants and tax collectors – were tantalizing in the depth that they might have brought to discussions around the daily practice of power in Hewe. The voices of these characters were difficult to find, though perhaps a more dogged pursuit would have produced results. The personal and professional relationships between Chawinga and other chiefs in Malawi, especially Mwase and Kyungu were not given as much attention as they ought to have been. Neither were the contributions of the educated and politically minded individuals in Hewe excavated as extensively as they might have been, especially the background of the first Members of Parliament from the area Mikeka Mkandawire and Levi Kaleya. More attention paid to these people would have bridged the discussion between the struggles of the general population in Hewe and the ambitions of political elites.

Whilst the history of Chawinga’s chieftaincy has been built up through the examination of normal peoples’ everyday experiences, the choices and decisions these people made as individuals, and as members of households, do not take centre stage in this thesis. That is not to say that they are not vitally important to understanding the practice of colonial chieftaincy, after all what is a chief without people? It has been made clear throughout that the economic strategies of the people of Hewe and the reproduction of their labour are strongly linked to the production of chiefly power; furthermore, the impact of the international labour migration economy on structures of local authority have, hopefully, been sufficiently acknowledged. However, the emphasis of this work has been intentionally put on the dynamics of the local regional political economy and the role of chieftaincy within it.

Part five. Outline of the thesis

The first chapter outlines the pre-colonial landscapes of authority in northern Malawi. By considering the changes that took place before the colonial and post-colonial period within the societies that the thesis is concerned, the chieftainship of the fifteenth Katumbi, Timothy “Kamangilira” Chawinga, is placed within a deeper time-scale. Historical relationships with other authorities in the region are highlighted as are the motifs of authority on which Chawinga draws to assemble his own claims to the past.

Chapter two will deal more explicitly with the early colonial period when territories were forged. It will probe the processes behind the delineation of colonial geographies, especially the creation of native authorities in northern Nyasaland. It will examine the relationship between textual and physical space and the extent to which chiefs were able to involve themselves in the dialogue which produced these new territories. Whilst recognising that colonial visions of territorial space were hegemonic the chapter will investigate the voices of Africans in Hewe who were sometimes able to appropriate these visions for their own benefit. By mastering the language and tools of colonial territoriality – the commissions, reports and surveys, as well as the formulaic demarcation of tribes and ethnicities – the Katumbi chieftaincy, under the leadership of Dukamayere I, had the opportunity of struggling for and eventually shaping the territory over which it became Native Authority.

Chapter three will discuss the local and national political context surrounding Timothy Chawinga’s crowning as Themba Katumbi Kamangilira. It will establish a sense of why the timing of his ascent was crucial to his success and will introduce one of the central ideas of this thesis: that by observing national policy changes alone, or by focusing on the chief solely as “Native Authority”, one cannot get a sense of how varied chiefs’ position and roles could be. Whilst national policy had some bearing on what was expected from them it did not create the same framework of opportunity for everyone, and likewise local conditions had the effect of producing different expressions of indirect rule chief. By unsettling assumptions about the central role of the state in producing local authority chapter three will use Timothy’s story to probe: the uneven nature of local government reform; the importance of constructing local narratives of legitimacy even in the context of indirect rule; and the use by Chawinga of various non-chiefly sources of authority available to him.

Chapter four tracks the relationship between the exploitation of agricultural resources and the accumulation of chiefly power; something that this thesis argues played a key factor in differentiating the position of native authority chiefs. Coinciding with a period of development after the Second World War, it will be argued that Chawinga’s early leadership was impacted upon significantly by the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1945 and 1949. This period of administration, often referred to as the “second colonial occupation” on account of the resolve on the part of the British Colonial Office to refocus its efforts in Africa, saw a huge investment in production. This new focus on environmental control and agricultural reform, and the attendant increase in resources and training through initiatives such as the Natural Resources Board and the Native Welfare Development Fund that came with it, saw new opportunities emerge for native authority chiefs to grow their authority. These reforms and interactions enabled local leaders such as Timothy Chawinga new ways of extracting and increasing their power in the local context. However, these opportunities did not always get

translated in successful ways; it will be argued that the presence of a thriving regional and cross border food market which gave a certain amount of autonomy from the state ensured that Chawinga had more chance of doing this than some of his fellow native authorities.

Chapter five will concentrate on how Chawinga managed to contain the challenges to his leadership in the run up to independence whilst chiefs around him struggled to do the same during the eventful decade of the 1950s; and how he negotiated his way through the myriad political alliances each promising to protect the future of native authorities in an independent Malawi. It was not necessarily chiefs' interactions with national level politicians that would see their future secured though, the ways in which a chief performed his role in the eyes of his people at this time of political "crisis" could have a significant impact on his future legitimacy. Furthermore, his ability to guarantee secure livelihoods at this time was of much greater significance to the colonial government than his political views. In light of this it will be shown that dividing chiefs into "nationalists" and "stooges" is neither helpful nor insightful.

Chapter six will put forward the argument that what happened between Timothy Chawinga and the local Malawi Congress Party faithful at this time of political transition, and in the early years of independence was absolutely crucial in determining how his relationship with the postcolonial state and its leadership would be shaped. It is through this lens of analysis that the shifting fortunes of Chawinga will be examined, rather than simply through the changes which were taking place at the national level. Having thrived within the colonial framework, where a new territorial politics enabled Chawinga to grow in personal wealth and power, certain of the new challenges he faced as the opportunity for other individuals to increase their influence will be confronted, and his responses examined. This chapter will conclude by considering the consequences of Hewe's transformation from peripheral "border zone", with little attention being paid to it, to that of crucial "border post", a key check point in the war against Hastings Banda's political rivals and unwelcome neighbours.

¹ The Nyasaland Protectorate was a British colony created in 1907. It was formerly administered by the British South Africa Company which had taken control of the area, and consequently from 1891 known as the British Central African Protectorate, after the British Foreign Office took control of it.

² The role played by Timothy Chawinga at this time is not entirely clear as there are many different stories that describe his orders and instructions at this time. Some remember that Chawinga "listened to the people but did not show his actions directly as he was also part of the government. He told people not to break bridges and block roads because they will suffer in the future if they do", Interview Mary Davies [hereafter MD] with Lyton Karua, Mgugu village, 23 January 2009. Others remember, however, that it was Chawinga himself who had ordered the disruption of the areas roads and bridges (see Interview MD with Samson Mumba, Chipofya Village, 27 January 2009, and MD with David Chawinga and Principal Group Village Headman Mikule, Mikule Village, 16 January 2009).

³ "Soldiers were coming from South Africa and Zimbabwe and came straight to chiefs asking who the party leaders were. Chiefs were showing who were the party leaders and then they were arrested". Interview MD with Jato Kawonga, Nguwoyang'ombe village, 29 January 2009.

⁴ Interview MD with NyaGondwe, Yiteta village, 10 January 2009

⁵ Interview MD with Acting Village Headman Thanila, Godwin Chawinga, 16 January 2009

⁶ Interview MD with Norman Chawinga, Yiteta village, 21 January 2009

⁷ Personal communication with Joey Power and Owen Kalinga, 21 November 2010

⁸ Many other interviews brought up this motif. During an informal discussion between the author and Dickson Mzumara on 10 January 2009, he said that Chawinga had remained in the office saying: "shoot me".

⁹ O. J. M. Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland State of Emergency', *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36:4 (2010), 743-763

¹⁰ Interview MD with Lyton Karua

¹¹ Timothy Chawinga recalls his arrest and imprisonment overnight in Mzuzu in some personal reflections that he had written sometime in the 1990s. This document is currently in the possession of his son, Norman Chawinga of Yiteta Village, Hewe.

¹² O. J. M. Kalinga, 'Resistance, Politics of Protest, and Mass Nationalism in Colonial Malawi, 1950-1960. A Reconsideration', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 36:143 (1996), 443-454

¹³ H. Rangan, 'State economic policies and changing regional landscapes in the Uttarakhand Himalaya, 1818-1947', in A. Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan (eds.) *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representation and Rule in India*, (Durham, 2000), 24

¹⁴ D. Cosgrove, 'Landscape and Landschaft: a lecture delivered at the "spatial turn in history" symposium at the German Historical Institute, February 19 2004', published in *GHI Bulletin*, 35 (Fall 2004), 57-71, 57

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ U. Engel and P. Nugent, 'Introduction: the spatial turn in African studies', in U. Engel and P. Nugent (eds.), *Respacing Africa* (Leiden, 2010), 3-6; see also Howard, A. M., "Actors, places, regions and global forces: an essay on the spatial history of Africa since 1700," in U. Engel and P. Nugent (eds.), *Respacing Africa* (Leiden, 2010)

¹⁷ F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa* (London and Edinburgh, 1922)

¹⁸ T. Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, 1983); L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991); M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and The Legacy of Colonialism*, (New Jersey, 1996); T. Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism and the limits of invention in British Colonial Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 44:1 (2003), 3-27

¹⁹ S. Berry, 'Hegemony on a shoestring: indirect rule and access to agricultural land', in *Africa*, 62:3 (1992), 327-355, 329

²⁰ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 4

²¹ J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (New Jersey, 2002), 21

²² Herbst, *States*, 43

²³ Much work has been done on the geographical reshaping and mapping of Africa; including; Stone, *Maps and Africa* (1994); *The spatial factor in African history : the relationship of the social, material, and perceptual / ed. by Allen M. Howard and Richard M. Shain* (2005); C. Gray, *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa* (2002); G. C. Mazarire, 'Changing Landscape and Oral Memory in South-Central Zimbabwe: Towards a Historical Geography of Chishanga, c. 1850-1990', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29:3 (2003), 701-715; On non-specific geographical places Robert David Sack's *Human Territoriality* (Cambridge, 1986) remains an excellent contribution to the secondary literature.

²⁴ Engel and Nugent, 'Introduction', 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6

²⁶ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 110

²⁷ A. von Oppen, 'A place in the world: markers of the local along the Upper Zambezi', in P. Probst and G. Spittler (eds.), *Between Resistance and Expansion: Explorations of Local Vitality in Africa* (Münster, 2004), 188

²⁸ W. Beinart, 'Production and the Material Basis of Chieftaincy: Pondoland 1830-1880', in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, 1980), 137

²⁹ B. Chinsinga, 'The interface between tradition and modernity: the struggle for political space at the local level in Malawi', in *Civilisations*, 54 (2006), 255-274, 271

³⁰ *Ibid.* 264

³¹ S. Berry, 'Debating the land question in Africa', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44:4 (2002), 638-668, 644; see M. Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge, 1985) for a lengthier discussion on this.

³² Berry, 'Debating' 645

³³ *Ibid.*, 659

³⁴ P. Peters, 'Challenges in Land Tenure and Land Reform in Africa: An Anthropological Perspective', *CID Working Paper No. 141*, Harvard University, March 2007, 3

³⁵ Chinsinga, 'The interface' 262

³⁶ Von Oppen, 'A place', 187: As an elite who had a particular interest in using the territorial model to his advantage, this study about the chieftainship of Timothy Chawinga will mainly ponder his use of territoriality in the Hewe Valley. However, in many places, especially where the population at large was able and desirous of the opportunity, non-territorial concepts of space – be they linear or concentric – continued to be of significance in ordering peoples' lives

³⁷ Added to the tensions formulated within the local political milieu was the fact that by the 1940s the colonial economy was beginning to have some effects which countered the logic of indirect rule. Labour migration, fast becoming the most important exit strategy for many Malawians from rural poverty and increasing agricultural obligations imposed by the colonial regime, was taking highly productive people out of the village economy and at the same time withdrawing them "from the moral and physical authority of the customary order". See K.E. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (New Jersey, 1985), 73

³⁸ Herbst, *States*, 95-96. In this sense, and as Herbst argues persuasively, the colonial state reproduced certain pre-colonial strategies of governance which were non-hegemonic.

³⁹ C. Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial authority and institutional choice*, (Cambridge, 2003), 37

⁴⁰ Von Oppen, 'A place', 188

⁴¹ Sack, *Human Territoriality*, 19

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19

⁴³ A. von Oppen, 'The village as territory: enclosing locality in northwest Zambia, 1950s to 1990s', *Journal of African History*, 47:1 (2006), 57-75: Territory is a particular construction of space, based on geographical surface, surrounded and effectively defined by a continuous boundary that divides a supposedly homogeneous inside from an utterly different outside. "Modern territoriality [...] conceives of territory not as a stand-alone entity but as embedded in a seamless system of other territories equally defined".

⁴⁴ Von Oppen, 'A place', 178

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 188

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 178-179

⁴⁷ A. Appadurai, 'The production of locality', in R. Fardon (ed.), *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, (London and New York, 1995), 211

⁴⁸ Boone, *Political Topographies*, pp. 20-33. She gives a political dimension to the opportunities which this "distance" from the centre can create, showing that rural elites do not, or cannot, act uniformly. Indeed, those who do not appropriate their own share of the rural surplus directly, and rely instead on state intermediation to extract and take advantage of this wealth, are clearly more likely to be interested in aligning with new regimes. Those who are able to appropriate their own share of rural surplus directly are more able to position themselves as competitors to new regimes, in a fight over division of the rural surplus.

⁴⁹ Appadurai, 'The production', 211

⁵⁰ Authority is not only negotiated, it has a direction; the room to enlarge ones authority can be found be going either toward the colonial power or toward the people.

⁵¹ R. Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: the politics of chieftaincy in Ghana 1951-1960* (Oxford, 2000), page

⁵² J. Tosh, *Clan leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society c.1800-1939*, (Oxford, 1978), 1

⁵³ M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems*, (London, 1940); M. Gluckman, 'Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand', *Bantu Studies* 14 (1940), 1-30; A. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An economic study of the Bemba Tribe*, (London, 1939); G. and M. Wilson, *The Study of African Society*, (Lusaka, 1939).

⁵⁴ M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Introduction', in M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.), *African Political Systems*, (London, 1940), 1

⁵⁵ The invention of tradition debate is of course the most prominent, and long running. The most seminal contributors to this debate have been: T. Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, 1983); M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and The Legacy of Colonialism*, (New Jersey, 1996)

⁵⁶ Indirect Rule was institutionalised in Nyasaland in 1933 under the Native Administration Ordinance (NAO).

⁵⁷ W. MacGaffey, 'On the moderate usefulness of modes of production', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 19:1 (1985), 51-57, 52, author's emphasis.

⁵⁸ Tosh, *Clan leaders*, 7

- ⁵⁹ E. Colson, "Defining 'the Manchester School of Anthropology'", in *Current Anthropology*, 49:2 (2008), 335-337; amongst those who took this approach included the director of the new school of anthropology at Manchester University Max Gluckman, a scholar who had previously been the influential director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Zambia. The most famous works from this time come from several scholars who had worked with Gluckman at the RLI and later in Manchester. Victor Turner's *Schism and Continuity in an African Community* (Manchester, 1957); J. Clyde Mitchell's *The Yao Village: A Study in the Social Structure of a Malawian people* (Manchester, 1956); W. Watson, *Tribal cohesion in a money economy: a study of the Mambwe people of Zambia*, (Manchester, 1958); J. Van Velsen, *The Politics of Kinship: A Study in Social Manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga of Nyasaland*, (Manchester, 1964)
- ⁶⁰ MacGaffey, 'On the moderate usefulness', 52
- ⁶¹ A. Eckert, " 'A showcase for experiments': local government reforms in colonial Tanzania, 1940s and 1950s", in *Afrika Spectrum*, 34:2 (1999), 213-235
- ⁶² J. Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha* (New York, 2010), 55
- ⁶³ See Herbst, *States*. He describes this as being done primarily through maps, surveys and ethnographic explorations.
- ⁶⁴ Eckert, " 'A showcase'
- ⁶⁵ J. Willis, 'Hukm : the creolization of authority in Condominium Sudan', *Journal of African history*, 46:1 (2005), 29-50, 29
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 29
- ⁶⁷ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 5
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5
- ⁶⁹ Tosh, *Clan leaders*, 7
- ⁷⁰ Eckert, 'A showcase', 217
- ⁷¹ M. Wright, 'Legitimacy and Democratization in Northernmost Zambia, 1950-1960', paper presented at the *University of Witwatersrand History Workshop*, 13-15 July 1994, 9
- ⁷² Lefebvre devised this understanding to re-examine the notion of "space" (H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, 1991), 81); I am using this perspective to rethink the institution of chieftaincy.
- ⁷³ C. Lund, 'Twilight institutions: public authority and local politics in Africa', in *Development and Change*, 37:4 (2006), 685-705, 693
- ⁷⁴ C. Lentz, 'The chief, the mine captain and the politician: legitimating power in northern Ghana', in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 68:1 (1998), 46-67, 47
- ⁷⁵ Lund, 'Twilight', 690-91
- ⁷⁶ J. Bayart, *The State in Africa: Politics of the Belly*, (London and New York, 1993), 252
- ⁷⁷ S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*, (Madison, 1990). Feierman discusses how peasants draw upon past forms of political language and transform it into new political discourse.
- ⁷⁸ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 4
- ⁷⁹ Lentz, 'The chief', 59
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 61
- ⁸¹ Herbst, *States*; the "broadcast" of power is a term which Herbst employs throughout his book.
- ⁸² J. L. Comaroff, 'Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa', in F. Cooper and Stoler, A. L., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), 184, quoted in C. J. Lee, 'Colonial Kinships: The British Dual Mandate, Anglo-African Status, and the Politics of Race and Ethnicity in Inter-War Nyasaland, 1915-1939', unpublished Ph.D thesis, (Stanford, 2003), 19
- ⁸³ MNA, NN 1/20/3, Address by Barker President of Northern Province African Protectorate Council, 4 May 1948
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ L. White and L. Vail, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi", in L. Vail (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in southern Africa* (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), 152
- ⁸⁶ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875 - 1940: The impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, (Blantyre, 2nd edition 2000), 40
- ⁸⁷ Power, 12
- ⁸⁸ W. O. Mulwafu, *Conservation Song: A history of peasant-state relations and the environment in Malawi, 1860-2000*, (Cambridge, 2011), 147
- ⁸⁹ White and Vail, 'Tribalism', 167
- ⁹⁰ C. J. Lee, 'Colonial Kinships: The British Dual Mandate, Anglo-African Status, and the Politics of Race and Ethnicity in Inter-War Nyasaland, 1915-1939', Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 2003, 20

⁹¹ Power, 13

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Lee, 'Colonial Kinships', 19. This understanding of the Nyasaland economy is an idea developed and discussed at greater length in H. L. Vail, "The making of an imperial slum: Nyasaland and its railways, 1895–1935." *The Journal of African History*, 16:1 (1975), 89-112

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Power, 13

⁹⁷ Lee, 'Colonial Kinships', 19

⁹⁸ G. Shepperson and T. Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the origins, setting and significance of the Nyasaland native rising of 1915*. (Edinburgh, 1958); L. White, *Magomero: a portrait of an African Village* (Cambridge, 1989); and D.D. Phiri, *Let us die for Africa: an African perspective on the life and death of John Chilembwe of Nyasaland*. (Blantyre, 1999).

⁹⁹ White and Vail, "Tribalism", 167

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 147

¹⁰² White and Vail, "Tribalism", c.f. Lee, 'Colonial Kinships', 2

¹⁰³ R. Rathbone, 'Kwame Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Fate of 'Natural Rulers' under Nationalist Governments', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6:10 (2000), 45-63, 57

¹⁰⁴ G. Carswell, 'Multiple Historical Geographies: responses and resistance to colonial conservation schemes in East Africa' in *Journal of Historical Geographies*, 32 (2006), 398-421, 398

¹⁰⁵ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 2

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-4

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2

¹⁰⁸ Malawi National Archives (MNA hereafter), NN 1/20/1, *African Provincial Council Meeting minutes, 1944-1946*, Copy of proceedings from African Provincial Council Meeting, Mzimba 6-12 November 1945, sent from PC Northern Province to Chief Secretary, 17 January 1946

¹⁰⁹ First discussed by D.A Low and J.M Lonsdale, 'Introduction: towards a new order 1945-63', in D.A Low and A. Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, Vol. III, (Oxford, 1976) ; see also E. Green, 'A lasting story: conservation and agricultural extension services in colonial Malawi', *Journal of African History*, 50:2 (2009), 247-267 for a discussion about the limitations of this periodisation and the perceived 'step-change' which has commonly been come to known as 'the second colonial occupation'.

¹¹⁰ G. Carswell, *Cultivating Success in Uganda: Kigezi Farmers and Colonial Policies* (Oxford, Kampala, Ohio, 2007), 3

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25

¹¹² E. C. Mandala, *Capitalism, Ecology and Society: The Lower Tchiri (Shire) Valley of Malawi, 1860-1960*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, (The University of Minnesota, 1983), 254

¹¹³ J. Pottier, 'The Politics of Famine Prevention: ecology, regional production and food complementarity in western Rwanda', *African Affairs*, 85:339 (1986), 231, quoted in Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 26

¹¹⁴ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 26

¹¹⁵ Mandala, *Capitalism*, 222

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 233

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233

¹¹⁸ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 33; (MNA), Transmittal files 3-12-4F, Box 9564, *Ulendo West Rumpi*: 6th March 1960, "Went to Mwachibanda and the Themba came too. Came back in the rain leaving Themba to hold a political meeting in a church (nobody was so tactless as to MENTION it; I only hope I didn't turn a blind eye too obviously)".

¹¹⁹ H.L. Vail, 'Religion, language, and the tribal myth: the Tumbuka and Chewa of Malawi', in J.M Schoffeleers (ed.) *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults*, (Gweru, 1979). In Chewa areas, for example, Vail asserts one such difference was that Chewa chiefs ruled over more defined areas and most chiefdoms "possessed the *nyau* closed society, an institution which is interpreted [...] as being aligned with local interests in balance against the interests of the central authorities", 216

¹²⁰ (MNA) NN 4/1/21, *Rumpi District Annual Report*, observation made by DC Cosmo Haskard, 8 February 1952

¹²¹ These ideas discussed by Lund are based on Mary Douglas' work. See Lund, 'Twilight institutions', 691

¹²² "Ideas of state and icons of modernity may be drawn upon, but also opposite ideas of tradition, identity and locality may equally convey legitimacy to what are essentially emerging institutions", Lund, 'Twilight institutions', 691

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- ¹²³ A. Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society*, (Chicago and London, 1992), 75
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 94
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 74
- ¹²⁶ J.C Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven and London, 1998)
- ¹²⁷ Understanding his motivations and ambitions, however, is less easy.
- ¹²⁸ A. Harneit-Sievers (ed.), *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia*, (Leiden, 2002), 13
- ¹²⁹ W. van Schendel, 'Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20:6 (2002), 647 – 668, 658
- ¹³⁰ See E. Swyngedouw, "Excluding the other: the production of scale and scaled politics," in R. Lee and Wills, J., (eds.) *Geographies of economies* (London, 1997), 169, quoted in van Schendel, 'Geographies of knowing', 658; see also Appadurai's discussion on the move from "trait" to "process" geographies, also quoted in van Schendel, 658.
- ¹³¹ Von Oppen, 'A place', 180
- ¹³² *Ibid.*, 186
- ¹³³ Von Oppen, 'The village', 61; Appadurai, 'The production', 211
- ¹³⁴ Appadurai, 'The production', 210
- ¹³⁵ In other words, "a geographical region, an area that can be pointed out on the globe", (van Schendel, 'Geographies' 658
- ¹³⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 82-83
- ¹³⁷ Appadurai, 'The production', 213
- ¹³⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26
- ¹³⁹ The Royal Family's genealogy is predictably confusing and contested. The number of "legitimate" royal clans range from three to five. The complexity of these shifting family dynamics are discussed in chapters two and three.
- ¹⁴⁰ Von Oppen, 'A place', 178
- ¹⁴¹ Appadurai, 'The production', 205-225; this is really an extension of the idea that national history is important in constructing nationhood.
- ¹⁴² Lund, 'Twilight institutions', 695
- ¹⁴³ Harneit-Sievers, *A Place in the World*, 15
- ¹⁴⁴ Fields, *Revival*, 55
- ¹⁴⁵ Von Oppen, 'A place in the world', 180
- ¹⁴⁶ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 27
- ¹⁴⁷ Chawinga had proven himself as a consistent and neutral leader; subsequent chapters will confirm this as they describe the lack of boycotting in the area, and the general compliance of people in cooperating with his rules and orders.
- ¹⁴⁸ M. Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: the colonial experience in Malawi and Zambia*, (Cambridge, 1985), 123
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 124
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 210
- ¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 214

CHAPTER 1

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

Part one. Pre-Colonial Landscapes

Hewe before the Balowoka: ecology, people and politics

The Hewe Valley lies in the western most part of what is today Rumphu District, a predominantly Tumbuka locality in the northern region of Malawi. In pre-colonial times this area formed part of a “healthy tsetse-free land bridge that [...] functioned as a natural funnel of people into the hospitable highlands of Malawi”;¹ this “Tumbuka-Zone” welcomed a variety of people, over a long period of time, from southern Tanzania and north-eastern Zambia and developed a distinct character which was quite different from Tumbuka areas to the south, both in terms of inheritance, settlement patterns and, indeed, structures of authority.² It is generally agreed³ that before the arrival of a group of traders-turned-chiefs known as the *Balowoka*⁴, the communities that lived here were, whilst unified by language, pretty fragmented. Vail infers that the physical landscape itself accounts for both the nature of settlement and the structures of religious authority to be found there:

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

Whilst Chondoka asserts that there existed a wider Tumbuka Kingdom from as early as 1460,⁶ under the “chieftainship” of M’nyanjagha, there is no strong evidence to be found in Hewe amongst the earliest known occupants⁷ that they gave tribute to an authority elsewhere, or indeed that they had allegiances other than to their own clan.⁸ Regardless of whether there had existed some wider structure of organisation amongst the Tumbuka in the past, by the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the influence of the caravan trade was making its presence felt in this region, no political or economic polity of any note was in evidence.⁹ Furthermore any wider influence a central figure such as the M’nyanjagha King, as Chondoka would have it, could have exercised would certainly have been swallowed up in the new economic landscape that was emerging. A landscape where experience of trade and contact with coastal markets, which the *Balowoka* had, were the decisive factors in determining who would wield both economic and political power in the future.

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

that there was already much interaction and interdependence between the Tumbuka, Bisa, Bemba, Lakeshore Tonga and Nkonde.¹⁰ Whilst it is commonly narrated that it was the groups of *Balowoka* who had first brought hoes into the area¹¹ there is much oral and archaeological evidence to suggest that people already cultivated their land with Phoka, and sometimes Chewa, hoes which they exchanged goats, chickens or sometimes maize for, and even that they had begun to use these precious iron tools as a form of bridewealth.¹² Furthermore the Tumbuka living in this area were also not completely ignorant as to the value of ivory, as some have suggested that they were. Official narratives state that when Katumbi arrived in the area around 1770-80 he “found people putting on bark cloth and using ivory as props on which to spread their mats”,¹³ but there is much reason to believe that by this time the Bisa, skilled hunters arriving from the west, had already started collecting ivory from Tumbuka areas.

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

An economic step-change: broader markets and better bargaining

If the people living in the Hewe Valley knew something of the value of these “bones” through their interaction and exchange with Bisa, Chikunda and other groups,¹⁸ to what they had not been yet exposed was a more sophisticated and extensive coastal trade that had been in the process of reviving through the Kilwa route from around 1785.¹⁹ Described often as “coming from ‘the coast’ (*mbwani*)” and “dressing like Arabs” the *Balowoka* group brought with them a different kind of trading mentality, a commercial perspective, and experience from the busy markets in the east.²⁰ Whilst there remains some debate as to whether these migrants came into the areas that they eventually settled specifically as traders or simply as people skilled in trading who had come looking for land on which to stay,²¹ what *is* apparent is that they were able to use this experience to further stimulate, extend, and eventually take control of the ivory trade as it passed through the areas in which they stayed; and to increase their personal wealth and status in doing so. The clan histories which the missionary Thomas Cullen Young collected during the early part of the twentieth century demonstrate that “a marked political change, namely the centralization of power” occurred at this time with the coming of these “strangers”; and that a “reliable” historical tradition emerges only once this settled contact has been made with “the commerce of the coast”.²²

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

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

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

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

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

From Trader Barons to Chiefs

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

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

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

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

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

Oral sources suggest that the presence in the interior of Arab traders, and their representatives, was increasing throughout this time. Remembered as being associated with “Arabs from Mwela”, the Ruga-Ruga are one such example³⁸ who are said to have traded just like them bringing better cloth, “superior” guns, and high quality metal tools.³⁹ Mlozi was said to have used them as his representatives in the interior⁴⁰ and they are often recalled in oral histories as having operated in Hewe.⁴¹ A superiority and sense of confidence that people saw in Katumbi as he dealt with these errant and unpredictable groups is expressed clearly in local sources:

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

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

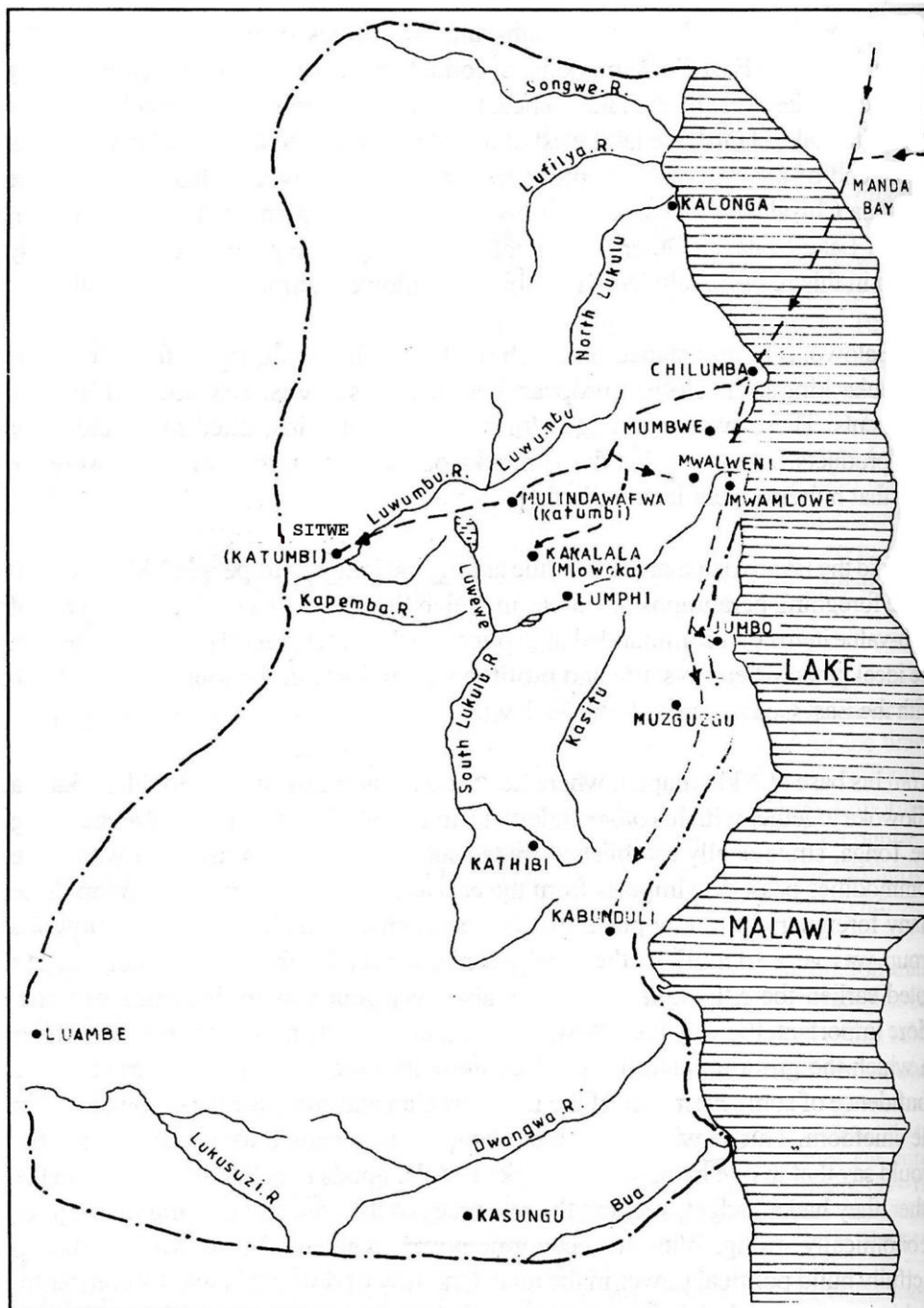
however; it offered new opportunities for accumulation amongst the local people themselves, and new avenues for hierarchies to emerge. This ‘new’ commodity, ivory, enthused a local population into tracking down the source of this wealth for themselves; “classes of professional hunters (*Fundi*) and professional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

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

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

Map 3.

The arrival of the Balowoka in Northern Malawi and Zambia



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

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

It is unlikely, given that this fluidity of territoriality existed, that there could have been one centralised kingdom under the rule of Chikulamayembe as has been claimed by a long list of people beginning with the European missionaries at Livingstonia⁵⁴ and the African elites who informed them, on in to the creators of the history syllabus of high schools in present-day Malawi. Aside from the fact that no common dynastic narratives exist to suggest this anywhere other than in Nkamanga itself, from a purely economic standpoint it is clear to see that the *Balowoka*, whilst certainly interdependent on each other ensuring the safety of goods and people from the other *Balowoka* regions, were each trying to establish their “own economic region from which he ensured the safety of the local trade routes and tapped ivory and other resources for his long-distance trade with the East coast”.⁵⁵

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

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

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

“As far as I know, the Balowoka did not change anything that they found here. Instead they listened to the owners of the land – the Tumbuka.”⁶³

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

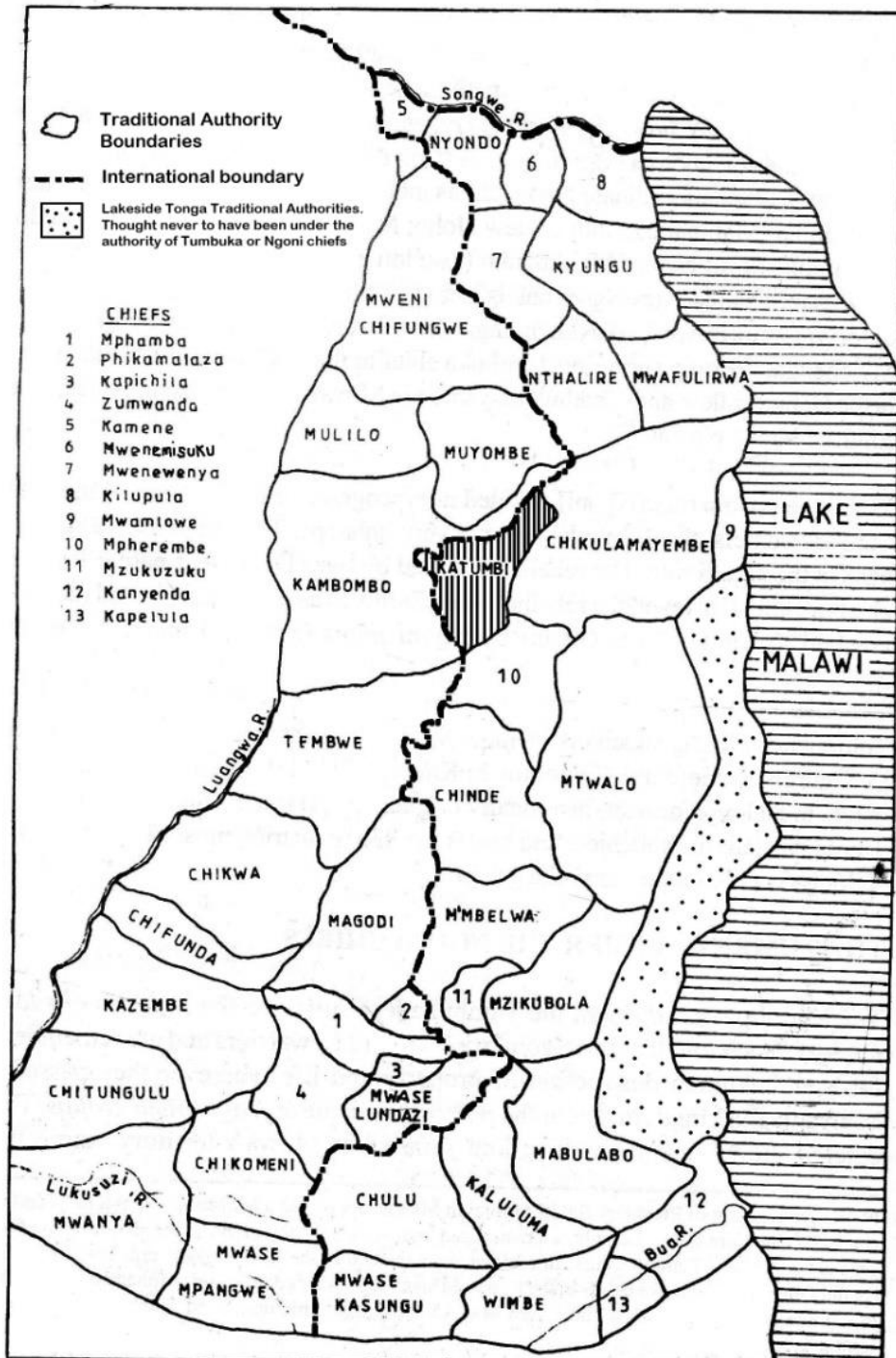
History and Ritual: constructing a place in the landscape

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

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

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

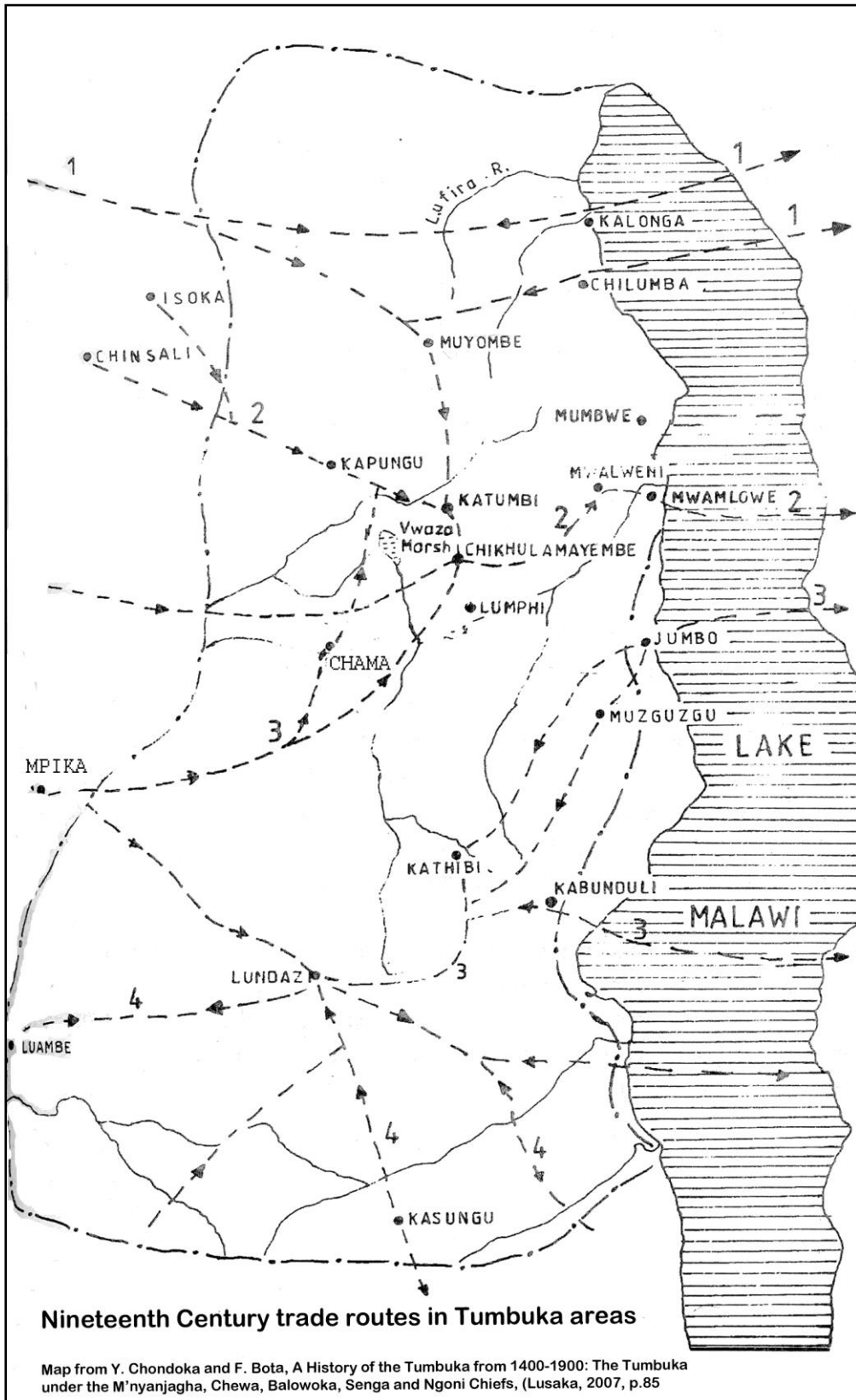
Map 4. Tumbuka influence before the Ngoni invasion



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

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

Map 5



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

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

Divergences and Difference: establishing fault lines in the chiefly narratives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Political tradition as discourse

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

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

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

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

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

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

The chiefly migration narratives and the centrality of various "royal" families which emerge from them have grown increasingly important over time, especially on account of their being privileged by the colonial state. They have become the basis from which people who are fighting over resources and access to land argue their legitimate rights to them. The performance of *Balowoka* chieftainship throughout the colonial period draws continually on these narratives and rituals; for the different chiefdoms throughout this region in northern Malawi the construction, negotiation and renegotiation⁹² of these tools of formal authority signify new ways of competing for resources, land and power.

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

Part two. Debating the raw materials of history

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Vail, ‘Religion’, 213

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ Interview LV with Nthawathawa Zgambo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37

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

²⁷ Interview Vail with Nthawathawa Zgambo

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

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

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

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

³² *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁹ Interview LV with Mwachibanda Munthali

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

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

⁴² Interview LV with Mwachibanda Munthali

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Basambazi* can be translated to mean wealthy, or privileged; see Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 172

⁴⁵ Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 172

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Interview LV with Kabazamawe Cilambo

⁴⁸ See also Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 150-152. Very little has been written on the selling of slaves by the *Balowoka*. The oral evidence suggests opinion is divided over whether or not Katumbi would have allowed the trade to take place within his area but it is likely that he was involved in some way given that “in those days the lives of people were not as important as they are today”. Furthermore “one only had to be suspected of doing evil in a village and that was enough for others to sell him away to the Ruga-Ruga”, Interviews, Vail with V.H. Mwachibanda Munthali, 7 August 1971. Munthali went on to tell Vail that the Arabs [Mlozi, Kopa-Kopa, and Msalemu] came to Utumbuka to buy slaves for which they would give cloth, guns and gunpowder.

⁴⁹ It was the chief who had “a lot of ivory derived from the taxes he collected from his people” so they would mostly interact with Chikulamayembe, Katumbi and other “big chiefs”. Interview LV with Kabazamawe Cilambo

⁵⁰ G. Pourtier, *Le Gabon, Tome 2: Etat et developpement* (Paris, 1989), 307-308 cited in C. Gray, ‘The Disappearing district? Territorial transformation in southern Gabon 1850-1950’ in A. M. Howard and R. M. Shain (eds.) *The spatial factor in African history: the relationship of the social, material, and perceptual* (Leiden, 2005), 240

⁵¹ Gray, ‘The disappearing’, 231-32

⁵² Kalinga, ‘The Balowoka’

⁵³ Gray, ‘The disappearing’, 231-32

⁵⁴ The Livingstonia Mission was established in the Tumbuka Highlands at Khondowe in 1891 after having to relocate away from the lakeshore. Their former mission had proved somewhat of an unhealthy place to live and the high death rate from malaria and other tropical diseases prompted this move. For more on the history of the mission see J. J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province* (2nd edition, Blantyre, 2000)

⁵⁵ Chondoka and Bota, *A History*, 161

⁵⁶ A. Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society*, (Chicago and London, 1992), 89

⁵⁷ Kalinga, ‘The Balowoka’, 36. This is corroborated by many oral sources collected from across Nkamanga and Hewe.

⁵⁸ They also benefitted by seeing their maternal relations rise from being situated in leading families in insignificant polities to become branches of the royal families in states of size, importance and wealth

⁵⁹ Kalinga, ‘The Balowoka’, 49

⁶⁰ Chondoka and Bota, *A History of the Tumbuka*, 169

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² The various priests are noted as: Mwakhaka at Nkamanga; Mwandandambi at Luviri [chikang’ombe]; Mlomboji at Hewe; and Tundururu in Henga. Interview LV with Gondwe, Bongololo, Gondwe, Chilambo

⁶³ Interview LV with Walutundu Luhanga

⁶⁴ A second difference commented upon by Vail between the Chewa and Tumbuka “was that most Chewa chiefdoms possessed the *nyau* closed society, an institution which is interpreted by Schoffeleers as being aligned with local interests in balance against the interests of the central authorities”. H.L. Vail, ‘Religion, Language, and the Tribal Myth: The Tumbuka and Chewa of Malawi’, in J.M. Schoffeleers (ed.) *Guardians of the land: essays on Central African territorial cults* (Blantyre, 2nd edition, 1999), 216.

⁶⁵ For example the Chikang’ombe cult in Nkamanga.

⁶⁶ Vail, ‘Religion’, 224

⁶⁷ Kalinga, ‘The Balowoka’, 49

⁶⁸ J. Tosh, *Clan leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society c.1800-1939*, (Oxford, 1978), 68

⁶⁹ Vail, ‘Religion’, 224

⁷⁰ Vail, ‘Religion’, 226

⁷¹ Controlling the productivity of individual gardens, farming techniques, and advising on the type and variety of crops to plant and when to plant them were responsibilities which were only assumed by Katumbi chiefs from the 1930s onwards.

⁷² S. Berry, ‘Debating the land question in Africa’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44:4 (2002), 638-668, 659

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 37

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

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

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

¹¹⁰ Interview LV with Mwachibanda Munthali

¹¹¹ Interview LV with Timothy Chawinga

¹¹² Vail and White, 'Tribalism', 157

¹¹³ Interview LV with Mcinangubo

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

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

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

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-27

¹¹⁸ Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism', 26

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

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 704

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

¹²² Mazarire, 'Changing Landscape', 704

CHAPTER 2

Infrastructure and Indirect Rule: Constructing the boundaries of political space in northern Malawi, 1904-1943

“What Chikulamaembe says is true. Our forefathers always worked together in the past but, since the Europeans came, things have become difficult”.¹

Introduction

The thirty years running up to the implementation of indirect rule in Nyasaland (1933), and the decade afterwards, was a time in which African societies' relationship to space embarked on an intense period of change. This was a period in which the indigenous economies of northern Malawi were hit hard by ecological disasters such as the rinderpest epizootic, by plague and influenza which wiped out huge numbers of people, and on account of the heavy involvement of northerners in the East African Campaign of World War One. These significant new economic and social pressures wrought on the population during this period of time forced a large number of the male population into labour migration. Firstly they went to Livingstonia, the largest mission in the area, but by the time the hut tax was introduced in the north in 1906, they were departing “in all directions”.² Yet this period was not only characterised by disaster and disrepair, it was one which had a formative effect upon structures of local authority, the definition of internal territorial boundaries, and the development of a closer link between chiefs and the land.

During the second decade of the twentieth century, running alongside the more visible struggles of the administration over hut tax collection, war recruitment and famine prevention, a process involving the tribalisation of African space – or, a spatialisation of tribal identity – began to take place. It was a process which discursively and practically wedded the “appropriate” tribal chiefly stories and their practices of governance to the land for the first time. This process is useful to understand as we explore the ways in which Timothy Chawinga built his authority several decades later. The battles which he fought over boundaries, the “irresolvable” contestations he involved himself with over history, and the construction of new rights to the resources in his area, all of which were crucial to his legitimacy, had their roots in this period where customary authority attained a distinctly spatial quality.

Some thirty years ago Chanock already observed the misguided connection which had been made by the colonial legislators in Central Africa at this time: that rights in land must be “derived from the political authority”³ found to be in charge in a particular area. For the administrators this assumption was useful as it enabled them to charge these political authorities with responsibilities for the control of labour and agricultural practice; ways of managing people and production which were vital for ensuring the success of colonial territoriality in the early twentieth century. These were a set of responsibilities which would be institutionalised under the District Administration Native Ordinance (DANO) of 1912. Before indirect rule formalised the relationship between tribe and space, it had already been articulated. Amongst the most important element introduced at this time was the way in which

these new responsibilities entitled chiefs to pass judgment upon who was a “native” and who was a “stranger”, creating a situation “where access to land was contingent on chiefly approval”.⁴ Whilst this had fewer implications when land was relatively plentiful, it is a dynamic which has played a significant role in conflicts over land in more recent history.

This process of bestowing these new responsibilities upon chiefs unfolded gradually however. Whilst these shifts simmered away on one level, at another the first two decades of the twentieth century in Nyasaland still represented a time of great opportunity for various other independent African voices to emerge. Having forged new links to imperial capital and mission education some new “grand figures” did find chances to gain authority. Especially if they could read and write, such people could gain considerable respect as they were able to “quickly pass for an oracle” within their communities; these big men’s prestige, if they learned “how to maintain it, kn[ew] no bounds”.⁵ Even after the DANO had been introduced there was still a lot of room for such figures to thrive, especially in the northern part of the country where access to education was so much greater.

When the Native Administration Native Ordinance was eventually passed in 1933 and these other voices were effectively silenced within the preferred dynastic narratives of the selected “Native Authority” chiefs they did not simply disappear. Hierarchies had been laid into the landscape throughout this time: among the “royal” clans; between neighbouring chiefs; and between religious authorities, political authorities and economically powerful actors. These would be dug up to form the basis of the many battles and contestations over space and custom throughout the period of indirect rule, during the process of decolonisation, and in post-colonial Malawi where “first comer” claims to indigeneity gained legitimacy as a way of contesting land access.⁶

The silencing of alternative authorities *within* the landscape of Hewe, and the obscuring of local historical geographies, which had no literate means of representation, certainly worked to Timothy Chawinga’s advantage. He came to power at a time when the colonial administration was still wedded to the idea of using dynastic histories wherever it was possible. Once the Katumbi chieftainship had eventually been granted the status of native authority it found itself in a powerful position in the regional landscape of politics after several decades of anonymity. With the help of educated allies the Katumbi clans developed a viable set of historical materials which were pliable and could be powerful as they came to compete in the political spaces forged by indirect rule. Another part of the reason why these royal narratives gained influence has to do with the colonial infrastructure. The roads, trading centre and recruitment centres, which from the 1930s began to be focused around the headquarters of the native authority, all helped to centralise the chieftaincy in the landscape.

This chapter will consider the context into which Timothy Chawinga emerged and began to practice his territorial behaviour. His predecessors and the policy reforms which were introduced in the twenty years before his crowning played a significant part in setting him up to develop his strategy to “affect, influence or control resources and people” in the area of Hewe;⁷ a strategy that would be effectively used by Chawinga to gain wealth and power up until the early years of independence. The chapter will consider the geographical and political infrastructure that formed the basis on which Chawinga built up his authority.

Part one. A dialogue between textual and physical space

Shaping a body of knowledge

As was shown in the previous chapter, the production of written histories was important in assisting imperial ambition to go beyond simply possessing space with an “appropriating gaze” to controlling it physically by mapping and naming it.⁸ Across the continent, at this time of early colonial exploration, “modern territorial practices” enabled a dialogue “between textual and physical space through which [...] territorial units [...] were forged”.⁹ This involved more than just mapping space, which was not the end goal. Populations needed to be fixed and controlled within this space for the strategies of territoriality to be effected; after all, and to reiterate Sack, human territoriality as an approach only works to “affect, influence or control resources and people” if those wanting to use it have control over an area.¹⁰ Colonial administrations took part in these processes, seeking to “fix the population in spaces under [their] jurisdiction, first on paper and then in physical reality, so as to facilitate their movements and activities”;¹¹ this was most commonly done in the first instance through census taking and tax collection.

Population movements, unfamiliar naming practices,¹² and shifting residential patterns were conducive neither to census making nor to tax collection. Furthermore, not all political structures seemed so easy to pin down within these dynamic spaces. In this sense the pursuit of “identifying tribes” and their political leaderships, through which these colonial territorial practices could be mediated, was crucial to their effectiveness. In doing this, an area which might have been characterised by a less “stable” or “fixed” identity was given boundaries and a name, and was now defined as a particular “socio-geographic space”.¹³ These territorial techniques, suggests Mazarire, were the “most useful means of establishing settler hegemony”.¹⁴ Crucially, this process of framing and naming space also had the effect of obscuring local historical geographies and, henceforth, the “spaces and practices of the non-literate peoples”¹⁵ became hidden within the “textual spaces of colonial bureaucracy”.¹⁶

However, whilst the dialogue between textual and physical space was at first articulated by the hegemonic voices of missionaries, colonial surveyors and ethnographers, these territorial units were not set in stone with the first arrival, and first cartographic expressions, of Europeans; the dialogue about them was, and remains, ongoing. From 1904 to 1933, the early years of colonial administration in Nyasaland before the Native Administration Ordinance definitively demarcated “boundaries to conform to tribal distribution”,¹⁷ ideas about political geography in the colonies were in fact shifting all the time. Practical considerations related to the appropriate size of governable units, the impact of ecological and political events, and the preferences and workload of individual colonial officials all had a dynamic effect upon the administrative framework in which African societies were categorised. Furthermore, as the previous chapter already hinted at, the forces shaping space were also mediated by local voices whose own power to contribute to the dialogue ebbed and flowed throughout this period.

There were various entry points to this official discussion about space. The most commonly consulted set of knowledge about local traditions, history and key personalities were contained in the district books of officers working most closely with the population. Whilst much of this information was passed down from one district official to another, debates around the validity and “truth” of this information were common. In the remote places of northern Nyasaland where a handful of officers undertook “incessant travelling” over vast distances,¹⁸ and received little support from their superiors in the south,¹⁹ they relied greatly upon local people to help them practically and advise them politically.²⁰ On account of the vast areas that officers had to manage and the very rapid turnover of staff,²¹ hand-over notes became a vital

way of orienting new arrivals to the diverse political and cultural landscape they found themselves having to administer;²² “I would quote from the notes of my predecessor left for my guidance”²³ wrote the District Commissioner Karonga in 1929 regarding aspects of native administration in the north, and this was a common place of reference. Being able to contribute to such a body of knowledge could therefore be a significant entry point to the shaping of political space at this time.

From an early stage Africans were complicit in constructing the spaces of administration, either on account of this close relationship with mission or colonial staff or as dissenting voices to the narratives which were rapidly becoming “official”. All began to realise the importance of being represented in these historical narratives and sought arenas in which they could make themselves heard. Some were given this opportunity at the official commissions which were set up before significant pieces of legislation were put in place. The Land Commission (1928-1931) and the Bledisloe Commission, a Royal Commission set up in 1937 to examine the possibility of closer union between Nyasaland and the Rhodesias, both offered new chances for the definition and classification of certain spaces to be debated.²⁴ As local voices found for themselves influential intermediaries or learned for themselves the value of crafting “historical raw materials” to their advantage they used these platforms and forums for discussion to challenge and contest the history which shaped the territory in which they acted.

Competing voices in the dialogue: patterns of power at the dawn of colonial rule

In the previous chapter, a discussion around the highly mobile nature of the *Balowoka* chieftaincies in the pre-colonial period presented that, to some extent, the integrity of the Katumbi Royal Dynasty was preserved because of this ability to move to “places of safety” throughout the turbulent latter half of the nineteenth century. Unforeseen consequences of the clan’s movement out of danger into the hot dry valley of Malambo to the west of their settlement in Hewe was that they were also moving out of the area that was to be demarcated as the Nyasaland Protectorate in 1907.²⁵ Across this new border, and now firmly under the jurisdiction of a different colonial territory [at this stage administered by the British Central Africa Company], the Katumbi chieftainship raised little interest for the nascent British administration. Scottish Presbyterian missionaries who had come touring these areas at the turn of the century record almost nothing about the figure of Katumbi and their journals give no sense that he retained any influence in the area of the Hewe Valley. The chieftainship’s apparent physical absence perhaps understandably equated to an absence of an established authority in the minds of missionaries and colonial surveyors, and Hewe was recorded rather as a place lacking in any strong leadership and presenting no significant presence as far as established Tumbuka chieftainship was concerned, if indeed anything was recorded about it at all.

Prior to 1912 the colonial government had yet to fashion a hierarchical framework, in which chieftaincies were used differentially to carry out separate tasks. As such, there were no substantial implications derived from Katumbi’s “absence” from the political landscape; chiefs had little to gain or lose from being associated with a particular space in this scenario. At this stage the northern most regions of the Protectorate, of which Hewe formed a part, were supervised in a rather arbitrary, even casual manner. The government relied upon the assistance of missionaries from the Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland who provided opportunities for work and education from 1878, and the British South Africa Company (BSAC) who began collecting taxes on behalf of the government from 1891.²⁶ These activities did have implications. The earliest written histories of Hewe, for example, were

produced on account of these encounters, and they did have an influence on the representation of certain figures. Furthermore, with their minds on Christianity and commerce rather than administration, the activities of the Mission and BSAC also had the effect of elevating certain less historically important actors from relative obscurity as their areas became small centres of trade and education.

Two major events took place in 1904 that would change the stakes, and would mark a shift in how local authority was recognised and accumulated in Hewe. Firstly, a small mission-run school was built in the village of Mwachibanda in the northern most part of the Valley. Secondly, a government Boma was built in Karonga, enabling the first official visit to Hewe by a colonial official who came to tell the Katumbi chieftainship and his headmen “about his work as a Government Agent, and that his people must pay three shillings as tax to the Boma”.²⁷ Both of these events reshaped the geographies of opportunity in Hewe, and prompted a new set of priorities for the Royal family who had to begin work on becoming more visible in the landscape.

A threat in the landscape, the rise of Headman Mwachibanda

As has been explored, the Livingstonia Mission has been responsible for the production of some very powerful hegemonic visions of chieftaincy in northern Nyasaland. Aside from the narratives which they promoted and authenticated in print (see chapter one), another way in which these hierarchies were developed and perpetuated was through the new infrastructure which the mission brought to local communities. When the missionaries arrived in Hewe they initially interacted with headman Mwachibanda, who presided over what they considered to be a fertile and productive land.²⁸ Situated at the confluence of two rivers, the Hewe River and the Chisimuka stream, Mwachibanda village lay in a valley nestled amongst hilly terrain where alluvial soils accumulated. Its relative altitude and lack of tsetse fly meant that cattle thrived and people kept large herds. For these reasons it eventually became known locally as “Greenland”.²⁹ Deriving this reputation from its abundant harvests it was a place missionaries had been drawn to. Crucially, Mwachibanda had been astute enough to welcome the missionaries permanently into his area by granting them a plot of land on which they could locate their school; this was a project which others in the Valley, including the recently “returned” Katumbi Chipiri, are said to have been reluctant about.³⁰ Many people remembered its past glory that “this area [of Chisimuka] was important, people were friendly, welcomed the missionaries and accepted Christianity very well.”³¹

The prestige bestowed upon headman Mwachibanda for having one of the first mission primary schools in the region established on his land was no small matter; it facilitated his fame not only in the local area of Hewe and Nkamanga but fashioned a reputation for him in the eastern province of Northern Rhodesia, and from as far and wide as the students of the school were being drawn from. So successful was this decision to associate with the mission at this early stage that at the dawning of Indirect Rule it was Mwachibanda’s name which was known throughout the region, not so Katumbi’s who was barely recognised as being more senior. The school presented the people of Hewe a new possibility of accumulating knowledge, wealth and status, quite away from the traditional ways that had been previously only open to men of ritual or chiefly prestige. By taking a more independent position within commercial and mission networks Mwachibanda was in a good position to “undermine existing practices [of power] and open the way for the imposition of modern ones”.³²

As plans for further infrastructure and markets were discussed by colonial and business interests, it increasingly made sense to locate such facilities at this new focal point. With no

visible ritual or residential base in the Valley it seems likely that the Katumbi chiefs merited no special prioritising in the eyes of the administration. Honouring a barely visible seniority by locating business at Katumbi's headquarters was not an important factor as the Africa Lakes Corporation looked in 1912 for a place to set up shop in Hewe that would make good business sense. This shop, one of the Mandala Store franchise, offered the possibility of purchasing good quality salt, cloth and iron hoes to people in the area for the first time. The shop and school enticed people from far and wide.³³ It clearly retained its importance well into the 1920s; when the store was burned down sometime around this time it only relocated a small distance away to a place called Kaphumphu in the valley between Chisimuka stream and the Hewe River. It was said that at this time, "a very large village had been established" in Chisimuka, "where people came from Muyombe and Malambo [in present day Zambia] to trade".³⁴ Whilst there is no evidence of other stores opening in Hewe until the 1930s there would certainly have been an increase in trading activities in the wider region. It is clear that the area of Chisimuka maintained its position regardless, and because of this it became a large settlement. Already a highly productive part of Hewe the commercial attention which was focused upon it enabled local markets to develop and thrive; Mwachibanda benefited greatly from this, accumulating further wealth and prestige.³⁵

These infrastructures also had an effect on the community immediately surrounding them. Foremost was the privileged access to education which it suddenly provided. Many of the early pupils of the village school were from the Chisimuka area, and it is clear from the life histories taken in Hewe that a greater proportion of the people selected to go on to attend secondary education and technical training at Livingstonia Mission itself were from Chisimuka. These people were amongst those who were to go on to become the first raft of African teachers, carpenters, and civil servant clerks. Some would go on to play significant roles in the anti-colonial campaigns of the late 1940s and 1950s. To this day Chisimuka retains its reputation as a place of intelligent and skilled people. Clearly the growing importance of Chisimuka within Hewe, and certainly the prominence of headman Mwachibanda, had implications for a Katumbi chieftainship attempting at this stage to re-establish some sense of authority in the region, particularly in the eyes of the new government Boma at Karonga.

Though it is not possible to accurately date when Katumbi Chipili "returned" to the area of Hewe and began to campaign for his political recognition it is likely that it was prompted by this increased level of activity by the Mission and the BSAC, and on account of the new infrastructure that were introduced alongside them. Chipili's emergence in the area, which would become Nyasaland, had been necessary for the chieftainship to recapture a position of importance in this new colonial setting. Without further research being undertaken amongst the Katumbi chieftaincy now in Zambia it remains difficult to understand fully how, why, and precisely when, a split took place in the royal family. However, sometime in-between the end of the seventh Themba Mtengacharo's rule, a chief who had continued to practice his power in what would become Northern Rhodesia, and the ascent of the eighth Themba, Chipiri I, who chose to base himself in Hewe, a severance did occur which resulted in the existence of two separate but closely connected genealogies.³⁶ On account of this rupture, new lines of succession were introduced on both sides of the border. In any case, when the Government Agent visited Hewe in 1904 to take account of the population and their political organisation, some elements of the Katumbi chieftainship must have been found. Oral sources suggest that Chipili himself was met by a representative of the government, "Mr Wales", and it is certainly true that by the time the District Administrative Native Ordinance (DANO) was implemented in 1912 the Katumbi royal family were recognised as the most senior of headmen in the area, if not the most

influential. The frameworks of native administration, which were set in motion in 1912, did promise more benefits for the recognised chieftaincies. In light of these new opportunities, elements of the formerly 'invisible' and insignificant Katumbi leadership must have pushed for permanent re-location across the border, and to remain there as a settled presence.

Being recognised as the most senior headman in Hewe by the DANO did not guarantee an immediate transferral of prestige from other authorities who had gained status during the time of dispersal following the Ngoni wars. Mwachibanda, for example, maintained his reputation. Neither did it amount to an assurance of equality with other Tumbuka chiefs. The revived Chikulamayembe chieftainship was regarded as the most senior Tumbuka chief and was granted the position of 'Principal' amongst them. Themba Katumbi Chipili and his successor Yiteta struggled to assert their narratives of seniority during their rule and were quite unable to convince the government of their right to more formal authority in these circumstances.

The DANO did not have the same commitment to observing the (illusory) "customary practices" of tribal law and administration, as the policies of indirect rule eventually would. As such its organising principles were more oriented around practical concerns such as the size of territorial units and the convenience of their management. The comments made by O'Brien, the District Commissioner of North Nyasa, in a 1928 Annual Report summarise the administrative logic of the DANO with an example drawn from a discussion about the relationship between the role of headmen and the land: "Each section is divided into groups of villages under a group or area headman who in most cases is the owner of the land", however he goes on to say that "some areas are very large so are divided into two whilst other headmen although calling themselves the owner of the land, were so small that they were lumped together under the most influential headman available"³⁷. The direction taken by the DANO was that tribal histories would, as much as possible, be made to fit 'appropriately' sized territories. Despite having a specific historical identity, chieftainships which were not economically or practically suitable to administer, might be considered "too small" to be given their 'own' administration under this legislation. This logic worked against Katumbi whose small 200 square miles of jurisdiction - his territory in Nyasaland amounted to just half of his 'rightful' area with a large part of it having fallen under the jurisdiction of the government in Northern Rhodesia - provided a very weak claim to having his authority independently recognised.

A new process begins: chief of a tribe and chief over land

The period leading up to the implementation of the District Administration Native Ordinance in 1912 was marked by an atmosphere of political possibility for Africans in the northern region of the Protectorate. Perhaps the example which demonstrates these dynamics most clearly concerns the revival of the Chikulamayembe Dynasty in 1907³⁸ after which the "new chief and his educated supporters set about building an historical image for their new Tumbuka 'tribe'"³⁹. Whilst the DANO allowed for this image to be formalised within an administrative framework, and the position of the chief who represented this image likewise, it was ultimately the context of the political economy in the northern region which meant these formalities resonated with a large number of the population, and hence were transformed into sustainable political identities.

The period between the introduction of DANO in 1912 and 1923 was a particularly unsettled one for the people living in the northern region of Nyasaland. Administering this area in the early years of government had never been an easy task; its remoteness from European industry presented particularly serious problems for revenue collection. There were limited opportunities for natives to sell their labour, particularly in North Nyasa given its "peculiar

difficulties".⁴⁰ Apart from a couple of cotton estates run by Mr Maxwell, the Africa Lakes Corporation (ALC) was the only employer of native labour in the district at this time, and both seemed to prefer employing Africans from Rhodesia and Mombera (present day Mzimba district).⁴¹ In 1920, the Resident in North Nyasa wrote with concern that "the provision of suitable employment for natives near their homes remains one of the paramount problems of this district".⁴²

As an area generally "unsuitable for the production of saleable crops"⁴³ and with a lack of local market for them, there were even fewer ways for these natives to obtain money for hut tax or indeed for the payment of school fees, an increasingly desirable good in the north. It is argued by Vail and White that a combination of this increasing need to access cash – for tax, education, consumer goods – and decreasing opportunities to strategically deal with the "external" demands made on the rural areas by the market economy,⁴⁴ saw to it that there was "an abrupt emigration of the male population from northern Nyasaland with as many as 70 per cent of the men absent from home at any one time".⁴⁵

One of the most major of these "external" shocks was the impact of the First World War which saw the British increase its demands upon the local population.⁴⁶ Though perhaps Vail and White do not geographically nuance the impacts of the war enough, they are correct in identifying it as a watershed in the political as well as economic history of the northern region. As "men were drafted to serve as porters in the British army for periods of up to three years", they argue, a serious shortage of labour was caused which "adversely affected food production in the village gardens"⁴⁷ and increased the burden of production upon the women; a burden which was intensified as many villages were also required to provide extra food to feed the troops.⁴⁸ Indeed whilst it could be argued that the end of the war improved the "cash-flow" situation in the north, providing an injection of money into the local economies as disbanded soldiers and porters returned home,⁴⁹ this did not represent a long-term opportunity. Once this extra money diminished over the next couple of years the usual problems returned; high levels of emigration, absentee husbands and the lack of opportunities to work presented themselves, leaving the Boma with limited expectations for revenue collection once again.⁵⁰ The exhaustion of this "war wealth" was noted by the Africa Lakes Corporation (ALC) agent who confirmed that by 1920 there was "a considerable falling off in the amount of money spent in their stores too".⁵¹ It is not hard to imagine, therefore, a significant and increasing pressure on Africans from these areas to migrate in order to find work.

The figure of seventy per cent of employable men as being absent from their homes in the northern region does hide a rather uneven reality however. Counted among the reasons for this apparent "exodus" are the impact of a decline in cattle trade on account of bovine pleuropneumonia (in 1912) and Rinderpest epizootic (1919), this would not have affected Hewe as significantly as it affected the Ngoni areas to the south, given that cattle had never played a major role in their local economy.⁵² Nor did the recruitment of porters for the First World War have as devastating a consequence in these western parts of the region as it had done amongst the more commonly recruited Ngonde and lakeside Tonga. Nevertheless, whilst the change across the region may well have been uneven and geographically variegated, it can be said confidently that the opportunities for chiefly authority certainly increased over this time. The war routinized and increased the responsibility of chiefs to organise labour within their areas of jurisdiction. They were relied upon to recruit both carriers (tenga-tenga) and soldiers for the war effort from amongst their people, spreading "the propaganda, often calling meetings of their followers to encourage enlistment, clarifying when necessary, and cajoling their subjects into agreement".⁵³ Such participation foreshadowed the way in which chiefs would be used during

the struggle for independence. With a state creating anxieties about the implications of being conquered by another nation through this war, and what that would mean for African land, people “acquiesced in deference to their traditional leaders”⁵⁴ who represented a tried and trusted, if not ideal, context. They stuck with conservatism over change. This worked to the benefit of these traditional leaders, in whose hands they increasingly placed their confidence.

Once the war was over the role of chiefs did not diminish as the war wealth had. The expense of the First World War meant that a consolidated civilian government which could implement plans for economic development was some way off; indeed before 1920 “occupation was by no means yet synonymous with administration”.⁵⁵ Chiefs and headmen were asked to participate increasingly in local life by both the government and the population. The former required a more stable administrative presence to assist the “Thin White Line” – a fluctuating cadre of colonial officers⁵⁶ – by collecting taxes and attending to the “general conduct and welfare of village life”,⁵⁷ whilst the latter looked to these local leaders to attend to their interests in the uncertainty of the age. The chiefly elite were to “maintain order in the village while they were far away, working as labour migrants”,⁵⁸ to represent their interests in the home and in the fields. These changes in the political and economic landscape certainly bolstered opportunities for chiefs across the region to take more control over people, their land, and their resources where they had not had the prospect of wielding such authority before.

The DANO also created opportunities for appointed Principal Headmen such as Chikulamayembe, and their subordinate village headmen, “to keep the district officer informed of births, deaths, crimes, disputes and disturbances, and immigration”, as well as being able to allocate “village gardens and pasturage” under the direction of a colonial officer.⁵⁹ Year on year further duties were added and by 1924, after a major amendment had been made to the Ordinance, the power of the Principal Headmen grew significantly. Now able “to administer ‘sections’ made up of ‘village areas’”, a new spatial demarcation of power tied him ever closer to a bounded territory (for which there was a necessity to have a parallel narrative of authenticity). The 1924 Ordinance provided for the fact that these Principal Headmen:

*“could hear cases referred to them by the village headmen and could charge a fee; they could officiate at weddings and grant or refuse divorces; they were responsible for tax collection which conferred advantages in the control of labour; they issued beer licenses which brought a major industry engaged in by women under their jurisdiction; they controlled afforestation, which involved house building and much local industry; and they acquired for the first time clearly defined powers over village headmen, with profound consequences for the allocation of land”.*⁶⁰

Vail and White conclude that these responsibilities not only bolstered chiefly authority but, in the northern province where an educated African elite was available to manipulate the narratives, they also “opened the way for a general acceptance of an identity and consciousness defined in terms of ‘tribe’.”⁶¹ The legislation of the DANO combined with the political economic context of these areas to enable a particular ‘tribal’ expression of territoriality. The dialogue between textual and physical space begun by earlier generations of travellers and missionaries continued to be articulated but now with a more explicit ethnic or tribal accent. It was a highly employable accent which enabled Africans – particularly the educated elites – to enter the dialogue more easily, revising stories about “native” territories along the way. These educated elites saw a new opportunity of gaining a more powerful voice through the DANO, and more specifically the local administrative councils which were set up as a result of the new legislation. With many of them leaving Native Associations and joining chiefs’ administrations a much

stronger “political alliance of traditional leaders and new intellectuals” took place in northern Nyasaland.⁶²

The DANO represented quite a different set of opportunities and constraints for people in the southern province, and especially the Shire Highlands. As the introduction highlighted, the impact of the Chilembwe uprising in 1915 – a response to the exploitation of African labour by estate owners in the region – saw to it that this legislation was used to a much greater extent to police discontent. On the whole Yao chiefs, who were “keen to distance themselves from Chilembwe”, were appointed as DANO headmen;⁶³ and it was the “rebellious” Lomwe immigrants from Mozambique who lost out. As Power has noted whilst these immigrants did have the choice to work for African headmen or European planters, in reality they were limited; they needed a tax certificate to undertake the work, and this had to be acquired through a chief or headman.⁶⁴ The introduction of DANO in the south contributed to a host of consequences which would play out over the next couple of decades, and culminate in bitter local contestations in the context of the nationalist struggle. In the northern region, by contrast, any discontent engendered by the appointment of certain headmen over others under the DANO might have created local flashpoints of conflict but did not pose too great a threat to stability. There was enough land, and a notable lack of social and economic differentiation in the north; a situation which meant that it took until the 1950s until any serious discontent against the native authorities manifest itself.

The spatial implications of the DANO: burying hierarchies within the landscape

Whilst the DANO did not bestow the same responsibilities upon native chiefs which the later indirect rule legislation of 1933 would, it did grant Principal Headmen certain privileges which would prove rankling for Katumbi chiefs who believed themselves equal or superior to their neighbours tipped for more significant positions. Chikulamayembe’s new privileges as Principal Headman (P.H) which were different from the paltry benefits Katumbi received caused tension within the relationship between these historically related families. One of the most egregious aspects of this legislation to Katumbi and his followers was Chikulamayembe’s new found ability to “call for carriers and arrest tax defaulters in Hewe”.⁶⁵ This Ordinance had a significant effect on the Katumbi chieftainships of both Chipiri I and Yiteta; by undermining their ability to control labour and production in their area and displacing their authority to “officially” meet out local justice the Ordinance dealt a serious blow to the reputation of these chiefs, which had already been re-imagined in the light of their long displacement from Hewe.

Lacking any recognition under the DANO, other than that of village headman, it was Katumbi Chipiri’s aim, and the continuing aim of the two chiefs who succeeded him, Yiteta and Dukamayere I, to claim before the colonial government an historical authority which they asserted had been misunderstood and passed over. One of the ways in which they did this was by resorting to accusations of deception directed at Chikulamayembe. They claimed that their rival chief had cheated them out of their rightful position during the period when plans for the DANO were being formalised and positions of chiefs decided. It is said that when the D.C O’Brien sent a letter from Karonga informing all the Tumbuka chiefs that a meeting was to be held at the boma to discuss their roles and position in the district, and in particular to discuss the idea of making Chikulamayembe Principal Headman, it mysteriously went astray before reaching Katumbi. The local stories make out that when Chikulamayembe received the letter “he told the messenger not to send the message to Katumbi until the next day. He started on his journey to Karonga and spent some days, on the third day the D.C. said you should be the one who is principal as Katumbi is not even here”.⁶⁶ Whether the intention was there to cheat Katumbi or

not, evidently he did not make it to the meeting and was marked down simply as a village headman.

From this time onwards Katumbi chiefs blamed Chikulamayembe chiefs for their inferior position. This motif of injustice is recounted continually and can be seen as one of the disagreements on which moral and political authority is fought. As borders became a powerful symbol of sovereignty and authority, conflicts over the accuracy of their demarcation became another central point of contestation between the two chiefs.⁶⁷ More stories emerged about how the colonial tools of territoriality were used by the chiefs to contest their narratives of historical seniority. Time and again throughout the colonial period the ownership of two villages, Chelanya and Kapemba, located within the border-zone areas between Chikulamayembe and Katumbi, was disputed. In some ways the place in which they were now to be found was a largely irrelevant aspect of the contestation; villages had neither been static in the past nor were they known as belonging within demarcated territorial boundaries. However, as soon as taxation was introduced as a way of tying authority to place, and place to the people, the first major contestation took place which flagged up how battles for authority oriented around new spatial forms of control.

Entering into the spatial dialogue as a way of “re-claiming” some authority in the situation of the DANO, Chief Chipiri Katumbi is said to have flagged up another historically unjust event between the two chieftainships. With the backing of his chiefs’ council he went to Karonga to give testimony to a story from the past which tried to demonstrate the cunning of Chikulamayembe. One Katumbi was said to have advised his chiefs Chelanya, Kapemba and Kalindamawe to carry some ropes to Chikulamayembe, the rope from Hewe was strong as a certain tree grew there which was suitable for such things. This, Chikulamayembe was happy with as it assisted him to make nets with which to catch animals.⁶⁸ When taxation began it was assumed that this rope giving tradition was in fact a form of tribute rather than a gift from a neighbouring chief and as such these villages started giving tax as well as rope to Chikulamayembe. By the time Katumbi began to claim that these people were in fact under him Chikulamayembe refused. After going to the provincial commissioner to discuss the matter it was decided that they should go to Katumbi and a boundary should be made. Thus began a long engagement over the “original” ownership of these villages.⁶⁹

After Chipiri died in 1923, his successor Yiteta brought some new tensions perhaps prompted by the increasing responsibilities given to Principal Headmen over their subordinates in the 1924 revisions to DANO. Neither Chipiri nor Yiteta had many responsibilities under the government, at this time such headmen were only directed to clear roads or build bridges, but the latter chief was active when it came for campaigning for the acknowledgment of the Katumbi chieftainship as historically important;⁷⁰ some suggest that he was in fact the first chief to be recognised by colonial officers, even if it was only unofficially.⁷¹ His chieftaincy spanned from 1923 to 1932 during which time several commissions were formed in which the history of land ownership and traditional authority came under the spot light. The 1929 North Nyasa Native Reserves Commission, part of the country wide Land Commission (1928-1932), was one such platform on which he could voice his disgruntlement, and officially put in a claim for independence from Chikulamayembe.

Yiteta’s bad behaviour in the eyes of the administration perhaps reflected his increasing frustration at not being recognised and from this time he is characterised as a troublemaker, “a little rat of a man”.⁷² D.C. O’Brien looked upon Yiteta’s claims as purely self-seeking, and an attempt to take advantage of the opportunity which the DANO offered chiefs to better their position. Yiteta on the other hand took this subservience to Chikulamayembe under the DANO

as humiliation and he insisted that he be placed under the authority of a non-Tumbuka Chief than face the dishonour of subjugation to his 'nephew': "Katumbi got so frustrated that he decided to visit Kyungu and offered to place himself under his authority. He could not stomach the idea of being a sub-chief to Chikulamayembe whom he considered to be historically his junior".⁷³ This, O'Brien considered as a tactic; knowing that he had no hope of succeeding with his "false claim" to seniority, he had planned out "an alternative scheme".⁷⁴ The request was not considered.

Both personality and practicalities had their part to play in this. Chipiri and Yiteta were not well educated, nor did they have a useful ally to articulate their demands for them, or the intellectual resources to give them leverage (see chapter one). Furthermore, these Katumbi chiefs found themselves ruling an area which was considered to be too small to be administered separately. The DANO practically did away with any expressions of leadership that did not match size of territory or type of chieftaincy that the colonial government wanted to deal with. These alternative narratives did not present a significant challenge to the official structure of native administration or alter the state-sanctioned subservience to Chikulamayembe which the Katumbi chieftainship found itself performing under; Katumbi would remain headman and Chikulamayembe would perform the role of his Principal until the dawning of indirect rule in 1933.

Even after the Katumbi chieftaincy had been granted the status of native authority, becoming equal under the law to his neighbouring chief, the psychological hierarchies which had developed during this time were to remain a humiliating tension buried within the relationship between Katumbi and Chikulamayembe, and to a lesser extent with Headman Mwachibanda, and they still have some resonance today.⁷⁵ This tension most frequently played out in ways which were articulated by spatial factors, with debates over borders and village ownership, something that the interaction between Chikulamayembe and Katumbi had rarely fought over in the past. Hierarchies were written into history by missionaries and early colonial techniques of rule as the previous chapter concluded, and these hierarchies became spatialised through the DANO. Tensions between Chikulamayembe and Katumbi can be seen borne out in discussions about shared borders, treasuries and courts throughout Timothy's reign (1943-73); what colonial officers describe as "petty jealousies" are in fact meaningful contestations that have resonance in local imaginations of chiefly power, even if they have become unrecognizable on account of their spatial articulation. These contestations will be explored in the next two chapters as the politics of Timothy's chieftainship is unpacked. Before this is done, a section will be devoted to a discussion of how the Katumbi chieftainship did eventually regain its place in the landscape and how the political and economic milieu developed into which Timothy Chawinga, the main protagonist, was crowned Themba.

Part two. The spaces of Indirect Rule

The end of the DANO and the politics of Indirect Rule

The 'local concerns' which seemed at first of limited importance to the efficient functioning of government under the DANO were given more credence after the First World War as chiefs were increasingly relied upon to administer local government. After some investigations it became clear that the administrative structure the DANO created was now barely effective. In one of the monthly North Nyasa District Reports from 1919-20 it was recorded that regular district councils had not taken place for two years and if headmen were even occasionally called

to report their work no record was ever taken of their activities or minutes taken of the meeting. In the district books attempts to call meetings were recorded as almost always a failure, and this was attributed to the fact that headmen were “indifferent and unresponsive”.⁷⁶

To some extent this “indifference” was not entirely about the system’s inherent flaws; it also had much to do with the political and economic difficulties of this time. Aside from the demands of war, the years 1919 and 1920 had seen influenza, plague and rinderpest put economic pressures on people in the north. In addition to this, the inadequate staffing in North Nyasa District tested the opportunity for regular and functional meetings whilst the physical terrain and lack of infrastructure put paid to the efficient collection of tax.⁷⁷ In order to mitigate these difficulties some amendments were made to the DANO within the first decade of its existence. There was a call to increase the responsibilities of chiefs within their own village areas. Furthermore, and for the first time, members who were not headmen but rather “representatives of the more educated and progressive classes of natives” were to be included within District Councils.⁷⁸ These amendments would not, however, prove long term solutions to the problem of “native administration” which was beset with difficulties relating not only to socio-economic context of early colonial rule but also to political jealousies and new hierarchies weaved into this context on account of the DANO itself.

District officials whose close interaction with communities allowed them to observe firsthand the troubling situation which the policy had incubated began to flag up the local grievances more systematically. The DANO, they argued, had set rather unsatisfactory arrangements in motion which were, though advantageous from an administrative point of view, “unquestionably a departure from native practice in the past”.⁷⁹ Officers working in the district of North Nyasa, long dissatisfied with the arrangements for native administration, cited the incongruities and “artificial nature” of the polities which the Ordinance imposed upon the people, “contrary to their customs”.⁸⁰ The new position of “group village headman”, required as a way of organising areas, was confusing and provoked jealousy as it seemed to encourage these selected headmen to think themselves of having a small chieftomship. It was even said in one report that this system had predisposed these new group headmen to “despise the principal headman” whose authority over them they now disputed.⁸¹ “The title of group village headman, an “impossible and artificial” measure, was a confusing role for the people, especially when it came to the custom of land ownership.⁸² At the same time the heads of individual villages, who played an essential role in the administration of day to day life, often remained unrecognised as “village headmen at Law” by this Ordinance. All of these measures had the cumulative effect of undermining the Africans’ “interest in their own affairs”, so much so that they were described as “fatalistically lethargic in matters which concern them”.⁸³ Through these investigations it was concluded that the DANO could not provide a “satisfactory basis on which to build up an efficient system of native administration in the Northern parts of this territory”.⁸⁴

From 1929 the disgruntled district officials of Northern Province who had been complaining that the Ordinance had no future were satisfied. With the introduction of native courts in that same year at which the principal headman were given the responsibility of hearing civil cases the district commissioners’ calls for a new system to be put in place was finally heeded. This system, they had said, would only work if the local administration was “based upon native tribal institutions”, otherwise there would be no hope of the courts in particular being effective.⁸⁵ It was in light of all these changes that the claims coming from Hewe calling for independence from Chikulamayembe was given another hearing. O’Brien maintained his dislike for Katumbi Yiteta when these claims to be acknowledged as equal emerged from the 1929 North Nyasa Reserves Commission.⁸⁶ Eventually, however, even he would come to

acknowledge the historical importance of Katumbi amongst the *Balowoka* chiefs in the region. Several things would have to take place before this could happen though. Primary among them were the deaths of the old Chikulamayembe in 1931 followed shortly afterwards by Katumbi Yiteta in 1932; the new chiefs, and their Livingstonia Mission allies, would alter the balance of local power significantly. Their relationships with each other and the government reshaped the political boundaries in the northern Tumbuka areas significantly.

O'Brien had formerly been convinced of Chikulamayembe's sovereignty over the whole area from the lakeshore in the east to the border with Northern Rhodesia in the west. Cullen Young's 1923 book had been influential in this regard, as had O'Brien's genuine dislike for Yiteta who he had no intention of promoting. In an annual report in 1930, whilst considering the implications which indirect rule would have in these parts, he wrote that he was quite sure that it could be introduced without difficulty in North Nyasa, as the power of the two Principal Headman in this district, Chikulamayembe and Kyungu, were "universally acknowledged".⁸⁷ A change took place in the discussions amongst missionary elites, educated Africans and government officials in the north not long after this, however, which drove the impetus for a revision of these emphatic conclusions about northern history; this change can be noted in the 1932 publication of Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples of Northern Nyasaland*.⁸⁸ In this publication some of his earlier conclusions about the hierarchy between Chikulamayembe and Katumbi, amongst other changes in tribal history, have been significantly altered.

In 1934 O'Brien became the first district commissioner of the new district of Mzimba which had been created through the merging of Chikulamayembe's Henga-Nkamanga area and Katumbi's Hewe area with the old Mombera District, then presided over by the main Ngoni chief M'mbelwa. Less than one year after he had confirmed Katumbi's subservience to Chikulamayembe under the original Native Administration Ordinance, O'Brien took this opportunity to overturn the decision. The short period in-between the introduction of the NAO and the meeting at Ng'onga is worth examining as a way of getting to the bottom of these shifts in appraisal of chiefly status; this can give some idea about the delicate balance between the production and use of historical narratives, and the politics of relationships between the mission and the chiefs.

New chiefs and the rise of non-chiefly advisors

Neither John Hardy Gondwe nor Zakeyo Dukamayere Chawinga had been in line to inherit their respective titles of Chikulamayembe (in 1931) and Katumbi (in 1932). Their chieftaincies represented a new era where education mattered more than hereditary right and progressive ideas more than laws of succession. It has already been noted at some length that the *Balowoka* chieftaincies were flexible and adaptable enough to easily accommodate new rules which conformed less to the inheritance structures which had variously managed the perpetuation of the Royal Dynasties, but rather more to the choices of powerful external interests. Both were mission backed candidates, the kinds of men that the government sought to install as chiefs. However, whilst the mission at Livingstonia had forged a cadre of men who were championed by the government as suitable chiefly candidates, it also promoted an unhelpful political ambition among them and their advisers; the influence which the Reverend Edward Bote Manda began to have on the new Chikulamayembe, John Hardy Zibange Gondwe, for example troubled the administration more than it reassured them.

Having been in poor health for several years before his death in 1931, the tenth Chikulamayembe, Mbawuwo Chilongozi Gondwe, had begun to lose control over the affairs of

his chieftdom; it was in this context that Manda began to increase his influence.⁸⁹ Under his pressure the “customary” successor of Chilongozi a man called Gogoti Gondwe was pushed to one side and the elders were persuaded to choose John Zibange Hardy Gondwe, to become the eleventh Themba. He was only 26 years old, and he was educated, he “knew white men and modern affairs”;⁹⁰ but he was pliable and susceptible to the ideas of Manda. In this way the radical minister began to use the Chikulamayembe chieftainship as his own instrument. In some ways the selection of John Hardy was also a boon for the Katumbi campaign, particularly once Zakeyo Dukamayere had replaced Yiteta. Both Manda and John Hardy wanted Katumbi to be recognised as of having historical importance in the region, possibly because it helped them with their claims for the much bigger project of “recreating” Utumbuka, a Tumbuka land to reflect an historical claim to a huge Kingdom and which would swallow up the Ngoni authorities in its wake.

At a meeting in Ng’onga which was held on 13th December 1933, it was hoped that various contentious issues could be resolved – including which of the chiefs could lay claim to the hotly contested villages of Kapemba and Chelanya. Dukamayere took with him a crack team of eight negotiators, amongst them the senior headmen Chembe, Zolokere, Chilikunthazi and Walutundu, as well as Daniel Kaira and the Rev. Levi Kaleya, both Livingstonia graduates and respected men. It was hard for John Hardy Gondwe to do anything other than admit to the administration that although Katumbi was not a senior chief to Chikulamayembe, he was indeed independent from him and he “had no objection to the fact that Katumbi should be independent and elevated to the position of Native Authority”.⁹¹ It was decided at Ng’onga that Katumbi should be promoted; he was designated his own section three, given a junior court of appeals, and allowed to report directly to the D.C.⁹² A clerk, Ben Mpitankhwakwa Munthali, and two messengers, Guza Ng’ambi and Mwambazi, were appointed to him, making his rise complete.

The importance in this overturning of inferiority, reclamation of lost prestige and statement of independence by Katumbi amongst the local community is acknowledged with the bestowal to Zakeyo, after his rise to Native Authority, of the praise name Dukamayere. Dukamayere refers to the action of jumping or overcoming witchcraft and trickery;⁹³ not knowing the reasons for the promotion, local people looked upon Zakeyo as being cunning enough to overcome the magical tricks which had hitherto undermined the chances of his predecessors.

In fact, in some ways they were right. Zakeyo was a more senior and salubrious character than his predecessor Yiteta. In many ways he even appears to have been a more conducive chief to work with than John Hardy, but he had been greatly assisted into the position by the personable figure of the Reverend Isaac Khunga. Khunga was a native of Hewe who had turned down his own chance to become a senior chief, Zolokere, in order to pursue a life in Christian ministry. He retained many advisory roles within his home area and with his concern for the well being of the population was regularly to be found around the place encouraging and counselling chief and commoner alike. It is likely that it was Khunga who played the major role in influencing the elders of the Katumbi Royal clans to select Zakeyo as the most suitable successor to Themba Yiteta; it is widely accepted that he was not selected through the usual, traditional, processes of election.⁹⁴

If a comparison is made between the personality and ambitions of Khunga and those of Manda it is not hard to see how much more palatable and trustworthy a figure the former was for the administration to work with. Khunga had been a strong campaigner for the restoration of the Katumbi chieftainship and for the unification of the area of Hewe and Malambo where the split of the royal family had created a separate Katumbi chieftaincy in Northern Rhodesia. He

had organised the appeal of Zakeyo Dukamayere with Kaira and Kaleya, in an effort to convince the D.C. to restore parts of Chikulamayembe's territory – most notably the villages of Kapemba and Chelanya - to Katumbi. Yet, his ambition seemed genuinely geared towards the welfare of the local population; he was a pastoral character, and had no political goal beyond the influence he could lend to the Katumbi chieftaincy. The goal of Manda, however, was much bigger than augmenting the local prowess of chiefs. For this reason he was seen by O'Brien as a more problematic presence, especially since the government Boma at Karonga was unable to keep such a watchful eye on activities in Henga and Nkamanga. Manda had developed a role for himself in this loose system of administration, playing a crucial role on account of the distance from the Boma and therefore "of necessity a liaison between Chikulamayembe and the D.C".⁹⁵ Not only was this bad practice, the D.C admitted in the 1930 annual report, this influence by the mission over local populations was "unfair on chiefs".⁹⁶

Manda's most ambitious plan had been hatched some time before the time when he began encouraging the young Chikulamayembe to expand his territory, and push to become paramount chief by establishing a Tumbuka chieftom in the heart of Ngoni country south of Nkamanga (see Vail and White). Manda had been collaborating for some years with others including the Hewe born Simon Masopera Gondwe, a former clerk and a character to whom the thesis will return later, to develop a strategy aimed at reconstructing what they claimed to have been a vast Tumbuka kingdom; this was revealed later during the 1940s when an investigation into the activities of Masopera Gondwe were undertaken by the District Commissioner H. C. Foulger. "Whatever the disguise Manda and Gondwe are imbued with the idea of deposing the Angoni chiefs and replacing them with the "original owners" of the country, harking back to the rather mythical "Karonga" who is reputed to have held sway over this country and as far as the Zambezi",⁹⁷ he wrote to his Provincial Commissioner in 1943. The Principal at Livingstonia admitted in the same year that whilst at Livingstonia Masopera Gondwe had undertaken a commercial course and then worked as a clerk from 1936 to 1940, he had at the same time been "he was the leading light of a little association which he called the Tumbuka Tribal Council or Association".⁹⁸

There had been no immediate objection to the idea that there existed Tumbuka chieftaincies south of Henga that might recognise Chikulamayembe as their chief. In light of the imminent change in legislation a thorough examination of Manda's claims was undertaken but once the Government was finally convinced that all Tumbuka authorities within the Ngoni territory were no longer known, any future attempts to "reunite" their people fell on deaf ears. "Claims fostered by E. Manda such as Nyanjagha on the Rukuru River, and the Baza people at Hora had been fully investigated and found to be entirely without support",⁹⁹ O'Brien recalled when the issue was discussed again in 1935. Various other of Manda's proposals of a similar vein, including his prompting of Chikulamayembe to challenge the British South Africa Company's right to the land in North Nyasa, were also invalidated; the D.C. reminding them that at that time "there was no Themba Chikulamayembe and no Kyungu, both had succumbed to the Angoni and Arab slavers [...] [they] received the Europeans with open arms as their protectors".¹⁰⁰

Their hopes for an enlarged territory had been raised by the North Nyasa Reserves Commission, where the idea for the creation of a distinct Henga District had been mooted. With a Boma located at Mburunje it was suggested that it include southern parts of North Nyasa District and northern parts of the Mombera District, and with no regards to tribal distribution the suggestion was to draw a line across the country.¹⁰¹ The provincial commissioner was quite happy to contemplate this idea as it would have created a much needed intermediary

headquarters in-between Karonga and Mzimba. However, once the policy of local administration was altered upon the introduction of the NAO, Native Authorities were to be strictly bounded according to tribal divisions and the chiefs of these units were to have authority only over people “who bore tribal allegiance to them”.¹⁰² It was in this context that the lack of wider recognition for Chikulamayembe was compounded. The people of Mwafulirwa, who had also had a long standing debate concerning their independence from the Themba, were given the opportunity to switch allegiance to Kyungu in 1931 and then eventually to become autonomous in 1932. There is little doubt that the constant “high handed” behaviour of Manda created this opportunity for Mwafulirwa. Annoyed by Manda’s arrogance, Murray, the provincial commissioner, had decided to penalise Chikulamayembe by allowing Mwafulirwa to separate from him and by bringing Chikulamayembe into Mzimba District.¹⁰³

Concerned about the backlash that this potentially unfair treatment would create for the Government, especially since the plans for a Henga District had also been put on hold, it was later decided that an apology for the confusion be issued and that a rest house at Njakwa in Henga be built as a small base from which Hewe and Nkamanga areas could be more closely administered. Having a district which only covered these areas, however, was considered completely out of the question. “The Chikulamayembe and Hewe units are so small” wrote the PC Northern Province, “that they do not demand a separate Boma to watch over them”.¹⁰⁴ He argued that a proposed new Boma in Rumphu, if established, would provide any officer stationed with such little work “that he would simply be a nuisance to Chikulamayembe supervising every trivial thing that he does”.¹⁰⁵ This arrangement, he said, also left Chikulamayembe free to return to North Nyasa District if he wanted; something which of course he considered far too shameful to even contemplate. The activities of Manda – who would continue to play a significant role in the administration of Chikulamayembe throughout the 1940s and an increasingly seditious one pressing for recognition of “the whole land of our ancestors”¹⁰⁶ – had caused anger to the administration and unsettled the traditional elders of Nkamanga. By 1935 the intense campaigning for change had settled down but the dialogue about these injustices continued on throughout the colonial period.

As opinion of Chikulamayembe went down in the context of indirect rule Katumbi’s steadily increased. Officers on the ground who dealt with border areas had been long of the opinion that a single system of administration common to all territories who shared boundaries was needed. With so much of the northern and central provinces of the Nyasaland Protectorate “adjacent to other British territory with identical tribes on each side of the border”¹⁰⁷ there was much sense in creating a compatible system. On account of this new arrangement which acknowledged that native territory could indeed straddle borders, chieftainships such as Katumbi’s, found a new chance to increase their authority.

With fresh perspectives driven by information collected from the Northern Rhodesian side of the border, O’Brien wrote to his Provincial Commissioner in the July of 1934 about the unfair situation that Katumbi had found himself in; it is, he said “the most blatant example of the unsatisfactory conditions brought about by adopting a purely artificial boundary to the Protectorate in the West...The bulk of Katumbi’s people have been cut off from him, leaving the chief with some 300 hut tax payers only within this district”.¹⁰⁸ His historical authority and ritual importance amongst the people in Hewe and Malambo were also brought into the picture; he is “now consulted concerning matters of headmanship and chieftainship by the Rhodesian Katumbi, and the Rhodesian Katumbi has approached the Nyasaland Katumbi on more than one occasion with a view to the alteration of the boundary including him within Nyasaland”.¹⁰⁹ The

attempt to make boundaries conform to the limits of tribal custom meant that Katumbi now became a chief with potential subjects across the international border.

The voices of colonial officials and the occasionally tense politics of administration in the north ought not to be forgotten as major contributors to the local debates about space. The contestations over the Northern Rhodesian and Nyasaland border in particular, where personal tensions and biases between the two local district administrations embedded themselves in the understandings of local history and politics of the adjacent native authorities is one example of how colonial officers ways of seeing land were taken onboard by chiefs and headmen, especially when it suited their own agenda. A memorandum discussion which took place on 1 October 1934 between the DC Mzimba and DC Lundazi, officers on either side of the inter-Protectorate boundary, demonstrates these dynamics. "It is a regrettable fact" so goes the memo:

"That the relationship between the D.Os in charge of these neighbouring districts has not always been as harmonious as efficiency and mutual understanding demands [...] it is apparent that extreme antipathy has existed. As is natural, this antipathy spread from the European officers to the chiefs on both sides of the boundary and the Rhodesian chiefs and Boma became obsessed with the idea of encouraging the watershed boundary with utter rigidity regardless of what hardship this may initiate upon natives hoeing and cultivating in its vicinity".¹¹⁰

This tension is reiterated in correspondence just a week or so later as DC Lundazi writes to O'Brien, the DC Mzimba:

"In the matter of the revision of the present boundary, perhaps I have not made it sufficiently clear that the attitude of my three chiefs has been taught to them by a jealous succession of officials, who, with an eye on the obligations of natives on this side of the boundary have not, perhaps, fully realized the difficulties in the way of the Nyasaland natives. In the matter of tax, guns, law etc... do you not think that difficulties would arise? An undefined boundary would be a release from supervision of the more lawless and taxless individual".¹¹¹

Furthermore, the production of political spaces within borderlands involved input from agents and institutions on the 'other side' of the boundary too. In Hewe, this was certainly the case; the lines which were drawn to the west of the Valley have been long negotiated lines and Northern Rhodesian officials and local communities alike played as significant a role in shaping these boundaries as those on the Nyasaland side. Northern Rhodesian attitudes to native customs and boundary demarcation were different from Nyasaland policies and this is reflected in the reports. This interaction of the colonial imagination with local political issues is vital to understanding how an area becomes "a place". Another aspect that needs to be considered is the interaction of colonial infrastructure with local geographies of power.

Part three. Places of power: how infrastructure reshaped chieftaincy

Resthouses, recruitment centres and remote places

Despite the new opportunities presented to the Katumbi chieftainship with the coming of Indirect Rule it is important to note that at this time Hewe was an area which had developed within it many places of power rather than a strong focal point which oriented solely around the Royal Family. As the colonial economy had gradually embarked upon capturing these peripheral areas it was rather in Chisimuka to where their attentions were drawn: crops were bought and

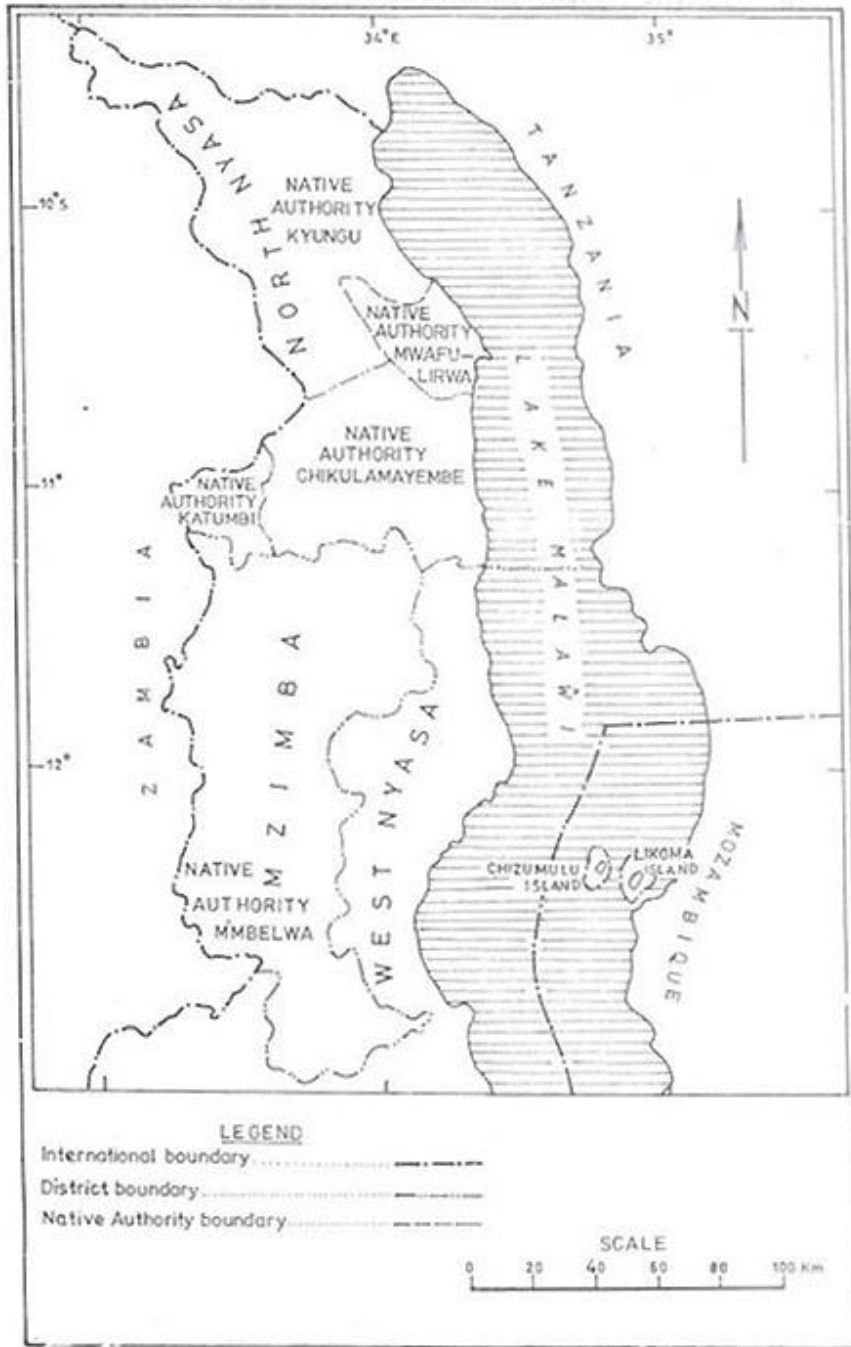
sold here, people were picked to go to school from here, and a lot of business was conducted here. Headman Mwachibanda had become a wealthy man, and his name had secured a fame that Katumbi could not easily equal. In contrast to the public presence of Mwachibanda, the Katumbi chieftaincy remained largely invisible in this new landscape based as it was in a private sacred space and dispersed in the different parts of the territory belonging to each of the royal clans. The chieftainship of Dukamayere, and henceforth that of the Katumbi Chieftainship, was therefore powerfully redefined and made “public” with the impact of colonial infrastructure. Roads, rest-houses and recruitment centres were developed in Hewe from the 1930s onwards and these infrastructures had the effect of reorienting and centralizing power within the Hewe Valley: the alliance of chieftaincy and mission education meshed powerfully at this time with a place that is newly defined by colonial infrastructure.

Whilst the administrative and territorial frameworks of the new Protectorate government reshaped power in Nyasaland in the ways in which we have described above, the people of Hewe experienced very few material differences in their lives up until the 1930s. Beyond the accumulation of individual wealth, the infrastructures and amenities which accompanied, or grew from, the broader economic changes of this time – specifically the growth in labour migration – were to have significant effects not only on the lives of those who managed and interacted with these facilities, but also upon the broader context of political struggle in Hewe. The rest-houses that accommodated migrants, the dispensaries that ensured their health for the journey ahead, and the canteens that fed them were all eventually established in Hewe, which had become not only a departure point for local people but also a common resting point for those coming from the south on their way to either Tanganyika or the Copperbelt in Northern Rhodesia.

By 1933 when the Native Administration Ordinance was introduced, and a closely monitored collection of taxation became increasingly feasible, it was rather through labour migration than agriculture that the majority of northerners sought to make the money they needed to pay for it and for the other commodities that were increasingly available, and desirable, to them. The people of Hewe were no exception to this. Gideon Luhanga’s first job was portering luggage for the Mandala stores to Karonga in a period sometime before 1930. He received “only 2 tambala” most of which, he complained, he had to give to the government in tax. Rather than continuing in this more localised work he decided to travel by foot to Tanganyika, to the Lupa Goldfields, whilst others too set about similar journeys to cut sisal or sugarcane in other parts of the country:

“Anyone was just going there. If someone was poor they would go. I heard I could make money there so I punished myself footing to go there. We imagined we could go and buy clothes...once we arrived we said we were looking for employment, they wrote our names and we started. They gave us a pick and shovel; we worked 30 days and at the end got 9 shillings. The ones who stayed at home were afraid to go footing for 2 weeks”.¹¹²

Map of Northern Malawi showing Native Authority boundaries as defined by the Native Authority Ordinance, 1933



Map 6.

Adapted from Vail, H. L., 'Suggestions towards a reinterpreted Tumbuka history' in B. Pachai (ed.) *The Early History of Malawi* (London, 1972)

Quietly, Hewe became a place of significance for thousands of migrating labourers who were going to Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia in search of work. Migrant-related infrastructures developed alongside other momentous processes of material change such as the clearing of the road through the Valley and the proliferation of trading facilities in the region. The ways in which people organised themselves for labour,¹¹³ the arrangements of how they ate and slept, and the order by which people respected others; all of these social and economic fibres began transforming.¹¹⁴ Understanding the impact of labour migration upon rural communities, as well as upon individuals as they travel away from their homes in search of work, has been a major pursuit of historians and anthropologists working on colonial East and Southern Africa from the time of the detailed ethnographic Rhodes-Livingstone investigations onwards.¹¹⁵ What is less often established is how the actual physical by-products of these processes, be they roads, labour recruitment centres, maize mills, or tea houses, impacted upon the production of local authority and how they shaped the landscape of chieftaincy in not immediately obvious ways.

As Hewe became redefined further by certain other emerging infrastructure, besides the Mission, the Katumbi chiefs were given new opportunities to regain prestige. The focus of inquiry so far has been on the production of formal authority throughout different periods. If these new sites of modernity within Hewe are taken as a context in which this authority is to be produced then it is possible to note how it offered both opportunities and challenges to the Katumbi leadership. Such understandings of the production of chiefly power are not adequately captured when Hewe's politics are understood through the colonial archive alone. Indeed even by looking through the memoirs and memories of colonial officers who worked closely with such communities at the time that these profound changes were taking place, the negotiations of chiefly power in this emerging landscape are not obvious. Setting these material consequences of the colonial economy within the framework not of the State but local perspectives of the place and the power within it can help in understanding how formal authority is captured and recreated.

Dukamayere: consolidating official power and capturing local authority 1932-1939

The figure of Dukamayere Katumbi was able to gain much greater authority than his immediate predecessors on account of his close connection to the Livingstonia Mission; this has already been discussed. His approval as a Native Authority was a combination of the long campaign for recognition which the Katumbi Royal family had been fighting since the DANO of 1912 and the implementation of the Native Administration Ordinance (NAO) of 1933 which necessitated a closer and more local management of rural communities which he was in a position to provide. However, whilst these changes guaranteed 'official' recognition at the level of mission and colonial administration a quite different process of power accumulation was required at the local level in order for the Katumbi chieftainship to regain prowess in the eyes of the Hewe population; this thesis argues that the local legitimacy accorded to Dukamayere was given a greater chance of success on account of how the new road and the expanding trading centre in the 1930's, was able to assist him in centralizing his power base and bringing the territory of Hewe more substantially under the chieftainship of Katumbi once more.

The clearing of the road from Mzimba to Hewe which travelled on from there in to Northern Rhodesia and Tanganyika coincided with these changes in framework and personnel in 1933. This, a section of the Great North Road, had a transformative effect on the communities through which it passed, expanding trade and increasing the traffic of both people and goods along its course. Charles Munthali's most vivid memory of it is that during the war from 1941-3 troops from the Kings African Rifles marching from Zomba northwards and then west into

Northern Rhodesia via the Great North Road would camp in Hewe all the way from Kaduku in the eastern part to Thanila in the west. He remembers scavenging with friends for the soldiers leftover food tins; amongst them Fray Bentos pie tins.¹¹⁶

Hewe had always been a nodal point in terms of trade and markets and it was only with the onset of colonial rule that its identity was reoriented to become a peripheral borderland in the eyes of the state. The passage that people took through the Hewe Valley had been long established as an important local route of migration and exchange. The proximity of the settlement at Hewe to its neighbours in Muyombe and Malambo - with whom it exchanged cattle, millet, maize and beans - ensured that there was a thriving local trade; movement which was guaranteed by the fact that the local political connections with these same neighbouring communities were historical and interwoven. It is likely that the road route was designed around 'popular resting places', as far as it was topographically possible to do so, with Hewe accommodating labour migrants on their ways north already it was an obvious choice to snake the road through the Valley before making a small diversion through Northern Rhodesian territory.

Whilst the road may not have initiated these movements it did a good job of making it much safer and quicker to travel the well trodden route, even if it would take several more years for bus and car transport to become a feature of the road. The road might not have passed through Hewe at all though had the North Nyasa Residents Association (NNRA) had their way. This small group of European settlers and businessmen who were based in the north protested strongly against the route of the road cutting through the Hewe Valley. They argued that it was a bad choice, both for the poor scenery and for the fact that it passed through country "infested with tsetse fly".¹¹⁷ The lack of attention paid to the NNRA demands, who wanted the route to accommodate more of the feeder roads so that they could increase the flow of products from the areas in which they had invested, indicates the government priorities in the north. European settlers in southern areas, where business interests mattered greatly to the economy and logistical concerns were given much attention, contrasted hugely. In the north stimulating the peasant economy had been of much greater import. In line with this a notable change took place in 1937 which opened the way for Hewe and its markets to grow in importance: a way was cleared through the Njakwa Gorge which saw the road extend to the lakeshore. This opened up a host of new transport and marketing possibilities, as well as to the instigation of various agricultural schemes which had been long devised but for which the prohibitively high transport costs had previously been shelved. It was from then on, remarked Jato Kawonga, when "people could move freely here and there [...] many came through these roads. That is when trade first started at Chiteshe, selling maize and other things".¹¹⁸

Chiteshe, at the crossroads in Hewe: A new place of power

'Chiteshe' refers to the area in Hewe which became a thriving trading centre during the 1930s and 40s; its name coming from the Tumbuka/English word, *siteshoni*, or station. This flourishing area soon became recognised as the heart of Hewe. From the early 1940s once a Witwatersrand Native Labour Association recruitment base was established here, and from which time the name Chiteshe came in to existence, local canteens opened, people began converting parts of their homes into local rest houses, local women found jobs there cooking for the migrants and portering luggage of returning migrants,¹¹⁹ a maize mill was built by the Boma, and WNLA representatives moved to live nearby. The area grew and extended to new parts of surrounding settlements which became known as 'Shasha', from the Chitumbuka word 'kusaska' meaning to

offer for sale or to hawk about. The area from Chiteshe to Shasha is remembered today as having been one big trading centre.¹²⁰ The Great North Road ran right through the middle of it.

In addition to the trade and business which this new space encouraged, the impact of the social development that took place here cannot be overstated. Communicating to the DC of North Nyasa the DC of Mbeya in southern Tanganyika asked for help making estimates for as many rest camps as he considered necessary in this district to provide shelter for the labourers who were walking to Tanganyika for work. He stated that they should be brick structures with floors of cement, cement plastered walls and a corrugated iron roof. Additionally there was a budget for a caretaker at each camp and a hospital assistant.¹²¹ It was made very clear by the PC that the siting of the shelters should follow popular resting places and not be altered to simply bring them within their own territory:

"If it is considered advisable to provide for these emigrants, four rest camps must be built...The provision of medical facilities would be a boon to the travelers and dispensaries might well be established near the Chitipa camp...and at Katumbi, where NA Katumbi has been asking incessantly for medical facilities".¹²²

The economic and social development of the area then is clear to see, but observing the emergence of Chiteshe is also instructive when analysing the political history of Hewe, showing how a certain combination of infrastructures were able to produce a powerful new type of settlement; one which became the central point for the whole of the Hewe Valley for the first time in its history at this moment. The new road (1933), the Native Authority headquarters (1934), which was the first building to be constructed by the government for Katumbi and the first brick building with an iron sheet roof to appear in Hewe, and the WNLA recruitment base (1937) together produced a place which easily surmounted the challenge which Mwachibanda had posed and even rivaled neighbouring settlements for the goods and services that began to be offered there. Whilst Dukamayere had gained a reputation as a strong chief from early on, he had taken the throne when the Royal family's power was dispersed and weak. The economic and geographical power base which the place of Chiteshe became enabled Dukamayere to consolidate his local power and centralize his chieftaincy which had been lacking a territorial focal point up until that point. This was the opportunity that was needed to re-establish the Katumbi family, centralize its power and make public its position.

With its "literate instruments of administration, classification, communication and enforcement"¹²³ and its insistence upon demarcating "political place" with borders, maps and surveys, it has already been noted how the colonial tools of territoriality had a powerful effect on local politics. At no time before had there existed such a need for those in positions of traditional authority to demonstrate a strong connection to a particular space as proof of their legitimacy; territorial behaviour was "an aspect of the group, but not the basis of the grouping. Pre-colonial clans and lineages were social groups within territorial dimensions but were not territorial entities in themselves".¹²⁴ In the pre-colonial period royal family clans occupied a number of different spaces within the Hewe Valley and, as has been shown, they had always needed to be relatively mobile so as to respond quickly to the threats of raiding and opportunities of trade. This ensured the ease in which the chieftaincy, and its royal narratives, survived as it ventured into new spaces. The Native Administrative Ordinance bound space and authority together very specifically. The new colonial order released the population from the threat of violent conflict however it also inflicted upon the chiefly families restraints on their usual patterns of accumulation and authority. Such chieftaincies had to sedentarise and

centralise in order to continue as a recognised institution by the government, and it had to absorb itself into the new patterns of wealth accumulation to ensure that new economic and political rivals from within the community itself were not able to usurp formal authority from it.

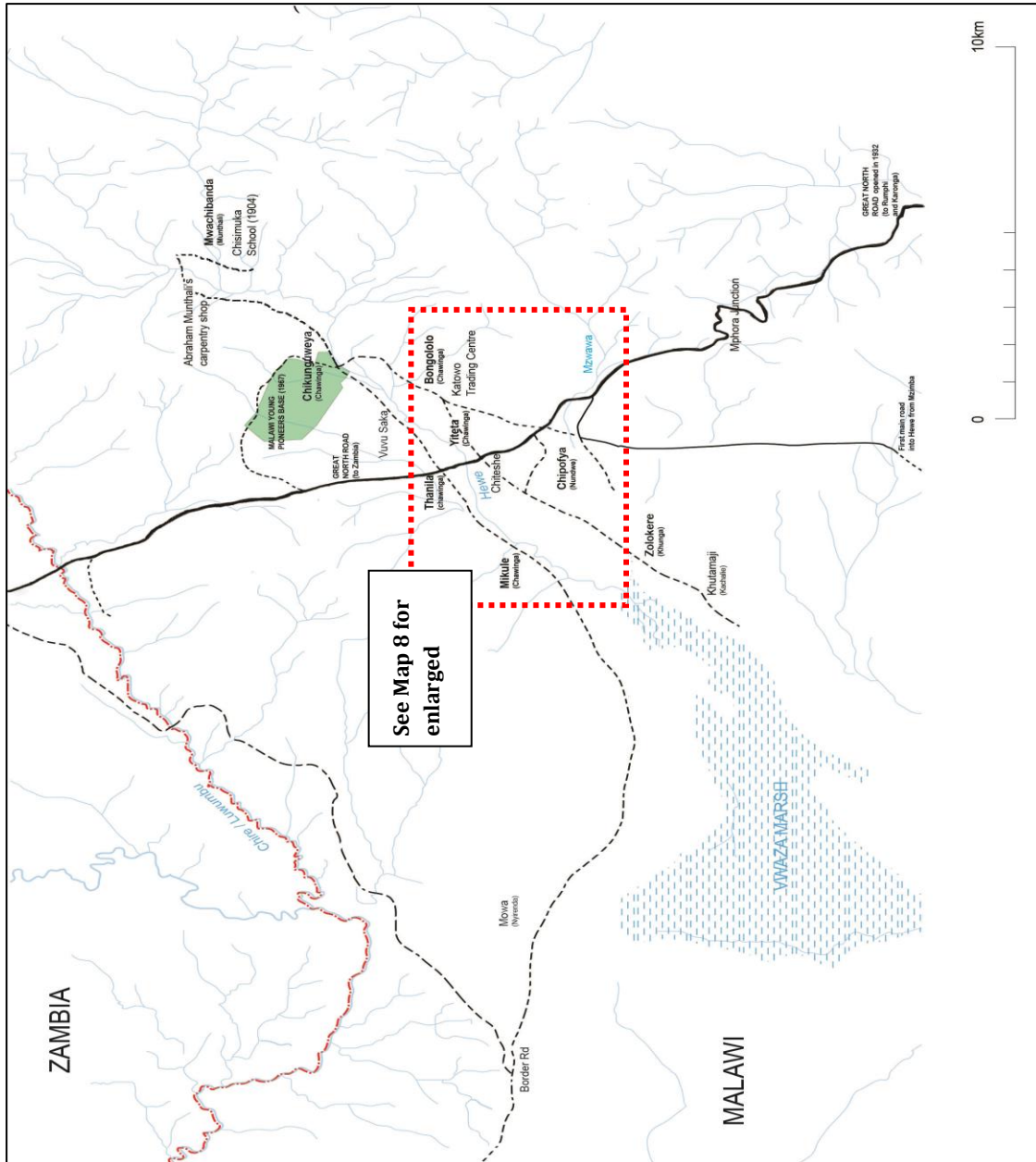
New territorial dimensions: Chiteshe redefining chieftaincy

The first chief's office was built by the Government and still stands, 70 years old, at the road junction in Chiteshe. It was the first time that a Themba Katumbi had relocated from his clans' residence to a public place.¹²⁵ It was a visibility which was further extended when Native Courts were established in 1934. This not only increased the power native authorities could wield over their people, as disputes were increasingly dealt with by chiefs courts rather than headmen and severe penalties could be doled out by them as a result, but it also gave them a new public platform on which to perform. Prior to this time the most important places of the chieftaincy had been the ritual spaces of the clans' burial grounds and at Vuvu stream where Mulindafwa's spirit had been buried. This shift from the private to the public is important when considering how Timothy Chawinga was later able to establish himself amongst the people. By the time that he became Themba in 1942 the school, the market and the main trading stores Mandala and Kandodo had already shifted from Chisimuka to Chiteshe. It made sense for business that all the amenities were brought together in one central area; but whether it was on account of the increased administration authority of Katumbi that these changes took place or simply as a result of economic pull of this new centre is unclear. What is clear is that a major ambition of Dukamayere, the reduction in the power and influence of headman Mwachibanda, was fulfilled in the process.¹²⁶

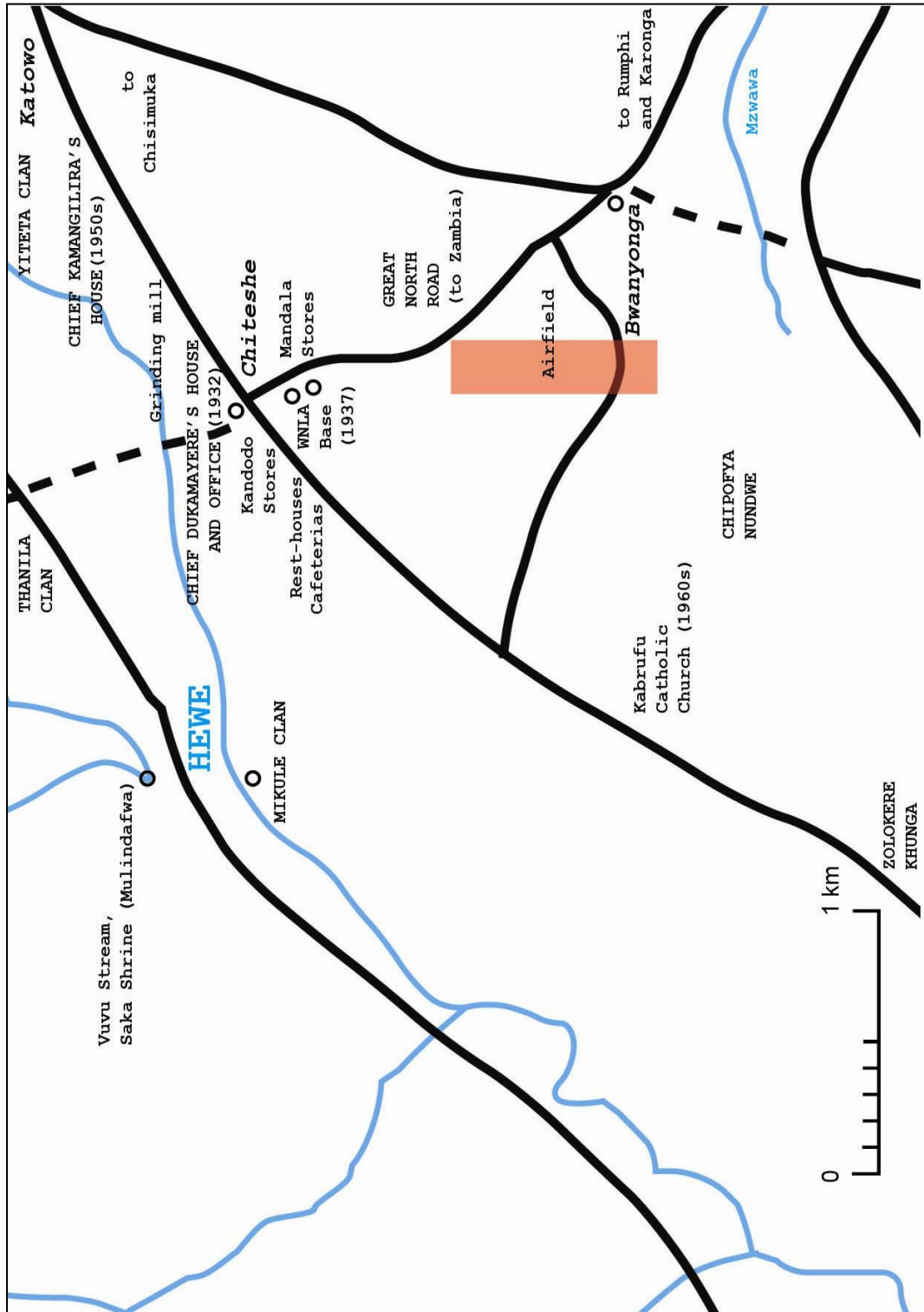
The movement of the school was a key factor in this shifting political geography. Dukamayere, himself a Livingstonia educated man, knew the importance of providing access to education in a place if it was to be considered "progressive". Once the school had moved from Chisimuka he called upon John Mwangonde, another person with whom he had had contact at with at Livingstonia, who accepted Dukamayere's offer to come and become the first qualified African teacher to teach in Hewe. Mwangonde provided the people of Hewe with a high level of education but also crucially proved an invaluable friend and ally to Timothy Chawinga when he became chief. His role in the chieftaincy of Timothy will be explored later, but it is mentioned here in order to stress how significant the period of Dukamayere's reign had been.

Dukamayere I did not only bring this well respected teacher to Chiteshe. He gathered people from all over Hewe with skills that would be usefully employed there. Jim Ngwira was one of the few people in the northern region who knew how to fix bicycles in the early 1930s. He had been living and working out of Chisimuka but was asked by Dukamayere to relocate to Chiteshe where he was given workshop premises and a key for a place to keep his tools.¹²⁷ Abraham Munthali, a skilled carpenter newly trained at Livingstonia, was also coaxed to work in Chiteshe.¹²⁸ All of these changes saw to it that business, population, and tax revenue all increased, and Dukamayere's reputation and power grew. The impact which the infrastructures around which Chiteshe was built changed peoples day to day lives. This might have been due to the new opportunities for wealth, as Charles Munthali, NyaKhunga and Nyamfune have mentioned.¹²⁹ It might also have been on account of their access to the dispensary and school. Whatever these changes were attributable to did not matter so much as the fact the general shifts in conditions amongst the people reflected well upon Dukamayere and he was able to consolidate his authority as a result.

Map 7. Native Authority Katumbi, showing the main roads and clan authority headquarters, see map 8 for large scale map of the colonial trading centre



Map 8. Chiteshe, the colonial trading centre in Hewe, and surrounding area



There is a growing presence of Katumbi's voice in the archive around local matters, furthermore the Bledisloe Commission Report records Dukamayere as fighting for his territory in Northern Rhodesia, and appears to semi-acknowledge his right to it.

Mwachibanda maintained advantages over the Katumbi's in some respects as the market and the amazing fertility of his land was still able to empower him. Government Ulendo notes recorded as late as the 1950s highlighted the area as a place of incredible fertility; "[It is] remarkable", wrote the Agricultural Officer for Northern Province in 1950, "that there is a surplus for sale from so small an area".¹³⁰ The increased value which had been placed on agricultural commodities, especially at a time when famine was taking its toll on the Nyasaland population across the country, put Mwachibanda in a particularly strong position. It had even been slated as one of the places where Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) maize could have been grown to be supplied to the workers on the experimental plantations near Mzuzu, and whilst these plans came to nothing Mwachibanda and Chisimuka remained economically crucial places for Hewe. Since it was an area that still might have chosen to establish independent economic ties outside of the Native Authority jurisdiction, it was also an area with which the Katumbi chiefs had to cultivate especially strong links. As the local political economy became oriented toward agricultural production the Katumbi chieftainship had to rethink its relationship to the agrarian spaces of the Hewe Valley if it was going to keep control over its rapidly altering landscape.

Headman Mwachibanda grew to become a 'Big Man' over the first decade of the century, but there was a limit to his authority, especially when certain external forces which had shaped the political space he operated in shifted. He had neither the time-span nor likely the ambition to convert this economic prestige into something more formal as the *Balowoka* big men had done one hundred years beforehand. The context of colonialism, which reoriented legitimacy around a broader "tribal" identity, looked to more established narratives of legitimacy to form the shape of native politics, even if they had to be dusted off a little. In Hewe these were much more easily found in the clan histories of the Katumbi royal family, the Chawingas. Mwachibanda was a well-known man but he had limited and very parochial historical raw materials to work with and was not, therefore, in a strong position to claim a role as an "indirect rule chief". On account of this he, and other "big men" like him, began to lose their advantage.

Conclusions

This was a time of great change in Nyasaland, but change that was broadcast differentially; a product of the different histories of north and south. Whilst in the south the fault-lines which had developed in the context of the early European exploitation were beginning to cause problems amongst the population, in the north there seemed more room for African advancement through the Livingstonia Mission which was helping to shape political space and personal ambition.

Timothy Chawinga inherited a geographically centralised chieftaincy. The area of Chiteshe gave the chief new opportunities to politically control an area and direct resources and people through it. However this area also created an environment in which other non-chiefly characters could thrive. Whilst access to mission education and support had strengthened the Katumbi claims to recognition with the government and had enabled Dukamayere to assume the leadership in Hewe it also enabled local artisans and Livingstonia trained teachers and pastors to carve for themselves an important place amongst the people of Hewe. The moral

authority which had previously lain only within chiefly institutions became dispersed and the increasing economic power that these non-chiefly characters wielded began to pressurize the various roles of the Katumbi chieftainship. The concentration of services and skilled people within the Chiteshe area enabled Hewe's economy to grow but by the late 1940s where once the chiefs had been the only people identified as prestigious there were now many growing numbers of people who challenged this order.

Within the chiefly clans tensions were also mounting. The impact of mission education was blamed for confusing the succession process by bringing new royal clans – from families that had been influenced by Christianity and education - into the line for Themba Katumbi. The new opportunities for power and wealth which clans in the position of native authority would now benefit from created jealousies within the Chawinga family. Vwende, the immediate successor to Dukamayere who took the throne in 1939 died within six months of his appointment under somewhat suspicious circumstances thought to have stemmed from these internal conflicts. It took another two years to find an appropriate successor who agreed to be crowned in this atmosphere of dangerous competition.

¹ Quotation from Chief Katumbi, MNA, NNM 1/14/8: *Native Administration: Miscellaneous 1940-49*, Minutes of a meeting held at Mwazisi to discuss the proposal to federate the administrations of Native Authorities Chikulamaembe and Katumbi, 25th June 1941

² J. McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, (Woodbridge and Rochester, 2012) 84-85

³ Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order* cited in Berry, 'Debating', 644

⁴ Berry, 'Debating', 644

⁵ Gray, *Colonial Rule*, 102

⁶ Interview MD with sub-Chief Zolokere Khunga, Chatumbwa Village, 4 February 2009; MD with Khutamaji Kachalie, Khutamaji Village, 5 February 2009

⁷ Sack, *Human Territoriality*, 1

⁸ Gray, *Colonial Rule*, 104

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Sack, *Human Territoriality*, 1

¹¹ Gray, *Colonial Rule*, 111

¹² When discussing the evolution of Tumbuka names, Chondoka and Bota highlight the difficulty of tracing all the original clan names since they have changed so drastically with the passage of time. Furthermore, other names also "broke-off from the main original name for one reason or the other". (Chondoka and Bota, *A History*, xii)

¹³ G.C. Mazarire, 'Oral traditions as heritage: the historiography of oral historical research on the Shona communities of Zimbabwe', *Historia*, 47:2 (2002), 431

¹⁴ Mazarire, 'Oral traditions', 431

¹⁵ Gray, *Colonial Rule*, 104

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 123

¹⁷ MNA, S1/922/26: Northern Province, *Chiefs and Headmen appointments, 1926-1939*

¹⁸ MNA, S1/499/20: *District Monthly Report, North Nyasa 1920-21*. Africans were said to be "resorting" to primitive practices in law and medicine rather than travelling to Karonga in order to access that which the government was offering.

¹⁹ Officers working in the Northern Province, at least up until the 1950s were generally left "to get on with it"; this was a feeling described in the memoirs of retired officers, certain of whose letters and memories were recorded by the Oxford Colonial Records Project and are deposited in the Rhodes House archive at Oxford University. The reminiscences of Richard Kettlewell, for example, of when he was working as an agricultural officer in the northern part of Nyasaland during the late 1930s, give the impression of the very great sense of distance which he felt existed between himself and his superiors: "I saw next to nothing of them", he remembers, and goes on to mention that the Director of Agriculture Small and his deputy Hornby, being specialists, "had no experience of field advisory work and, I think, little interest in it: they never travelled with me, seldom called at my base and correspondence was minimal. (Oxford University Rhodes House, Oxford Colonial Records Project (OCR), MSS. Afr. s. 1715 (154) (Box 10), 27ff, Papers of Major Richard W. Kettlewell, CMG)

²⁰ Richard Kettlewell describes his first year of experience during which time he recalls that “I must have walked between two and three thousand miles, most of them only in the company of Africans from whom I learned the language and a basic understanding of their way of life and the problems of improving it. Of equal importance I acquired an eye for the countryside, its potential and its constraints, which stood me in good stead when I had wider responsibilities for it”. (OCRCP), Kettlewell, f.17

²¹ A point made by both Kettlewell, who eventually became Director of Agriculture, and Cosmo Haskard (District Commissioner and Provincial Commissioner) when they were asked to reflect upon their time in the colonial service.

²² See also Fields, *Revival and Rebellion*, 56. She discusses how District Notebooks were an important point of continuity; they contained a lot of information about local events, languages, traditions, and personalities which were “passed by official to successor”. This was crucial especially with regard to the government’s continued co-operation with the “men who counted locally”.

²³ MNA, S1/478/29: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province, 1928-30*

²⁴ The Lands Commission (1928-1931), and in particular the North Nyasa Native Reserves Commission (1929), were set up to collect information about local populations, their land practices and their political organisation just before indirect rule. For more on this see MNA: S1/1519A/28 and Public Records Office, London (hereafter PRO): CO 525/130/3. General discussions around boundaries between the period 1934 to 1961 can be found in MNA: NN 1/5/2, *Boundaries 1934-61* and PRO: CO 525/149/9, *Alteration of District Boundaries*. The debates sparked off by the Bledisloe Commission played an important role in the reshaping of Hewe especially with regard to the potential incorporation of Katumbi’s people in Northern Rhodesia. See MNA: NNM 1/14/8. Discussions from the Northern Rhodesian administration’s point of view can be noted in Zambia National Archives (hereafter ZNA): EP 4/7/1, *Native chiefs and headmen 1934-39*

²⁵ It was called the British Central Africa Protectorate in 1893 and only later, in 1907, became the Nyasaland Protectorate.

²⁶ A levy of 6 shillings was charged in the first instance which was most often paid with combinations of grain and labour. Whilst the Foreign Office was not very happy with this form of payment the company itself didn’t mind as it was in need of labour.

²⁷ Interview LV with Timothy Chawinga

²⁸ Interview MD with Abraham Munthali, Kawulumira Village, 30 January 2009

²⁹ Interview MD with Austin Mfune (Principal Group Village Headman Chembe), Chembe Village, 29 January 2009

³⁰ Informal discussion MD with Joseph Munthali, February 2009

³¹ Interview MD with Elias Jato Kawonga, Nguwoyang’ombe Village, 29 January 2009

³² Gray, *Colonial Rule*, 101

³³ Interview MD with Ching’anya Nyirenda, Ching’anya Village, 22nd January 2009

³⁴ Interview MD with Kawonga, 29th January 2009

³⁵ The trade stores and primary school would certainly have been a focal point for people in Malambo, which is presently found in Zambia, where a section of the Katumbi family settled some ten to twenty years beforehand.

³⁶ See table in appendix II.

³⁷ MNA, S1/478/29, 1928 Annual Report

³⁸ See Chiremba, *Chieftainship*, 68, for a discussion as to how Chilongozi was chosen as Themba Chikulamayembe.

³⁹ Vail and White, ‘Tribalism’, 155

⁴⁰ MNA, S1/499/20. Transport infrastructure was almost non-existent and there were limited job opportunities for Africans in the north. Dr Laws, the principal at Livingstonia Mission, had predicted that there would be a significant migration out of the province, especially if the hut tax remained at 6/-.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Report from October 1920

⁴² MNA, S1/1172/19: *District Monthly Reports, North Nyasa District 1919-20*, John Abraham, Acting Resident, 31 March 1920

⁴³ *Ibid.*; see also PRO: CO 626/1: *General Administration Reports 1907-1913*, Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 31 March 1913

⁴⁴ MNA, S1/1434/22: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province, 1921-22*; MNA, S1/1434/23: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province, 1922-23*. The Spanish influenza pandemic of 1919, outbreak of Bubonic Plague in 1920, and a severe famine in 1923 all had obvious deleterious effects upon the region. This built on top of other disastrous ecological events such as the spread of bovine pleuro-pneumonia in 1912 which had effectively ended the trade in cattle (Vail and White, ‘Tribalism’, 158).

⁴⁵ Vail and White, 'Tribalism', 158

⁴⁶ See M. Page, 'Malawians and the Great War: Oral History in Reconstructing Africa's Recent Past' *Oral History Review*, 18:1 (1980), 49-61. Page suggests that on account of its position on the border with German East Africa, Nyasaland played an important role in the East African Campaign. 200,000 Africans were recruited as soldiers and labourers in the military and the rest of the population was charged with providing food for the army throughout the duration of the campaign.

⁴⁷ Vail and White, 'Tribalism', 158

⁴⁸ See M. Page, 'The war of Thangata: Nyasaland and the east Africa campaign, 1914-1918, *Journal of African History*, 19:1 (1978), 87-100. Discussing this time and its impact upon their lives, Page describes how Malawians gave the war a name which reflected the intensity of their feelings, "The war of Thangata". "The demand for African labour, known as *thangata*, had become one of the chief characteristics of British rule in the Nyasaland Protectorate. In Chichewa the word literally means 'help' and originally referred to a system of 'narrowly structured exchanges of services between chiefs and their dependents prior to British colonization.' In the colonial situation, however, the term was applied to the demands, usually from new European landlords, for labour in exchange for 'rent' and for taxes. *Thangata* thus reflected a sense of new dependency and gradually came to signify not 'help' but unwarranted demands by Europeans for African service. '*Thangata*,' explained one Malawian, is 'work which was done without real benefit.' In this context the word symbolized the worst features of British rule".

⁴⁹ Tax revenue noticeably increased at this time which coincided with a more accurate census, enabling the Resident to "prosecute more vigorously". See MNA, S1/1172/19: *District Monthly Reports, North Nyasa District, 1919-20*

⁵⁰ MNA, S1/478/29, 1930 Annual Report

⁵¹ MNA, S1/499/20, Report from October 1920

⁵² The uneven impact of ecological change across the region should be considered in greater detail, especially how these dramatic changes in economy and society during the first two decades of the century differently affected the patterns of local authority. The ways in which this environmental context assisted and/or hindered the development of chiefly authority in the colonial setting is the subject of chapters three, four and five.

⁵³ M. Page, 'The war', 88

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "The thin white line: the size of the British colonial service in Africa", *African Affairs*, 70:314 (1980), 25-44

⁵⁶ According to Kirk-Greene the years 1919 to 1939 were the high point of British Empire in Africa. These years were, however, characterised by five year cycles of expansion and contraction, which is reflected in the patterns of recruitment and retrenchment of administrators. There was a post-war boom, a slump between 1921-1923 followed by expansion until the late 1920s, but then the world recession of the early 1930s saw 75% retrenchment in 1931. A recovery did take place which reached a peak in 1938 until the Second World War put pay to the recruitment of any more officers. By 1946 the recruitment picks up again, with a record number of 553 appointments to colonial service (Kirk-Greene, 'The Thin White', 26). The effect of these specific periods of expansion and contraction on the ground has not really been considered at length.

⁵⁷ Vail and White, 'Tribalism', 152

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 155-156

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 152

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 159

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 155-156

⁶² McCracken, *Politics*, 335

⁶³ Power, *Political Culture*, 20

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21

⁶⁵ MNA, NN 1/20/1, Memorandum from J. O'Brien, D.C Mzimba to P.C. Northern Province, 23 April 1931, cited in Chiremba, *Chieftainship*, 81

⁶⁶ Interview MD with Kawonga, 29th January 2009; Interview MD with Chembe, 29 January 2009; Informal discussion with Martin Bongololo Chawinga at Katowo Trading Centre in September 2009.

⁶⁷ "The conflicts with Chikulamayembe only really came with the borders" (Interview MD with Kawonga, 29th January 2009)

⁶⁸ The absence of the once historically important net making skills in Chikulamayembe's country was alluded to in a meeting held in Bolero (Chikulamayembe's headquarters) on the 15 May 1941. When the issue of using nets to catch pests came up Regent Juwaunini pointed out that nets had never been used in

this area as “people did not know how to make them” (MNA, NNM 1/14/8, *Minutes of a meeting held at Mwazisi to discuss the proposal to federate the administrations of Native Authorities Chikulamaembe and Katumbi*, 25th June 1941). This gives weight to this story told in Katumbi’s area about the provision of ropes to Chikulamayembe.

⁶⁹ In 1941, discussions to federate the treasuries of Chikulamayembe and Katumbi were stalled on account of this unresolved dispute, as well as in relation to the contested “ownership” of the village of Chelanya. At the meeting Headman Chipofya testified to the fact that “one time Chikulamaembe sent word to Katumbi to ask for ropes. Katumbi sent Chelanya with the ropes. Chelanya received presents from Chikulamaembe and since that time he has been under him. That is all I know”. (MNA, NNM 1/14/8).

⁷⁰ Interview MD with Group Village Headman Patstone Yiteta Chawinga and Laugh Wazumale Chawinga, 17 September, 2009

⁷¹ Interview MD with Gideon Luhanga, Mwatanantha Village, 30 January 2009. “Whites came first with him. They taught him to use a gun and I saw him shooting. I was still young by then. We were wondering these are things they use when killing people. I hardly saw any whites at that time. I only saw one and he was using machila”.

⁷² Chirembo, *Chieftainship*, 80

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ MNA, NN 1/20/7, *African Provincial Council Meeting Minutes*, Memo O’Brien to PC north, 4 October 1930 cited in Chirembo, *Chieftainship*, 80

⁷⁵ Throughout Timothy’s reign (1942-73) these tensions can be seen borne out in discussions about shared borders, treasuries and courts. What colonial officers describe as “petty jealousies”, which they consider to serve only to deter development in their areas, are meaningful contestations that have resonance in local imaginations of chiefly power. As regards the tension between Katumbi and Mwachibanda, there was clearly some desire on the part of Timothy Chawinga to assert authority over the headman as he denies that a school had ever been based in Mwachibanda village, certainly not the first school in the area which he describes was built in Katowo. (Interview LV with Timothy Chawinga)

⁷⁶ MNA, S1/1171/19: *Monthly District Report, North Nyasa District*, 1919-20

⁷⁷ MNA, S1/499/20, *District Reports North Nyasa, 1920-21*, Principal Headmen and councillors across the district met at Karonga in May, December and March to discuss hut tax, the Lands Commission, the census and new proposals with regard to vaccination and treatment of leprosy.

⁷⁸ MNA, S1/478/29, *North Nyasa District*, Annual Report 1929

⁷⁹ PRO, CO 626/3: *Nyasaland Administration Reports 1914-1919*

⁸⁰ MNA, S1/478/29, Annual Report 1929

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* John O’Brien, D.C North Nyasa to Anderson, Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, Annual Report 1929. This was a sentiment that had already gained popularity in other parts of the British Empire on account of Lugard’s publication, *The Dual Mandate*. The implications of this have been discussed at length in the introduction to this thesis.

⁸⁶ “Mr Burden, His Honour thought, had obtained a wrong impression of the position of Katumbi which might be corrected by a perusal of the evidence given before the North Nyasa Commission. This Mr. Burden had not seen and I have therefore arranged to send it to him” (S1/922/26: Northern Province – Chiefs and Headmen Appointments 1926-39: folio 60. H.H The Judge in Northern Province, Re: the Chikulamayembe Succession)

⁸⁷ MNA, NN 4/1/1: *Northern Province Annual Report 1930*

⁸⁸ As the previous chapter has noted the revised 1932 edition of *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples*, by Thomas Cullen Young attributed to Katumbi a more senior position amongst the Balowoka to before.

⁸⁹ Vail and White, ‘Tribalism’, 159

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Chirembo, *Chieftaincy*, 81.

⁹² MNA: NNM 1/7/2 Report on Tribal Organisation of Henga-Nkamanga NA, 29 Oct 1933. This all took place following the meeting at Ng’onga which had been called to define the tribal organisation of the Wahenga people (See MNA: NNM 3/1/2, Mzimba District Annual Report 1934; MNA: NNM 1/14/8)

⁹³ Several discussions with Martin Chibumila Chawinga, in various locations but most often at the Katowo Trading Centre, October 2008 to September 2009

⁹⁴ Interview MD with Robert Bongololo Chawinga, Bongololo Village, 10th September 2009

⁹⁵ MNA, NN 4/1/1, *Northern Province Annual Report*, 1930, G. B. Anderson, P.C Northern Province

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ MNA, S15/1/3/1, *Hewe Improved Council*, 1943, DC Mzimba, H. C. Foulger to P.C Northern Province Barker, 24th May 1943

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, W.M.C Galbraith, Principal, Overtoun Institution, Livingstonia Mission to H.C Foulger, D.C Mzimba, 20th May 1943

⁹⁹ MNA, S1/922/26, *Chiefs and Headmen Appointments, 1926-1939*, "Memorandum on the discussion on points raised by the Rev. E. Manda in correspondence with the Themba Chikulamaembe", attachment to a letter from O'Brien, D.C. Mzimba to P.C. Northern Province, 27th April, 1935

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ In fact this issue of Mwafulirwa had wider implications. At a later meeting in 1941 regarding a possible change to district boundaries, DC Karonga (Adagh) in correspondence with DC Mzimba Foulger wrote that he thought they should think very carefully about changing anything as a calm had been attained. If things were changed to benefit Mzimba, he pondered, then it would certainly be construed by Afulirwa and Ankonde and Kyungu as a "first step to absorption under the Ahenga". His worry was that such modifications would ignite a bigger dispute between Ankonde and Ahenga. His conclusion being that "the declaring of Mwafulirwa's country as independent of both (it is in fact now a buffer state) will tend to help the healing of old wounds and remove one of the sources of jealousy" (MNA: NNM 1/14/8 O. C. Adagh (DC Karonga) to Foulger (DC Mzimba), 9th April 1941)

¹⁰⁴ MNA, S1/922/26. In the discussion about the northern boundary of Mzimba District between Mwafulirwa and Chikulamaembe, the D.C. was asked by Murray, the Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, to clear up another matter concerning an earlier promise to start a new Henga Boma. The P.C wished it to be noted that there was "no more justification in giving Chikulamayembe a boma of his own that any other chief of similar size, say Yakobi Jere at Emfeni". It would of course have been easier to administer Yakobi Jere at Emfeni as his chieftaincy was politically organised and associated with the larger M'mbelwa Paramountcy, whilst Hewe and Nkamanga were quite definitely politically separate and 'a law unto themselves'.

¹⁰⁵ MNA, S1/922/26, "Memorandum on the discussion on points raised by the Rev. E. Manda in correspondence with the Themba Chikulamaembe", attachment to a letter from O'Brien, D.C. Mzimba to P.C. Northern Province, 27th April, 1935

¹⁰⁶ MNA: NNM 1/14/8, Edward Manda to Themba Chikulamayembe, 28 March 1941

¹⁰⁷ MNA, S1/478/29, *North Nyasa District Report*, Annual Report 1929, Native Administration, Anderson to Chief Secretary, 20 February 1930

¹⁰⁸ MNA: NNM 1/2/2: *Northern Rhodesia Boundaries, 1931-1936*, J. O'Brien, D.C. Mzimba to P.C. Northern Province, 24th July 1934

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Memorandum of a discussion between the D.C. Mzimba and D.C. Lundazi regarding the inter-protectorate boundary, 1st October 1934

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, C.H. Rawstorne, D.C. Lundazi to J. O'Brien, D.C. Mzimba, 11th October 1934

¹¹² Interview MD with Gideon Luhanga

¹¹³ A useful ethnographic description of this can be found in R. E. Gregson, 'Work, Exchange and Leadership: The Mobilization of Agricultural Labor Among the Tumbuka of the Henga Valley', Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1969. His field site is fifty miles or so from Hewe and displays similar characteristics.

¹¹⁴ The most interesting differences in this regard were the changes that took place to the institutions of *mphara* and *ntanganene*. These were the institutions which organised the male and female initiations and formed the social basis of community life. Men and boys ate together in *mphara*, and boys also slept together in communal houses, women and girls did likewise in *ntanganene*. These arrangements began to change as the cash economy saw certain community members able to buy better food or as they desired to build themselves better houses in which they wanted their children to sleep. See, Interview MD with Mr Chilambo, Senior Group Village Headman Mteweta, 20 January 2009

¹¹⁵ A. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: an economic study of the Bemba tribe*, (Oxford, 1939); W. Watson, *Tribal cohesion in a money economy: a study of the Mambwe people of Zambia*, (Manchester, 1958); J. Van Velsen, *The Politics of Kinship*, (Manchester, 1964); and the later rethinking of the Rhodes Livingstone ethnographies by, amongst others, J. Pottier, *Migrants No More: settlement and*

survival in Mambwe villages, Zambia (Manchester, 1988); H. L. Moore and M. Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: gender, nutrition, and agricultural change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990* (London, 1994); J. Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1999). Eugenia Herbert makes an important point where she suggests that the most serious effect of labour migration can be better gauged by imagining what *failed* to take place in the rural setting as a result of the absence of men and women who migrated. Those who spent time “outside” were often more likely to have been energetic and educated; she poses the question what might have taken place in terms of development and change had they stayed “at home” (E. Herbert, *Twilight on the Zambezi: Late Colonialism in Central Africa* (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), 73)

¹¹⁶ Interview MD with Charles Munthali, Blantyre, 6 August 2009.

¹¹⁷ MNA, S1/830/31, *Northern Nyasa Residents Association, 1931-36*, A. McKenzie (NNRA, P.O. Livingstonia) to Chief Secretary, Zomba, 5 May 1933. In all likelihood the real motivation for suggesting an alternative route was to protect and develop their own business interests in the region.

¹¹⁸ Interview MD with Kawonga, 29 January 2009; see also interview with Lyton Karua.

¹¹⁹ Interview MD with Charles Munthali. He remembers how Vinolia soap was used as payment for the porters who would carry luggage of returning migrants from the WNLA base to their homes, often several hours walk away.

¹²⁰ Interview MD with Karua

¹²¹ MNA, NNM 1/9/3, *Lupa Gold Diggings 1936-37*, quoting the DC Mbeya, DC North Nyasa to Chief Secretary Zomba, 29 October 1936

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Gray, *Colonial Rule*, 43

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 83

¹²⁵ Interview MD with NyaHarawa, Zingatikome Village, 13 February 2009

¹²⁶ Informal discussion MD with Mlomboji Munthali at his home in Mwachibanda, May 2009

¹²⁷ Interview MD with Jim Ngwira, Thiti Farm, Mwatanantha 19 September 2009

¹²⁸ Interview MD with Abraham Munthali and Nyamhango, Kawulumira Village, 22 September 2009

¹²⁹ Interview MD with Nyakhunga and Nyazunda, Chiteshe, 25 August 2009. Interview MD with Lyton Karua

¹³⁰ MNA, Transmittal files, 3-12-4F (box 9564), *Ulendo Books 1950-66*, G. Craske, Ulendo notes, August 1950

CHAPTER 3

Becoming “Kamangilira”: Establishing authority as a chief in 1940s Nyasaland

“I understand that Timothy Chawinga at first declined to be selected as chief”.¹

“They started calling him ‘Kamangilira’ after he killed this lion at Mowa. [It means] whatever he says he will do, he will do it”.²

Introduction

Becoming a Native Authority chief in 1940s Nyasaland was neither a comfortable route to power nor a guarantee for a secure future. Whilst rents on land could bring in some money for chiefs in areas where European’s wanted to farm like Ntcheu and Lilongwe, chiefs salaries in Nyasaland rarely amounted to £300. Unlike some of their counterparts in Tanganyika, “almost all of (whom) could afford a car”, in Nyasaland, whilst most had more money than their subjects, they “were more likely to own a bicycle”.³ The Traditional Authorities of today might enjoy the benefits which the discourse of “indigeneity” has won them, especially in terms of their protected rights over land,⁴ but their Native Authority antecedents had no such advantage.

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, custom was being wielded as a tool to gain advantage in Nyasaland from as early as 1912, but each chief still had to work hard to prove his right to brandish it. The colonial archives are brimming with evidence of these leaders’ attempts to convert their historical narratives into useable “customary” identities in the context of indirect rule. In this new political and economic landscape where territorial units formed the basis of local administration, these usable identities had also to correspond to a piece of land, a defined place whereupon the custom could be contained. Colonial chiefs, therefore, spent much of the colonial period producing the historical evidence needed to demonstrate their customary legitimacy over land.

Complicating the chiefs’ largely local ambitions were the machinations of various mission educated Africans who used these platforms, in which chiefs contested their legitimacy, for their own political purposes. The previous chapter highlighted the activities of the Reverend Edward Bote Manda in this regard, and introduced the character of Simon Masopera Gondwe; both operated in northern Mzimba amongst their native Tumbuka communities, and both were motivated by a vision to restore to the landscape a Tumbuka kingdom which they claimed had once been vast but had been lost on account of the Ngoni wars. In the context of these external agendas, chiefs, particularly young and inexperienced ones, could be easily manipulated to perform on behalf of these ambitious elites who were well informed and developed in their political ideas; Masopera Gondwe is said to have subscribed to the Ghanaian newspaper the Daily Graphic which he would let people in Hewe come around to read.⁵ As much as these men had enabled chiefs to enter the dialogue which shaped political boundaries in the first place, by the 1940s it was becoming the case that being represented by one of these figures could be as problematic as it could be helpful.

For all of these reasons it was not easy to become a respected and influential chief during this period. It required a strong personality, a good grasp of history, a decent level of education but also great sensitivity to the needs of the elders and advisers within their own communities, the alienation of whom could easily result in native authorities falling from grace in the local setting. Zakeyo Dukamayere had been a senior and stable chief who kept things in order amidst this wrangling, but when he died in 1939 the Katumbi leadership was left exposed to succession disputes and made vulnerable to renewed territorial challenges from its neighbour. It was not only changes in the local setting which caused instability in the chieftaincy. The pressures of the Second World War had created a systemic problem of human resources for the Colonial Office. As the number of colonial officers dropped steadily throughout the early 1940s as they were recruited into the British Army, different priorities were set in terms of local government. The need to streamline native administration by federating native authority treasuries and shifting district boundaries prompted a re-ignition of old disputes; the fragile peace which had held together for the first ten years of indirect rule was about to end in northern Nyasaland.

In the context of these precarious arrangements it is unsurprising that Timothy Chawinga "at first declined to be accepted as chief".⁶ His two immediate predecessors had died fairly swift deaths and the district was on fire with battles to define boundaries and assert dominance. Furthermore, it was starting to look as though perhaps the policy of indirect rule, and hence the centrality of using native authorities to run local affairs, had run its course. From this time onwards there was a move towards opening up chiefs' councils to "progressive" non-chiefly individuals, and as a result another plane of potential conflict opened up for new chiefs like Timothy. However, under some duress and some encouragement from senior members of the family, and with the added fortification of protective medicine, Timothy Chawinga did take up the position as fifteenth Themba Katumbi in January 1943.

By the end of the War and certainly by the time Governor Geoffrey Colby arrived in Nyasaland in 1948 with an agenda to bring development to the Protectorate there began a brief period of time – sometimes known as the "second colonial occupation"⁷ – in which chiefs like Timothy were able to develop the territorialising legacy which the DANO and NAO had passed on to them. When government policy had been focused upon distribution rather than agricultural production there were fewer benefits that native authorities could gain from their institutionalized responsibilities for land. However as the government began investing in the local setting and the potential value of land began rising the opportunity for augmenting their authority increased hugely. In peripheral areas the possibility was more so. These years were important for Timothy; they enabled him to gain a real foothold in the landscape, prove his worth locally and to the government, and gather resources and allies for future. The longstanding local conflict with Chikulamayembe with which Timothy also became involved was particularly important as a symbol of his pre-eminence; their battles over borders, villages, treasuries and historical superiority are central in understanding the rise of Timothy Chawinga and his reputation amongst his people during this time. This was the time that he began to master his territory and lay down what could be done in it and on it. This was the time he needed in order to earn himself a worthy praise name, *Kamangilira*; "whatever he has said he will do, he will do it". By 1953 the political situation in Nyasaland changed dramatically. Had Chawinga ascended to the throne at this juncture there might have been limited time for him to establish himself before the politics of Federation and Nationalism took hold in the local setting.

This chapter will discuss the local and national political context surrounding his crowning. It will establish a sense of why the timing of his ascent was crucial to his success and

will introduce one of the central ideas of this thesis that the relationship which the state developed with chiefs varied hugely throughout the country, and whilst national policy had some bearing on what was expected from them it did not always create the same framework of opportunity for everyone.

Part one. The local politics of succession

A divided Chieftaincy: The crowning of a new chief

Timothy Chawinga knew that there were plans afoot to install him as Themba Katumbi from as early as 1938, Dukamayere had openly named him as one of a number of possible successors before his death in 1939, and a move to crown him had even been attempted in the early part of 1942 on an occasion when, during leave from his job in South Africa, he had briefly returned to Hewe. Born in 1913 he was a good age to become chief and with his experience of working outside Nyasaland as a captao in Tanzania and a waiter in the army in South Africa he was considered worldly enough to deal with the inevitable difficulties that came with this position. Furthermore he was married to NyaBota, a woman from Malambo the place where the other Katumbi chiefs had settled; this was no doubt considered an important factor when selecting the candidates as good relations with their Northern Rhodesian counterparts would have been crucial.

It was Timothy that was most likely the mooted popularly heralded “successor” mentioned in a letter that the Reverend Isaac Khunga had written to H. C. Foulger, the District Commissioner of Mzimba in 1942.⁸ Being crowned as Themba Katumbi was for Timothy not such a pleasing proposition; he knew the dangers associated with such a role, especially in the increasingly competitive atmosphere of chiefly politics, where magic was being used by factions to secure prestigious positions. An influential role it might have been, but it was not without its pitfalls and in many ways Chawinga was happy with his life as it was; at first he rejected the ‘honour’ which was destined to befall him.

When Timothy eventually assumed the position of Themba Katumbi he finally put an end to the perpetual uncertainty that the now controversial succession was creating following Dukamayere’s death in 1939. His installation as chief, however, was not the ‘solution’ which the colonial administrations on both sides of the border had envisaged. They were aware of the problems that were being caused by, what they had interpreted correctly as, a ‘crisis in legitimacy’ surrounding the Katumbi chieftaincy. Local narratives about this time confirm these official suspicions; they speak of a serious power vacuum which had emerged following three uncertain years of chieftaincy troubles. The suspicious death of one of the chiefs who was crowned after Dukamayere plays an important role in the local stories around the chieftaincy disputes of this time (1939-42); these stories reveal not only an ambivalence toward the institution at this point in its history but a serious confusion regarding the ‘rules’ surrounding succession and a set of problems relating to inheritance patterns which have to do with the proliferating number of legitimate clans within the royal family of Chawinga.

Isaac ‘Vwende’ Chawinga, of the royal clan Chikunguweya ascended to the throne at the end of 1939 following a brief period of caretaking by Zakeyo Dukamayere’s brother Eliya (both of the Bongololo clan) who died later in the same year as his brother in the December of 1939. Vwende’s appointment had not been greeted with enthusiasm either by the people of Hewe or by Foulger, the district commissioner, who described him in the District Book as having “little authority or personality”;⁹ but, possibly on account of the ‘under-representation’ of the

Chikunguweya clan in the more recent history of Katumbi chiefs, the crowning went ahead. Vwende died in 1942 having never established himself successfully as Themba Katumbi in the two short years he reigned as chief. It had been a difficult role to live up to from the beginning. Foulger remained insistent even after the appointment had taken place that Isaac was not the "rightful successor" and that as a result serious problems would surely arise; there has "been no chief in the proper line since the death of Zakeyu"¹⁰ he fretted in 1942.

Notions about Vwende's illegitimacy in the local setting can be explored through the narratives surrounding his suspicious death. He was "struck by lightning" said many who were asked about the end of his chieftaincy;¹¹ this is both narrated and interpreted by Hewe residents to mean that he was killed magically, 'through ufwiti'.¹² The royal clans in Hewe, which by this stage amounted to five¹³ and who had managed to keep their tensions at bay until this point, were unable to make a decision about who should be taken next to rule. The clans divided more fundamentally after accusations flew over who was to blame for Vwende's death. These splits have remained as a fault-line in the Katumbi chieftaincy up until now, the perception being that the successor to his throne ousted him with underhand tactics.¹⁴ Meanwhile the figure of Yakobe Chawinga loomed large in the imagination of both the colonial administrators and local mission elites as the silver bullet in the resolution of the chieftaincy disputes. Yakobe was from Sitwe in Northern Rhodesia where certain branches of the Katumbi royal clans had been based since just prior to colonial occupation. The chieftaincy disputes, it was thought, were largely borne out of this division of the chieftaincy on account of the split in the royal family, the imposition of the colonial border, and the confusion of the succession of royal clan lines which followed. The crowning of Yakobe, the 'rightful Katumbi', would bring both sets of people from Hewe in Nyasaland and Sitwe in Northern Rhodesia under the authority of one chief once more, even if the territories remained administratively separated. His perceived legitimacy would, it was thought, bring present fighting to a stop, prevent future disagreements, and ensure a host of beneficial knock-on effects which would enable a more efficient native administration.

The Reverend Khunga became convinced that Yakobe's ascendancy was vital to achieving stability. Having been an important consultant during the discussions about native authorities in the Tumbuka areas prior to the 1933 indirect rule bill he had initiated many conversations about the history of these areas and had been influential in urging administrators to reflect again on the local formations of power. He had authority in these matters as he had worked for some time as a minister in some of Livingstonia's Northern Rhodesian stations and knew the areas and histories well. Outlining his understanding of the local chieftaincy in a letter written to Foulger, in November 1942, just two months before Timothy was crowned, he articulated what appears to have been the wish of both the previous Katumbi Dukamayere before he died (in Nyasaland) and the still reigning Katumbi in Northern Rhodesia, that the two areas be 'reunited' under one authority and Yakobe be crowned Themba over all:

"Since I met you...after hearing your suggestion of Katumbi's two areas to be ruled by one chief, I was very pleased and also expected to hear from Hewe if what the DC had suggested had been approved by the Government. So I am writing to you to ask if that suggestion of yours will be carried out early next year – I think people should be warned so as not to make any confusion on considering the election of a chief [...] About a month ago, I heard that the Hewe people had mentioned the name of a successor, but since I has (sic) in mind what you said, I simply reminded them what was agreed to by both the late Duka and Citanda (the present Katumbi Sitwe). At their meeting they said, 'what will be future position if one of us die?' They then both of them came to the conclusion that even if the Govnt. (Sic) would hesitate to unite the Rhodesian part to Nyasaland, we shall have one chief under the other so that if the Government makes two countries into one there

should not be any quarrel or claim for superiority. Therefore in my letter addressed to Councillor Zolokere and V.H Chipofya I told them (without telling them any thing you spoke of to me) that they must change the method of selection, the real Themba is at Sitwe. Duka himself was not satisfied with the division of the chieftainship into two, even in 1906 at the very beginning when there were first two Katumbis, my father [the then Zolokere] was also against it very badly; he only agreed after he realised that it was not the peoples' wish to divide the land into two, but it was the Government which had done so by its authority".¹⁵

This lengthy passage is illuminating for a number of reasons. It points to the very fluid nature of succession at this time; the expedient and pragmatic way in which the method of selection is handled is clear to see.¹⁶ Another key issue that this excerpt points to is that one chief is needed to rule across the territories so that *"if the Government makes two countries into one there should not be any quarrel or claim for superiority"*.¹⁷ This is a conclusion that had been made in response to the Royal Commission of 1938 led by Lord Bledisloe which was set up to investigate the opinion about and possibility for closer federation between the Rhodesias and Nyasaland. Whilst it hoped to only garner 'native opinion' about amalgamation it stirred up local feelings and raised hopes about the possibility of border alterations which would accommodate people "of the same tribe"¹⁸ within one country. The ideas generated and outcomes which were associated with the Bledisloe Commission investigations in Hewe certainly cast a shadow not only around the Katumbi Chieftaincy successions in the early 1940s but they would make a mark on the early career of Timothy Chawinga; his claim for reunification with Northern Rhodesian relatives would be a more or less annual affair, and always inflected with tones of local political significance.

A dangerous power vacuum

The crisis of legitimacy amongst the Katumbi clans only became a pressing issue which the Government felt they needed to get involved with on account of the political activities of Simon Masopera Gondwe on the one hand, and the reanimated border disputes between Chikulamayembe and Katumbi on the other. After failing to have any success with the "Tumbuka National Association" which he had set up with Edward Manda in Nkamanga, Masopera Gondwe set his sights on control in the context of local politics in his home area. Having been dismissed from his position as Clerk to the Native Authority in Fort Manning on 1 May 1942 for his "political leanings",¹⁹ and after a brief stint as working temporarily with the Native Tobacco Board in Lilongwe, Simon Masopera Gondwe fixed his efforts on challenging the native administration in both Nkamanga and Hewe.

Masopera Gondwe saw a chance to take advantage of the power vacuum that the death of Dukamayere had created and set up the Hewe Improved Council (HIC) in 1941 when the royal family was in some disarray, bitterly fighting over who ought to take the crown next. The activities of Gondwe were clearly designed to undermine the moral authority of the chieftainship by querying their "wandering ways". At his meetings he stirred the situation by asking members why there was so much misunderstanding between the Themba, his village headmen and their people.²⁰

The disrespect and discontent amongst the chieftainship led Gondwe to direct the Hewe Improved Council to try to make resolutions on witchcraft and marriage, which had always been very much the realm of local chiefly authority. He suggested that if there was a permanent council then it would improve the living of everyone there, keen to capture Katumbi's chiefly council within his own.²¹ Concern grew in the Government that the council was having too

radical an influence in Hewe and with the lack of an established chief at the helm of the Native Authority when the council was set up, Foulger was determined that it be shut down since it was "usurping the functions of the legally constituted NA in that area".²² Despite the government's suspicions of it, the Hewe Improved Council (HIC) remained in existence as Timothy took the throne and his activities – in their various forms – continued to irritate Chawinga and compete with his authority even after HIC had been disbanded, up until his death in around 1958.²³ Yet Masopera Gondwe's activities were just a symptom of a deeper more protracted problem of chiefly authority in this region. Had the conflicts with Chikulamayembe not been reanimated in 1941 then there might not have been as pressing a need to arrange the ideal successor in Hewe.

One of these conflicts, concerned with the contested border villages of Kapemba and Chelanya, prompted Foulger to write to his counterpart in the District of Lundazi (Northern Rhodesia) to ask him if he could set up a meeting with Yakobe Chawinga in the May of 1942, whilst Vwende was still on the throne in Hewe. His concern is expressed as follows: "A dispute between my Native Authorities, Chikulamaembe and Katumbi, as to the ownership of two villages has existed for many years. I hope to settle it but my efforts are unlikely to succeed unless Yakobe Chawinga, the rightful Katumbi, is present".²⁴ His presence, and the moral authority that was perceived would accompany his appointment, was portrayed as capable not only of healing the rifts amongst the Chawinga's but it was envisaged to be enough to stem, even resolve, external disputes, more especially those associated with Chikulamayembe. All these expectations did not have anything like as much impact on the man in question; Yakobe Chawinga refused to come to Hewe and take the crown²⁵ and the discussions around the chieftaincy once again fell in to confusion. These expectations for a superior moral authority, however, did not simply fade away as Yakobe fled the scene; they were swiftly transferred on to the shoulders of the next Themba, who was to be Timothy Chawinga.

The contestations over Chelanya and Kapemba had been reanimated in 1941 when discussions about the federation of native authority treasuries were put on the table as part of the policy to cut the costs of administration. Rather than easing the burden on district officials this decision proved time consuming and disruptive. It reopened a bitter dialogue around a set of disputes that had been discussed at the meeting in 1933 but had evidently not been concluded to any of the parties' satisfaction. When Chikulamayembe had conceded some authority to Katumbi in December 1933 at the meeting in Ng'onga which was called to work out the boundaries and jurisdictions of native authorities in the Mzimba District, it seemed that a new period of co-operation had dawned. In fact, after the meeting was concluded a great many unresolved issues remained hanging over the district; something that the principal of Overtoun Institute, Galbraith, was quick to point out to Foulger when they reared their heads again in 1941. Regarding the decision to federate treasuries Galbraith warned "that any scheme restricted to Katumbi and Chikulamaembe will not be acceptable to the former as it will seem to be too like the compulsory amalgamation with and subservience to Chikulamaembe which existed from 1913 to 1933 and which was a constant source of complaint".²⁶ His suggestion was that for no suspicions to be aroused and for an easier management of the changes, the federation would have to include chiefs Mwafulirwa and Mbwana too and that the new sub-Boma in Lura (Henga) would have to expand to include these areas in their remit.

Having avoided being put under the authority of Chikulamayembe in 1933 neither Mwafulirwa, nor his ally Kyungu in Karonga, was likely to take kindly to any suggestion of future administrative association with him. They would see the change of boundaries as the "first step to absorption under the Ahenga", cautioned Adagh the D.C. at Karonga.²⁷ As the

expansionist ambitions of Manda and the Chikulamayembe chieftainship became obvious their not so subtle attempts to gain paramount status were increasingly checked by neighbouring chieftaincies. Chikulamayembe's claims of having once reigned over a vast zone of influence were undermined continually by the will of the people across the district whose loyalties, it seemed evident, lay elsewhere. The chief's anxiousness to claw back some lost prestige in this regard was in evidence during the series of meetings and discussions which took place in May and June 1941, meetings which would set the tone of conflict for Timothy Chawinga's chieftaincy.

On the 15th of May Assistant District Commissioner Thatcher, who had been based at the experimental sub-Boma at Lura in the Henga Valley for four months, attended two meetings, one at Katowo and the other at Bolero, the headquarters of Katumbi and Chikulamayembe respectively. He reported back to the D.C from both concluding that it would be quite impossible to federate the treasuries if the issue as to the ownership of the villages of Chelanya and Kapemba was not settled. Whilst Chikulamayembe was happy to talk only of federation in this meeting thinking perhaps that it offered the "prospect of regaining a proportion of his old ascendancy over Katumbi",²⁸ the meeting at Katowo was used as a platform to raise what they believed to be past wrongs rather than a discussion about federation. The delegation from Hewe reminded the colonial officials that they had a longstanding challenge relating to the boundary with Chikulamayembe, especially in relation to the ownership of Chelanya and Kapemba. Having been told at the Ng'onga meeting in 1933 "that the matter could not then be discussed" it had become clear to Thatcher when investigating the possibilities for reforming the native administration boundaries in 1941, that this "sore has festered ever since".²⁹

Whether the village of Chelanya had been tricked into paying tribute to Chikulamayembe or not, and regardless of the "real history" behind Kapemba's own strategically shifting loyalties to both, the debates around these pieces of territory were about much more than righting the wrongs of history. They were symbolic contestations of territoriality; a territoriality that had not existed in this form before colonial rule. The colonial response to these disputes reflected this way of thinking about authority as having clear geographical dimensions. Assessing the situation for himself the Assistant D.C. confirmed the conflicting "historical accounts as to their original allegiance", but taking his evidence from the "well-defined physical boundary between the Nkamanga and Hewe" he concluded that "it is reasonable to assume that they were originally in the area of Katumbi's influence".³⁰ This debate raged on, along with various other long-standing disagreements between other chiefs regarding seniority and historical allegiance; all were articulated in terms of territory.

In this context of insecurity it is not surprising that the Government and the senior advisers within the Katumbi chieftaincy were desperate to find a suitable candidate to resolve what they perceived to be resolvable. It is also understandable that the possibility of drawing one from the Northern Rhodesian side of the border increased after the Bledisloe Commission confirmed the linkages between the Katumbis on either side of the border. When Timothy became the successor these issues were all unresolved and how he dealt with them would go a long way to establishing his legitimacy amongst his people. The chapter will continue by discussing how he managed to overturn some of the disadvantages which he inherited and how he began to set the key motifs of authority for his chieftaincy.

Chairman no more: the Mikule clan and the Katumbi chieftainship

Timothy was from the Mikule clan within the Chawinga family. Historically, chiefs from Mikule could hold only the title of 'chairman' amongst the clans.³¹ Whilst never destined to be Themba,

these leaders who hailed from the Mikule clan held an important position which needs to be better understood in this context. The role of chairman was in place in the past, most probably, as a way to mediate conflict amongst the other family lines in order to avoid the sort of disputes and dangerous rivalries which are now commonplace amongst the Chawinga's. The clan history of Mikule, corroborated by other Chawinga family clan histories, convincingly tells us that this family is the senior. The name 'Mikule' having only been adopted during the Ngoni period,³² this clan line, originally known as Chimbavi, descends from the original *Balowoka* Mulindafwa's senior son:

"The house of Chimbavi, which is the bigger house, [received more respect]. In the past when there was a big occasion they were calling him to be the chairman and he was the one who would conclude everything and he was the one who could declare that someone is guilty or not [...] In the past he was not supposed to be the chief because he already had respect but these days people have seen that chieftaincy is something sweet but in the past he was not chosen as the chief".³³

This position, of chairman,³⁴ neither translated well in the colonial context as it could not be converted to a specific role in either the administrative system or the colonial imagination of how 'native' power was constructed in relation to defined territorial responsibility, nor did it serve well the campaign of Dukamayere and the other Katumbi's who had spent many years desperately trying to claw back some power from Chikulamayembe and establish themselves as a Native Authority in their own right. The idea that there could be someone *more* powerful than 'the Chief' but who simply did not wield power in the same way was never discussed by passing district administrators, indeed it is not to be found in any official discussions, and this clan's almost invisible authority was sidelined as colonial structures began to be layered on top of local ones. This grave misunderstanding of the landscapes of power in Hewe could be at the root cause of the disputes that are seen today. Timothy hailed from Mikule making him, in this sense, an 'illegitimate' candidate; the fact that he had not been foremost in people's minds as successor, and his refusal to be crowned Themba at first might well be on account of this. Notions of legitimacy and illegitimacy had, however, been radically altered in the local imagination by this time, and as far as the colonial state was concerned chiefly succession had always been a matter of efficacy and pragmatism. In the event once their first option had fallen through Timothy appeared a worthy enough replacement. Educated and well travelled, he belonged to a powerful heritage;³⁵ a heritage which elders in the royal clans understood would now need to be included in this new way of interpreting the Katumbi chieftaincy.³⁶ He was the first and, until present, the only chief to be crowned from this clan.

After Timothy was eventually caught at his cousin's home in Monga³⁷ and crowned by Councillor Zolokere in January 1943,³⁸ Foulger wrote to the Provincial Commissioner telling him of Chawinga's initial refusal to be crowned: "I understand that Timothy Chawinga at first declined to be selected as chief. As you are aware the rightful chief is Yakobe Chawinga the Native Authority Katumbi who now resides at Sitwe in the Lundazi district".³⁹ The ambiguous position which Timothy immediately found himself in, a chieftaincy ritually bestowed upon him by his grandfather but with limited legitimacy amongst his people and with the Government, left him in a position similar to Vwende before him. How then can his rise from a reticent and 'illegitimate' leader to a masterful and authoritative one be explained? And furthermore, given the dangerous context which the disputes created, how did he manage to reign for so long? Not only did he have to establish himself amidst this local ambivalence but with much change taking

place at the local administrative level, and a Government lessening its expectations regarding the effectiveness of Native Authorities, Timothy Chawinga's practice of chieftainship reveals perhaps an unexpected story. By asking questions around how Timothy was able to *establish* himself as a chief in this period, and in particular how he managed to increase the influence he had with his people and within the government structures throughout his reign, his chieftaincy can provide an example which can be set nicely against the background of 'official' discussions at this time, and indeed much of the historiography, that the Native Authorities to be found in Nyasaland were more likely to be a 'hindrance to progress' rather than the effective agents of change which had been so desired.

Part two. Chiefs and the Colonial State: expectations and opportunities

Reforming the Native Administration Ordinance

By the time Chawinga was crowned the Native Authority Ordinance had been in place for ten years. Early ambitions for what it might have been expected to achieve had dampened as the decade had worn on and as the expectations of the native authorities' role increased. Native Authorities had always been envisaged within the logic of this indirect rule legislation as an extension of the state in local areas, essentially a cost-effective way of assisting an under-resourced administration to deliver basic services and oversee economic change, especially in places where colonial staffing was thin on the ground. However, in a post-Second World War atmosphere of austerity, when the contribution of even the most peripheral of colonial economies mattered a great deal more than before, new pressures were put upon these native agents of the state. Under a new modernizing impetus, designed to increase the efficiency in agricultural, industrial, health and education sectors, the British delivered a new batch of colonial "experts" to their colonies, full of "reformist zeal".⁴⁰ Believing that these "development initiatives would make colonies simultaneously more productive and ideologically more stable" the reorganisation of local government during the 1940s and 1950s was a continent wide phenomenon meant to serve as one of the "steps towards political modernization, towards more effective and – at least rhetorically – more democratic rule".⁴¹

These different bundles of reforms, the new direction which they appeared to beckon in across many African colonies, and the increasing attention that went with them seemed to represent such a step-change from the previous approach that this late colonial phase has come to be known by most observers of this period as the "second colonial occupation".⁴² Whether or not there was a marked ideological shift in this post-war period, or simply a shift in the *scale* of intervention, as Green has suggested,⁴³ the inclusion of reforms around the Native Authorities and their administration were noted as of paramount importance to the success of the reinvigorated developmental agenda. In Nyasaland this reorganisation, in principle, was to take two major routes: increasing the Native Authority capacity to deal with the rapid transformations that were taking place within rural economies at this time;⁴⁴ and the introduction of non-chiefly, 'democratic' elements into local government to ensure the ongoing 'modernization' of political institutions.

From 1945 the Nyasaland Government set an initial agenda for this local government reform in a Five Year Development Plan.⁴⁵ With the broad aims of increasing production, purchasing power, and encouraging consumption within the domestic economy – as a way of pulling Nyasaland out of a serious budgetary deficit – the plan focused on the Protectorate's only profitable option: the management and improvement of agricultural resources. With more

resources and staff available there was a return to the earlier inter-war emphasis on controlling bad agricultural practices, as well as new initiatives: encouraging cash-cropping, co-operatives and local industry as ways of being able to generate domestic income.⁴⁶ It was the native authorities who were charged with implementing the new developmentalist visions by undertaking tasks which specifically promoted the economic growth of their areas. They were urged, in particular, to take on responsibility for the most pressing developmental concern of the 1940s and 1950s: improvement in the use of native land.⁴⁷

As a part of this push to increase the value of land district commissioners in Northern Province were charged with collecting and summarizing all Native Court cases which dealt with land in order to establish what rights existed over Native Trust Land and what the powers of chiefs, village headmen and other person regarding these matters actually were;⁴⁸ an assessment considered vital if solutions “to cope with the problems posed by an enhanced land value produced by efficient methods of cultivation” were to be found.⁴⁹ Funds made available by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945, along with the establishment of the Native Development and Welfare Fund (1944) and Natural Resources Board (1946) ensured that this focus on African agriculture could be supported through increased numbers of extension workers, more training opportunities, better marketing facilities and more forums through which the African farmer’s needs could be represented; in 1949 the first agricultural officer in the Northern Province was able to be employed, reflecting the greater importance now placed upon the sector.⁵⁰

Native Authorities were charged with overseeing these agricultural and infrastructural ‘innovations’ by being empowered to create their own place appropriate native rules and orders, and prosecuting according to them. But that these local authorities were capable of taking up the pressing new challenge of overseeing the “development” of their areas was a doubt in many officials’ minds. Chiefs and headmen could cope with rudimentary tasks of tax collection and judging local civil disputes but after little less than a decade in operation it was increasingly thought that the Native Administration Ordinance, and the native authority position which it authorized, was rather ill-designed to successfully manage the effects of the rapid social and economic change that had begun to take place within the agrarian communities of Nyasaland. During a Provincial Commissioners conference called to discuss and consider a particular Colonial Office despatch, regarding the 1945 Agricultural Development Plan, the official recognition of village group councils was first mooted as a way of assisting native authorities in their increasingly important role. Furthermore the delegation of some of the native authorities’ authority to executive officers who would be trained and charged with acting on their behalf in ‘departmental’ spheres such as agriculture, forestry, public works, and public health was discussed. It should be possible, some of the delegates concluded, that native authorities could be deposed if they were proved to be incapable of carrying responsibility as regards the proper use of lands under their control and with this their role could be substituted by direct rule through the D.C. acting as native authority. In addition to these factors the nomination of possible heirs of chiefs and their education and special training was discussed.

Agricultural production and the machinery of Government

When a new Governor arrived from Nigeria in 1948 this reimagining of native authorities moved from theory to implementation. The direction of Geoffrey Colby, given the moniker of “the Development Governor”,⁵¹ typified the attitude of the Colonial Office at this time which was taking its lead from visions of high modernist agriculture.⁵² From his experience in Nigeria he was aware that the new infrastructure and increasing pressure on production would require a

much better trained and well-prepared civil service to manage it than had hitherto been available in Nyasaland and he invited Hudson, a consultant from the Colonial Office, to survey the local government situation in the Protectorate. He came up with the following conclusions about the potential of the present system to respond to the challenges of development:

*“Education, health and sanitation; roads and bridges; water supplies, good buildings and all the things that people now want in their own country and in their villages. These new things which have been introduced during the last 50 years cannot be provided and controlled and organized by the old machine, and therefore that machine, the old machine of the chiefs and the elders, has to be strengthened and changed in order that it may be able to do the new work as well as the old work”.*⁵³

Inherent in this approach was the notion that the local government system ought to open up to include more “educated” “progressive” members of society, and that it move along the lines of political modernization ascribed to in the Colonial Office correspondence. As Eckert points out, most of these changes in approach took place within the context of an undertaking by the Colonial Office from 1946-1949 of “a major reassessment of British constitutional policies throughout Africa”.⁵⁴ In this evaluation it was concluded that the forces of nationalism and the push for self-government would come to bear increasing pressure on the colonial governments, a pressure, it was said, which had been especially enhanced by the impact of war. The Secretary of State for Colonies at this time, Creech-Jones, asserted on several occasions that the development of a “democratic system of local government” was paramount so as to ensure that the “growing class of educated men”⁵⁵ had a place in which they could not only express themselves but be enabled to develop “appropriate political values” alongside which an opportunity to provide voters and politicians “with valuable experience in the operation of democratic institutions” would be created.⁵⁶

So with Colby’s arrival a clear step-change took place which saw a more committed and determined political reform of local government and a more targeted investment in agriculture. Such ideas for reform are notable in the correspondence and policy since the development plan of 1945 but no accompanying increase in investment had ever been exercised as a way of facilitating these improvements; it was Colby who brought the impetus and, importantly, the resources to make a difference and his fortified administrative system cranked into action not long after he arrived. He had been adamant from the beginning of his appointment that the “machinery of government” which he had inherited would need to be progressively improved and it was his belief, in keeping with the reforming mood of the time, that plans for development could only be effectively implemented and sustained if there was a “considerable increase in Government staff and in government service”.⁵⁷ Aware that with little private enterprise, no mineral deposits and “limited financial, entrepreneurial and managerial resources”,⁵⁸ the only real potential in Nyasaland lay in agriculture; his three-fold agricultural policy concentrated on the “conservation of natural resources, production of ample good food, and increased and more economical production of cash crops – and each was pursued vigorously”.⁵⁹

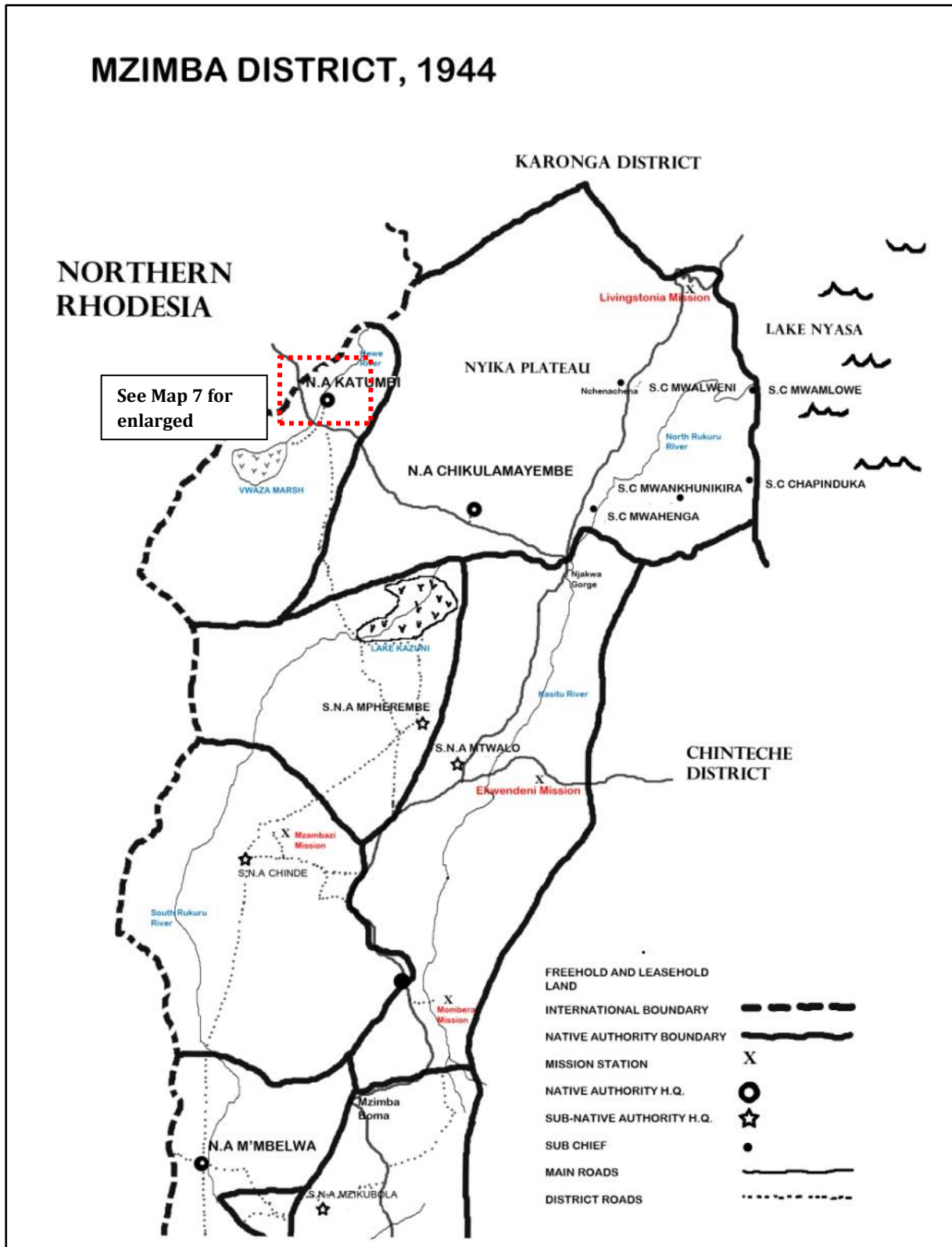
In addition to the soil conservation and agricultural improvement schemes which were rolled out across British Africa, Nyasaland had its own economic particularities to manage. As Governor Colby was eager to point out the Protectorate suffered heavy financial losses on account of the labour migration patterns which had developed over the previous couple of decades. Whilst this trend had meant that the purchasing power of many rural Nyasas had increased significantly over this time, the trading facilities had not kept pace and as a result

many were spending their income outside of Nyasaland. It was espoused that along with better marketing, communication and transport infrastructure, trading facilities must expand.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in an attempt to reverse the trend of heavy out-migration, he brought attention to the fact that there was actually a labour shortage internally and concluded that "more people would enter employment locally if the commercial community provided 'consumer goods in adequate variety', since 'harder work is bound up with incentives': he was clear that increased production could be achieved only by harder work by all".⁶¹ It was hoped that such initiatives would not only encourage people to spend their income *within* Nyasaland, but that they would also have a significant effect in stimulating domestic native markets and trade. In a peripheral economy such as Nyasaland Colby surmised that "the state" was the "only realistic medium through which sufficient development could be generated".⁶² As such those departments concerned with 'production', fundamentally the natural resources departments, were massively invested in⁶³ and by the time Colby left office in 1956 these had grown to become the largest in the civil service; the Agriculture Department's annual expenditure alone rose dramatically from £17,132 in 1948 to £314,054 in 1956.⁶⁴

"A good council can wed chieftainship to democracy":⁶⁵ chiefs, commoners and local government

Alongside these agricultural reforms the government sought to convince everyone that the chiefs were *still* "the true voice" of the people; this became increasingly necessary as a growing number were beginning to feel unrepresented. For some, "detrribalised" elements of society, in other words those who had migrated outside of Nyasaland, or who had worked as teachers, traders, or agricultural assistants within the Protectorate, neither native authorities nor the distinctly non-political Native Associations seemed to provide useful platforms for their views.⁶⁶ The government had reason to want to strengthen the chiefs' position in this context as they rightly feared that this "clerk class" of marginal men⁶⁷ were looking to the emerging Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) as a way of making their voices heard. Their experience and education made them "dangerous", especially as they could no longer be controlled through tribal organisation; they needed to be incorporated into the administration and given a forum where their views and issues could be aired if they were to be prevented from becoming too politicised.

As one way of trying to neutralise the increasingly political atmosphere the government tried to modify the native authority system making them more institutionally inclusive to these "marginal men". This was done primarily by reviving and reforming the somewhat forgotten district council system. The system of District Councils had nominally come into being in 1933 when the Native Authority Ordinance was first instituted but in reality there were "few areas of the Protectorate where [the council system] was working effectively as an integrated structure providing an unbroken chain of representation from villager to the Protectorate Council, and an



Map 9. Mzimba District, adapted by M. Davies from a sketch made by DC Mzimba, District Annual Report 1944

effective link between the central Government and the villager";⁶⁸ let alone any regular contact between the chief and his people living remote from his headquarters. However, as the shortcomings of the indirect rule administrative 'machinery' could no longer be ignored the revitalization and expansion of this council system was put forward as one possible way in which local government might be able to "start bridging these gaps" and become more representative.⁶⁹ District native authority councils were given more clout, village councils, group village councils and a chiefs' administrative council were created, and Native Courts of Appeal were established;⁷⁰ furthermore Provincial Councils were set up in 1944. Crucially, the educated "marginal men" were to play a major role within all of these arenas:

"It was considered necessary to extend the local government system with the purpose of giving scope to more progressive elements of the population to take a hand in local government and in fact to develop bodies fully representative of all the people, and enable the councils on varying levels to afford opportunity to all sections of the community to make their wishes felt".⁷¹

Despite the obvious potential for undermining chiefly authority, the government proclaimed that the new system was not designed to reduce the power of chiefs: "As I see it", Hudson went on to say, "the formation of district councils will not weaken the Native Authorities or the chiefs but will strengthen them. The Native Authorities will still have a very important part to play in looking after their areas, as they always have done, *but when all the chiefs of an area sit together and also add all the wisest men they can get to help them, then it is going to be a very strong government indeed*";⁷² 'wiser' elements of society were required to deliver the strongest system possible of local governance.

This way of thinking about local government reform at this time was common across British Africa. In Tanganyika where a similar system was in operation a variety of councils were also created, with the intention of evolving more democratic structures from the existing bodies of native authorities "by adding commoners"; teachers, clerks, doctors, agricultural assistants and traders, all who had "so far had little or no influence in local politics", were hastily ushered into the executive.⁷³ Some of these educated and progressive individuals, who on paper could be seen to threaten chiefly power, found in the late 1940s a colonial state keen on assisting them in achieving more power. Happy to be shaking up the old system, these educated non-chiefly figures were often nurtured and promoted by provincial and district colonial administrators who perceived them as the key to the democratic and efficient local governance which was now anxiously sought after. Those required to strengthen the machine, "the most progressive, best, most educated, the wisest and the most modern"⁷⁴ simultaneously posed a major threat to it. Therefore, managing these new elements within their advisory structures increasingly required strong chiefly leadership with a credible power base within the community themselves. It also meant that chiefs would have to become more developmental in their thinking if they were not to be bypassed by the administration.

Remaining Useful: Nationalist politics and the threat of Federation

It was a time where there was much room for negotiation. Reforms in Nyasaland brought about a new "channel of expression for western educated young men in the districts", but they were also supporting chiefs to retain "control over law and order, and the power to issue oral or written orders of rule" just as had been the case in Tanganyika.⁷⁵ It was a fine line between what these state endorsed spaces to compete directly with chiefly authority (such as district councils, African Provincial Councils) represented and the unmanaged inappropriate competitiveness of

nationalist groups such as the Nyasaland African Congress, set up in 1943. The former were encouraged by the government to improve local native authority structures, to bring progressive ideas and as a way of potentially stemming their desire to find a more radical platform elsewhere. Those who did prefer such a platform were to be found in the latter category and mostly threw in their lot with the NAC. Whilst the African Protectorate Council and African Provincial Council meetings were full of nationalist sentiment they were not seen as particularly useful arenas for the committed nationalists as they could not hope to bring about much of the change which the sentiment would have hoped to provoke. The 1940s was therefore quite pedestrian as far as radical national movements were concerned, especially given that Congress was disorganized, factional and underfunded. Most activities associated with these African elites were taking place at the very local level – through the likes of Manda and Masopera Gondwe – but they were agendas articulated in terms of the local politics of custom and tradition.

Before the serious, and controversial, move to federate with Northern and Southern Rhodesia became an imminent prospect there were few galvanizing issues that could move the NAC to increase their popularity amongst the grassroots of the country and become effective nationalist campaigners. During the early negotiations around Federation the native authority chiefs occupied an effective position as intermediaries to negotiate with the government. They were seen and promoted themselves as having the potential to temper the nationalist influence amongst their people. With most of them desperate to stop Federation on account of the perceived threat it posed to their land some tried to use their connection to the grassroots support of the Congress as a bargaining chip to prevent Federation. Chief Mwase of Kasungu started the Chiefs' Council, which was independent of the Protectorate Council, in 1952.⁷⁶ It was a body that claimed it could put an end to Congress activities in the areas of their jurisdiction, and would do so immediately if plans for federation were shelved. This turned out to be a small window of opportunity for native authorities to prove their worth. Federation was not shelved and as it grew closer the chiefs' opportunity turned to a threat over their future role. The government used examples from the recently independent Gold Coast to appeal to the Chiefs' Council to turn against Congress whose fight for independence could well "spell the reduction of chiefs to mere ornaments".⁷⁷

The first ten years of Timothy Chawinga's chieftainship were built upon a dynamic political context, where the future of traditional authorities' role was uncertain. Once the country embarked upon the federal period the chiefs' position grew ever more precarious. Many had been able to productively negotiate their way around the various arenas of local politics during the 1940s, but as soon as Federation took place in 1953 these finely balanced relationships were upset and a new decade of more decisive campaigning dawned; as Power puts it, Federation "fractured the coalitions and alliances that had made the colonial system workable and set the terms of political protest".⁷⁸ In this situation, certainly if one looks at it from the perspective of nationalist historiography, native authority chiefs found themselves involved in much less flexible relationships with both Congress and the colonial administration. In the period of time running up to the State of Emergency in 1959, Congress took advantage of a growing peasant discontent that was said to have emerged within the Protectorate on account of how these new interventions shaped their productive capacity, as well as their food security. The nationalists could persuasively file chiefs into those who would support them and those who were "Federal" (or pro-government) and would use these labels as a way of increasing their leverage in the villages. By linking the changing access to resources with the fight against

federation they “fostered the kind of grassroots populism that became the hallmark of nationalism in Malawi”.⁷⁹

Keeping the discussions about political change focused upon the chief-nationalist-state set of relationships does not necessarily allow for an investigation into the changing nature of chiefly authority per se. The introduction to the thesis stated emphatically that this arena cannot be the only one in which chiefly authority ought to be analysed. Firstly it does not give room to understand the impact which the various identities that a chief constructed for himself had. Secondly it does not give room for the different kinds of relationship with the state that native authorities could potentially have beyond being political and therefore dangerous, or cooperative and therefore friendly. The geographies of colonial rule can help to bring out different conclusions in this regard. There were other layers of contestation and negotiation that existed not simply at the level of national politics.

This was a period which also dramatically shifted native authorities' relationship in terms of agricultural production and environmental control, heralding not only a political shift. Too often only considered in the context of political processes, the relationship between development schemes and their implementation ought to be observed bearing non-political factors in mind. By examining the nature of these schemes, and especially the methods used to introduce them, they can be re-imagined in environmental, agricultural and technical terms, as Carswell has done in Kigezi⁸⁰; local agendas, based in other desires and grievances were also affected at this time; it wasn't purely shifting the scene for the nationalist agenda to play its role. “As commercialisation led to new demands for land and labour, Africans increased their efforts to negotiate new relationships in order to gain access to additional productive resources”;⁸¹ in this context Timothy Chawinga turned ever more to the agricultural setting as a source for his authority. Chawinga maximized the potential which the state had given him to manage the agricultural landscapes of his territory, weaving their increased commercial potential with an historical narrative which created an authentic connection to these landscapes of Hewe; the empirical dynamics of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Part three. Geographies of authority, going beyond the role of chief

Magically equipped: local narratives of power in Hewe

In Hewe, with its history of strong personality driven chieftainship,⁸² Chawinga operated in an arena in which he could easily engage and use, what Lentz has termed, his charismatic “role image” as a customary leader;⁸³ something which would have been understood by the colonial administration as essential to perform effectively in the arena of native authority politics. Yet he also had in his armoury a whole host of alternative “registers of power”;⁸⁴ identities which drew on economic, spiritual and political sources, enabled and necessitated by the historical and geographical context of the region.⁸⁵

Returning to the episode of Timothy's crowning can stimulate the discussion around other possible sources of his authority. When he was ‘caught’ and crowned at his cousin's home in Monga on the south-eastern edges of Hewe, rumours began to circulate, and tellingly continue to be recounted today, that his visit here had been a pre-emptive move. Knowing that his being crowned had become inevitable, he had gone with his cousin, a well known *ng'anga* or witchdoctor, to get “medicine from outside” as a means to protect him in the job that he was soon to be given.⁸⁶ Some say he was simply hiding out at his cousins home when ambushed,

however it is unlikely; had he really been intent on avoiding being crowned he would never have returned to Hewe at during this time at all.

Timothy would have certainly sought advice as to how he should prepare himself for leadership and it is thought that his cousin, well-versed in the ways of the rituals that were required prior to chiefly installation, was the first person that he went to when he returned to the Valley in late 1942. The stories variously describe the places and methods that were used to fortify Chawinga; the most dramatic amongst them involving a journey to Tanganyika, to a famous African doctor whose method of “making men”⁸⁷ was to cook them (*kuphikika*) with a concoction of medicinal herbs, in a large pot.⁸⁸ Whether or not he had been ‘cooked’ in a pot in Tanganyika, the effect of the rumour has had a powerful effect on the community of Hewe both in the past and in the present, and on the ways in which Timothy was perceived in the eyes of his subjects. It is a motif that keeps returning as people narrate his story; his authority or *mazaza* has its roots in this, they say, and they tell additional tales which seem to prove this mysterious power.⁸⁹

This idea of Timothy as a heroic, magically powerful leader is, in many ways, a retrospective construction. It is based on reflective understandings of events which attempt to qualify how Timothy ‘stayed’ as a chief for such a long period of time, relative to his predecessors and indeed to those chiefs that followed; “clearly he had strong medicine” people reply. An alternative narrative about his longevity turns on quite a different notion, that “he stayed long” because of his “morally acceptable” behaviour. He didn’t sleep around, say those who believed in his image as a “good Christian”; unhealthy morality the culprit, they imagine, for the sexually transmitted diseases perceived to have killed other chiefs before him. Thompson Nundwe, senior headman Chipofya, stood by this measured behaviour as being the main reason for his longevity:

*“It is difficult to talk about the life of someone. Other chiefs didn’t stay long, sometimes this was because they were careless, marrying anyhow. He [Kamangilira] was very careful, he moved by himself. He was a well respected man. It was not about medicine, he had discipline [...] it is not true that he had medicine in his office; it is not medicine that can keep someone in office so long. I think it is discipline itself. People killed each other through beer parties and food poisoning [and he avoided these]”.*⁹⁰

The people of Hewe usually express either one or the other of these opinions. Whilst they seem to be wholly contradictory narratives both suggestions in fact contain complementary notions about Timothy, and his authority. There is an assertion in both versions that he had an additional strength – a morally and/or magically exacting one – which he was able to use to defend himself against the spiritual threats which all chiefs faced when they came into power. These apparently very different stories and rumours, which are a feature of any conversation about the late Timothy Chawinga, also demonstrate the ambiguous role which chieftaincy, and the authority it represents, played and continue to play in people’s lives. What Chawinga was able to do successfully was to control this ambiguity, the ambivalence which certain people had towards him as a person and his chieftaincy, and the various ways in which people chose to engage with him as a leader. Furthermore, given that he was able to operate in so many of the varied landscapes of power within and external to his immediate chiefly terrain, in some sense, the seemingly opposing narratives about the sources of his power both reflected a version of the truth.

Constructing “customary” rights and finding prestige through the royal clan

The framework of “customary” rights and responsibilities on which indirect rule was premised suggested that the colonial government was aware of these local narratives, and the power that they had to build and erode chiefly authority. Fields has suggested that the colonial government in Northern Rhodesia only realised this connection between what she calls “foundational routines” which underpinned local leaders legitimacy and their ability to effectively implement indirect rule once they tried removing certain rights from chiefs to manage their people. She comes to this conclusion by way of the example of Chief Citimukulu, paramount chief of the Bemba.⁹¹ Noting that his inability to exercise his “traditional” right to call for labour in order to build a new capital – a customary requirement – was leading to a serious undermining of his perceived ritual power amongst the local community, the government hurriedly “gave back” these tasks to them. They concluded that the removal of their rights to deal with cases of marriage and divorce, the collection of tax, and the repression of deviance in their areas, had threatened the effective working of indirect rule and its ability to maintain colonial order. Their “ability to obtain voluntary obedience”⁹² was seen as a crucial aspect of their ritual and administrative success.

For all its insights into a specific case of customary authority, Fields example of Citimukulu does not represent patterns of power accumulation in northern Nyasaland. For the Balowoka chieftaincies, there were no such “foundational routines” which enabled them to call for tribute or demand voluntary labour. The Katumbi chieftainship had never had a strongly embedded set of customary rights and any that had existed had already undergone massive rupture in the previous fifty years of warfare with the Bemba and Ngoni. Jurisdiction over marital and land disputes, rights to exact customary labour tribute, which was in the later colonial period “given back” to chiefs through salary increases to pay for “communal labour” for example, and the ability to make rules and orders about agricultural production in particular were novel additions to Katumbi’s customary repertoire, which had previously retained only limited rights over the land his people worked and had little part to play in the resolution of civil discord. *Balowoka* families established themselves as royalty but customarily they carried “no distinctive or special economic privileges, rights or opportunities”;⁹³ their prestige was based mainly upon the fact that they had achieved this position through their trading activities.

Having lost the economic basis of their power – ivory and trading prowess – one of the major ways left open to Katumbi chiefs was to attain distinction by fighting to assert “their rights and status within the royal clan and their attempt to control the chieftom and its affairs”;⁹⁴ as a result the royal clan, and histories around it, became the focal point in the search for prestige.⁹⁵ Carswell notes similar attempts by chiefs in Kigezi to redefine their authority in a competitive colonial economy by “recreating authority through their position as clan leaders” as opposed to chiefs.⁹⁶ Katumbi used colonial legislation, which sought to “formalize” the succession process of chieftaincy, to his advantage for his own exploitation of the clan. The new colonial practice of officially naming successors in advance so that their education and suitability for the position could be discussed saw the rotation system of chieftainship – from one of the five royal clans to another – get easily manipulated. Timothy Chawinga understood that in a context where education, good sober behaviour and Christian faith would get someone selected to be successor much more than hereditary right alone, he could manoeuvre his son into position regardless of the fact they both came from the Mikule clan. Indeed it is recorded in 1950 that the heir in Hewe, as nominated by the chiefs’ council, was “Pearson Cawinga (sic), eldest son of chief”.⁹⁷

Timothy Chawinga's establishment of a strong centralising narrative and celebration of his ancestor was important in the setting of regional politics and within the highly competitive royal clan setting which had been the downfall of several of his immediate predecessors. By creating a public celebration of this history further cohesion and concentration of power was achieved. Said to have been inspired by the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the first official Mulindafwa ceremony was held in September 1954. This celebration of the founder of the royal clan became an important performance of power which has taken place every year up to date. Van Binsbergen has highlighted with the example of the Kazanga Cultural Association in western central Zambia, such ceremonies are enormously useful as a way of exchanging "the one resource which one locally has in abundance, competence in symbolic production, for political and economic power".⁹⁸

The fact that the Mulindafwa festival inspired several other ceremonies across the region in the 1960s is telling. One of these, the Vinkakanimba Day which celebrated the arrival of Chief Muyombe, was observed at close hand by the anthropologist George Bond. Bond noted the way that the new Deputy Chief Edwall Muwowo had engineered this new public occasion himself in the context of African nationalist politics, and how it served several useful purposes. The day would "emphasize the position of the royal clan as the rightful rulers vis-à-vis the new politicians", and "within the framework of the royal clan it would reinforce the claims of the descendants of Vinkakanimba, and it would bring the residents of the chiefdom to the capital, emphasizing it as the political and, for many, the religious center of the chiefdom".⁹⁹ It is said by Edwall himself that his Vinkakanimba Day was directly inspired by Timothy's version of Mulindafwa.¹⁰⁰

Fighting for a place in the landscape: rivalries, historicity and authority

The success of individual chiefs in these northern Tumbuka areas was connected very closely with their ability to build and maintain authority in the regional context. With such an emphasis on the prestige of royal families, they had to maintain their standing in the local setting by also performing sufficiently well in a regional setting, especially vis-a-vis the other royal families with which they had connections. Certain motifs of authority for these chiefs were set as new territorial units were being forged for them in the early part of the twentieth century. The hierarchies that were written into history and as a result the native administration at that time were key points of conflict which had implications for the building of local authority. The fight for recognition by the Katumbi chiefs from 1912 to 1933, for example, had not only been about getting a salary it had equally been about saving face in order to keep people believing in their leadership. There is no point in glorifying ones past if the situation in the present suggests their weakness. The naming of Zakeyo as 'Dukamayere' is interesting in this regard. By associating his victory over Chikulamayembe with defeating witchcraft the popular stories about his success suggest that winning battles such as these are crucial to ones authority.

The long debates about the federation of Chikulamayembe and Katumbi's treasuries had such a layer to it. It might have been simpler from an administrative point of view and "easier for the Boma to deal with one unit rather than two",¹⁰¹ but since it would have been perceived in the local context as an undermining change, a symbolic defeat, "the first step towards (Katumbi's) small administration being absorbed by (Chikulamayembe)",¹⁰² it had to be fiercely fought against. Whilst Foulger stressed 'partnership' in this move, Timothy Chawinga continued the policy of his predecessors (who had protested against it when it was first mooted in 1940) by absolutely disagreeing with the idea when it was brought up again in 1946. He was too

concerned about appearing subordinate in the eyes of his community and surrounding authorities, knowing that such a status would have serious implications on his ability to control labour and effectively administer his area. The last thing he was going to do would be “to throw his lot in with that of N.A. Chikulamayembe”.¹⁰³ Hodgson, the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province when this discussion came up again, appeared baffled as to why Chikulamayembe and Katumbi would not want to federate their treasuries given that the way they “stand at present they have no power whatsoever, but if they combined they would be in a much stronger position”.¹⁰⁴ He seems not to have had the understanding, as Foulger had in 1940 when the federation of these treasuries was first brought up, that it would be difficult to do such a thing “without arousing the jealousy of Katumbi who would naturally conclude that his acknowledged independent chieftainship was being abolished”.¹⁰⁵

These tensions were perceived by the administration to be “trifling” battles of legitimacy amongst the Tumbuka chiefs but they were firmly held views unlikely to be affected by the changing government policy that was taking place around them; from a local perspective these institutional shake-ups simply altered the scene rather than the content of these battles. From early on Timothy turned these battles about treasuries, village disputes and borders, into symbolic stages on which he could perform his chieftaincy. Rather than seeing Chikulamayembe as a local partner, his people required Katumbi to dominate him; his assertion of power over Chikulamayembe was a very important process in the early of his chieftaincy as he was establishing himself. It remained more important for chiefs such as Timothy to control local narratives and manage historically embedded hierarchies in order to maintain status as a ‘big man’ than to hold relatively more power through national structures or seemingly more powerful positions in terms of the State.¹⁰⁶ This was something that Hudson had noted across the country when, having undertaken his extensive survey into local government, he addressed members of the African Protectorate Council in October 1950 on the issue of co-operation. He told the chiefs and elders that they had the opportunity to take on more responsibility in terms of administration if they really proved they could facilitate change but “if, of course, you all want your own little areas to yourselves; if you are jealous of each other, then you will never get anywhere at all”.¹⁰⁷ Managing their little areas themselves, however, was a fundamental part of the local success that the administration actually needed them to have.

Chawinga looked increasingly seriously at the opportunity to gain prestige by pursuing the campaign begun by his predecessors of “getting back under his control those of his Kamanga people who are at present living in Northern Rhodesia”.¹⁰⁸ This focus worried the district administration who noted a change in Chawinga from his more compliant earlier years of rule. On account of his determined pursuit of this ambition he was described in 1946 as being “a disappointment” and not “entirely straightforward in his dealings with the Boma”;¹⁰⁹ the fears were that this distraction would hamper “the efficient administration of his area”.¹¹⁰ The administration ought not to have been so critical; after all it had been down to their colleagues’ willingness to consider the Bledisloe Royal Commission findings a few years earlier that had given the campaign some hope of success in the first place.

With further investigations shelved on account of the war the notion that this reunification might happen had never been fully put to bed. It had become a real possibility for local people and had even taken root in the thinking of the district administration. Foulger had the idea of it in the back of his mind when thoughts turned to the federation of treasuries. He admitted that under current conditions it was a good idea because Katumbi had a small area with very few people under him. However, he did not rule out the possibility that these conditions could change; “if the recommendations to the Royal Commission are accepted”, he

wrote to his P.C. in 1940, “and Katumbi obtains his lands and people in Northern Rhodesia, he would be in a better position altogether and one which might not justify federation”.¹¹¹ Encouraged by the Reverend Khunga, whose early experience as Supervisor of Schools in Nkamanga and Uyombe in Northern Rhodesia had given him a sense of how people felt about the idea, the point was raised in one of the first meetings of the African Provincial Council in 1945 when it was suggested that the boundaries be altered “so that all the people of the same tribe are in one country [...] [and] under one chief”.¹¹² ‘Reunification’ with neighbouring territory in Northern Rhodesia had become one of the motifs of the Katumbi chieftaincy. Whilst Chawinga never succeeded in achieving the reunification, he repetitively involved himself in performances which asserted his territorial right over this area.

The sense that Timothy Chawinga was an administrative liability did not last into the 1950s as he began to show that he had the diplomatic skill to manage the different interests within Hewe in the midst of the rapid changes which were taking place. This was particularly impressive when observed in contrast to his rival Chikulamayembe who struggled to deal with the repercussions which the jealousies between headmen in his area were having on his ability to work with councillors and advisers. He was accused of generating “a lot of heat in discussion of proposals for change” and worried the administration who wrote that the “relationship between him and his subordinates is on an uneasy footing”.¹¹³ His chiefs’ council was a place where there was “too much talk for the sake of talking and a great deal of manoeuvring for self-aggrandisement”; any decisions taken within this forum, even if unanimous, were always “treated with caution – since the council might change its mind next time it meets”.¹¹⁴ As Chikulamayembe and Katumbi were involved in their own battles, and were continually being compared by the administration they played off each other to gain advantage.

It was not only against other native authorities and amongst village headmen that Chawinga had to stake his claim. He put up a fight against the introduction of a Catholic mission in Hewe, something which will be explored in Chapter five, as well as making sure that any European presence, limited though it was, knew who was boss. The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association had a depot in Chiteshe from the 1940s and was managed for a time by a European, Mr. Brisley. Whilst there is not a great deal of archival material about the activities of this particular depot, or about the man that ran it, the little information that does exist gives some insight into the tense relationship that developed between the chief and Brisley, and about Chawinga’s desire to take control. In a letter dated 4 September 1947 Chawinga wrote to Moore, the District Commissioner of Mzimba at the time, complaining that the WNLA manager recently “spoke to me many things and some of which have made me to write to you”; this included the accusation that he was “against wenela” and “talked too much at the Provincial Council at Livingstonia” about it. With the feeling he had been treated with disrespect by the chief, Brisley warned Chawinga, “you must consult me before you send questions to the District Commissioner which are in connection with wenela”; something the chief was non-too pleased about.¹¹⁵

By referring the case to Moore Chawinga clearly hoped to undermine the activities of Brisley as he accused him of “preventing market fees to be obtained from the people who bought their produce to the market”. He also took the opportunity to make some other accusations, that WNLA recruits were not sufficiently briefed about the work they were signing up and that the costs of repatriating WNLA recruits had not been sufficient enough, “I leave all this in your hands” he wrote, hoping to gain the upper hand over Brisley as he did so.¹¹⁶ Moore acknowledged that indeed the WNLA representative had no right to know what was being discussed at Provincial Council meetings, however Chawinga did not get it all his own way; “I

am satisfied that all persons going to the mines are given full information before they go but some do not listen", wrote Moore, "further if conditions were not good recruits would not sign on time after time, which in fact they do".¹¹⁷ His closing comments provide the merest of hints that Chawinga's behaviour in Hewe reflected that he thought he owned the place and believed it was his right to get involved in every aspect of its management:

*"I would remind you that WNLA compound belongs to WNLA and if you wish to talk to the WNLA representative when he is up there you should ask if he will see you and not shove in with your hat on when he is busy. You and your people derive much benefit from WNLA and you should be on good terms with them".*¹¹⁸

Economic registers of power

Understanding a chief as an economic individual brings an important alternative opportunity for their accumulation of authority; this aspect of their identity must not be forgotten. There were increasing opportunities for "commoners" to accumulate wealth in Nyasaland from the 1930s onwards, but having "overlapping" identities at this time was not unusual; one could simultaneously be a labour-hiring farmer, a cash-cropper, a businessman, a trader, and a chief. Austin, an historian who has focused on the economic behaviour of chiefs in Ghana, provides examples from South Asante of traditional leaders who acted and performed as economically motivated individuals to maintain their position among an emerging rural elite. Whilst the "old" ways of establishing a material base for chiefly position did begin to change as the colonial economy managed and restricted the forms of accumulation which had been used in the past - such as hunting and taxing the caravan trade - chiefs were not all sidelined in this process. Many maintained their material position by reorienting themselves in the colonial economy where they could, often by *using* their "old" ritual identities, create "new" positions for themselves and become a part of the new rural elite.

In the context of the growing cocoa farming industry in 1920s and 30s colonial Ghana, Austin charts how chiefs "participated in these sources of wealth while retaining non-market instruments of enrichment in addition",¹¹⁹ and were in fact remarkably successful in adapting to the new economic opportunities in South Asante. Many were "in the vanguard of the cocoa industry, and used diverse means to extract income from it, thereby off-setting in large part the reduction of their old fiscal powers".¹²⁰ In colonial Malawi Peter Mwakagunsulu, who became Chief Kyungu from 1932 to 1965, even "abandoned all claims to divinity", and placed a much greater emphasis on his experience as a teacher and trader.¹²¹ Having set up three stores and become a successful investor in cattle and cotton he won the respect of district officials, but he also paid heed to his people through his promotion of indigenous practices.

These new sources of wealth put certain individuals in a good position to negotiate their role within the chiefly families too. In Hewe, chiefs who had been better educated and had more opportunity to accumulate wealth had more influence in the decision making processes around who should be crowned. That an overwhelming majority of chiefs since 1933 have come from a clan based close to the commercial trading centre of the Hewe Valley, the Bongololo clan, shows that this economic influence on succession was powerful.¹²² This fits with Austin's conclusion that "success in cocoa-farming came to be one of the ways in which candidates for a stool could load the genealogical dice [...] a candidate's chances were helped if he would improve the finances of the stool and, indeed, those of the elders".¹²³ The impact of Timothy's own economic activities in this regard will be considered in the next two chapters, but the space in which he

was free to accumulate wealth should be understood in the context of its relationship to the colonial state.

Achieving new popularity and projecting old power

If the context was malleable enough, when a chief played the right moves it mattered little whether or not he had customary resources at his disposal or a strong government mandate to rule. If he could achieve popularity and get people on side he could then “transform a newly created public consensus into new power”.¹²⁴ Not only did Timothy achieve this popularity through the Mulindafwa ceremony, he was a master in public performances, and he used rumour and gossip to his advantage. When asked how Chawinga had managed to become a strong leader the most frequent answers from those interviewed in Hewe suggest that it was his promotion of the interests of his people that was most important. He built up the trading centre, including the maternity ward and the community hall; when there were funerals anywhere in Hewe he would go and contribute money; when government officials came he seemed to stand up to them; on most days before he went to office he would visit sick and then go to the school; he would close the road when there was snakes and lions and would go to shoot them.¹²⁵ The fact that he had inherited a concentrated institutional structure from the Dukamayere chieftaincy, which he could use to his advantage and to build his economic and political clout, was a crucial platform on which he could build all of this.

Due to the fact that his chieftaincy was considered of little importance or threat to the colonial state, but that it was strong enough institutionally to be an effective leadership, Hewe was left as a rather “non-incorporated” area; this played very much to Timothy’s advantage who used it to accumulate power and wealth, attributes that successfully enabled him to non-coercively mobilize people into collective action. Such people, according to Boone’s analysis, could then increase further their bargaining power vis-à-vis the centre; with a colonial state that had limited resources to project its sovereignty, if it could rely upon others to take on that role within their own areas then - if they were places of limited interest to the state - they could be largely left alone to practice their own sovereignty. An effective native authority had the potential to lower the costs to the government (and indeed to the chief himself) of social control which might otherwise have had to be achieved through coercion, enforcement and/or much closer monitoring of agricultural and other productive activities in the area.¹²⁶

In his important article about the size of the colonial service in British Africa, Kirk-Greene spends some time discussing the performance required of a district official in order for him to be effective at administering the vast area under his charge. He argues that he “administered with the aid of an authority erected upon his own self-confidence” and that “it was a probably indispensable sense of one kind or another of superiority, at once unquestioned and unquestioning, which enabled the expatriate colonial administrator to advise, to act, to accomplish, and indeed to be”;¹²⁷ this was the way in which Timothy Chawinga also operated. Aside from his performances of power in the local context he is remembered as styling himself upon the D.C Cosmo Haskard, and this was reflected in the way he governed his people; in using the limited resources he had available to him he used his personality effectively, in other words, “he ran Hewe like a British person”.¹²⁸ Sir Robert Coryndon, Governor of the Ugandan Protectorate in the 1920s, is quoted by Kirk-Greene to illustrate that such behaviour by native authorities ought to be encouraged:

"It is recognized that a valuable principle of Native Administration is that the desires and the measures of the Government shall be carried through as much as possible by the force of personal prestige which should be the distinguishing characteristic of native officials ... that, in fact, the administration of the natives should be, in a sense, by personality rather than by legislation".¹²⁹

Conclusion

Native Authorities in Nyasaland were defined indiscriminately in the majority of the late colonial legislation as somewhat out-dated bodies that needed to be welded to new progressive elements forthwith: "chieftainship left to itself will too often rot", wrote Hudson in 1950, "the canker spreading to all in contact with it".¹³⁰ The variation in influence and effectiveness of the system was reflected in the allocation of native authority salaries which was increasingly dependent not only on population and size of territory but also "on imponderables, such as a chief's eminence with his tribe, his relationship to neighbouring authorities, etc..."¹³¹ Yet the "success" and "failure" of native authority chiefs in this late colonial period was not a simple equation; as Power highlights:

"Even though migrant autonomy might pose a challenge to chiefly authority and prestige, migrants could also assist chiefs in asserting political claims. Similarly, African cash croppers demanded security of tenure and 'modern' inheritance laws to safeguard their material wealth, while defending 'traditional' corporate 'family values' when this suited them. Chiefs wanted their people to prosper so that they could collect taxes and other levies, but they also wanted to ensure that emergent accumulators did not undermine their own authority or efforts at accumulation. So chiefs and commoners had feet in both 'old' and 'new' worlds. They were all part of the new colonial economy, and this had implications for the way colonial politics would play out".¹³²

Whilst the colonial framework empowered Timothy Chawinga in various ways the process was a subtle and contextualized one and there were limits to this state-endorsed authority. This chapter has attempted to unsettle some of the assumptions that exist concerning the central role of the state in producing local authority. Gaining power through other means – be they narrative, productive or symbolic – shifted the frameworks in which authority was produced in colonial Hewe. To reiterate Apter, power can change "the rules of the game – the depth and span of the royal lineage, the prerogatives of high office, the ranking of chiefs, the influence of Big Men – and can do so because authority is not simply given or imposed, but it is constructed, negotiated, and reconstructed by actors, myths and rituals that can uphold the status quo, but they can also be invoked and performed to oppose it".¹³³

Timothy manoeuvred himself skilfully within a landscape of overlapping identities and local opportunity but was fortunate also to have established himself at a time (1943-53) when it was perhaps easier for him to move between his role image and his other registers of power. If the sphere of native authority politics was less about emphasizing and wielding customary rights and obligations per se, but rather more about negotiating access to people and resources in whichever way one could then this was a time when certain advantages could be gained in this regard. From 1953 as the political situation in Nyasaland became increasingly tense, and the stakes for wielding authority at every level was higher, the government was becoming ever vigilant, replacing what they thought of as rebellious anti-federation chiefs with native authority councils. Furthermore native authority structures became the target of Congress attacks rather than the places they had been where support for the nationalists could be garnered. Recasting

the debate about chiefly authority in terms of economic accumulation helps to shift the lens away from the usual political collaborator and resister discussion of this time and emphasises that native authorities continued to use both the “old” and “new” worlds to establish and develop their authority.

¹ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, H. C. Foulger, D.C. Mzimba to J. M. Ellis, P. C. Northern Province, 4 February 1943

² Interview MD with Norman Chawinga, Yiteta Village, 25 September 2009

³ McCracken, *A History*, 225

⁴ In the lively neo-liberal debates around “indigenous rights”, customary law has been reappraised as “a local regulatory system” where “customary norms form the lived reality whereas state law and state courts are remote, strange, expensive and difficult to access” (J. Ubink, ‘Land, chiefs and custom in peri-urban Ghana: traditional governance in an environment of legal and institutional pluralism’, in W. Zips and M. Weilenmann (eds.) *The Governance of Legal Pluralism: Empirical Studies from Africa and Beyond*, (Wien and Berlin, 2011) see also B. Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power and Culture in the post-Apartheid Era*, (Oxford and Scottsville, 2005)

⁵ Interview MD with Charles Munthali, 6 August 2009.

⁶ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Foulger to Ellis, 4 February 1943

⁷ What distinguished this period from earlier decades was the amount of money available for development and agriculture. See Low and Lonsdale, ‘Introduction’, 12-16.

⁸ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Khunga to Foulger, 17 November 1942

⁹ MNA, NNM 1/24/10: *District Book, Mzimba/Mombera 1942*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Interview MD with several anonymous informants

¹² Ufwiti can be translated as witchcraft

¹³ Whilst I was undertaking fieldwork the five clans were: Mikule, Bongololo, Yiteta, Thanila, and Chikunguweya. It remains unclear how many ‘original’ clan lines there were but it generally ranges from three to five, although there is confusion over the correct names of them all. I was told that various factors led to the emergence of different narratives of legitimacy. These included: the Ngoni invasions; the bringing of ‘non’-chiefly elements in to families when the size of one’s clan was thought to reflect authority; the linking of families through marriage; illegitimate children claiming a line to the throne; and more recently the preference for educated and progressive men which led the mission to look elsewhere for ideal candidates; as well as the colonial construction of an international border which divided the families more significantly. See appendix for a few examples of clan history; this demonstrates the divergence between them all.

¹⁴ Vwende was from the Chikunguweya clan. Since his suspicious death certain sections of the clan have held some bitterness toward other clans in the royal family. The last chief Katumbi to have come from Chikunguweya was Peter Kamaiza Chawinga. Kamaiza was a controversial character in Hewe who reigned during a time when intense disputes over the chieftaincy were the cause of great disruption in the area. It is said that he too died suspiciously, in 2007, having upset many people in Hewe. Interestingly Kamaiza had always refused to use the office which Timothy Chawinga had worked from during his chieftaincy as he was afraid of his magic. Unlike most successors to a chiefly title who do not have to deal with the implications of having a living predecessor, Kamaiza was always afraid that Timothy would retake his crown once he had been released from detention. In some ways he was correct to worry as Timothy was still in local custom the legitimate chief, having not died. The other potential reason why there was disharmony between the Mikule clan and the Chikunguweya clan might have been on account of the alleged involvement of the former in the death of Vwende, thus ensuring the rise of Timothy to be Themba.

¹⁵ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Khunga to Foulger, 17th November 1942

¹⁶ Dukamayere was selected from the Bongololo clan, thought of by some to be a non-royal line. It was said that his level of education overrode the fact that he was not ‘officially’ in line to inherit the chieftainship.

¹⁷ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Khunga to Foulger, 17th November 1942

¹⁸ MNA, NN 1/20/1, Finding of a meeting of 41 native authorities and 25 councillors held at Lilongwe on 4 May 1938

¹⁹ NNM 1/14/8, DC Lilongwe to DC Mzimba, 8 May 1942

²⁰ MNA, S15/1/3/1, *Hewe Improved Council 1943*, "The summary of the proceedings of a meeting of the Hewe Improved Council held at the Hewe on the day (sic) of December 1942".

²¹ MNA, S15/1/3/1, H. C. Foulger, D.C Mzimba to P.C. Northern Province, 5 June, 1943

²² MNA, S15/1/3/1, unofficial file correspondence notes, author unclear but probably Barker (PC) to the Assistant Governor, 14 April 1943. The note urgently suggests that instead of simply writing "pastoral encyclicals" to the N.A's the DC should be sent to go and close down these factions who are having an effect on chiefs authority.

²³ His activities had more than simply local politics in mind; he had shown something of his nationalist ambitions at these early H.I.C meetings: "How shall we be true modernists in the realities of our country or native land?" he asked the members of the Council at one meeting. To which the council members answered: "we must understand the goodness of meeting together, discussing political, economical, educational and social aspects so as to become true citizens of our country" (MNA, S15/1/3/1, *Hewe Improved Council 1943*, "The summary of the proceedings of a meeting of the Hewe Improved Council held at the Hewe on the day (sic) of December 1942). His breakaway from the NAC in 1953 when they decided to send delegates to the Federal Parliament can be seen in the context of these local machinations.

²⁴ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Foulger, to C. J. W. Fleming, D.C. Lundazi, Northern Rhodesia, 19 February 1942

²⁵ More research needs to be conducted from the Zambian Katumbi perspective in order to confirm some of the reasons for this. What is known is that he took the crown in Sitwe around 1947 but was arrested during the early 1950s for allegedly killing a man. Since then no Katumbi chief has been officially recognised as anything other than a village headman in Zambia.

²⁶ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Galbraith to Foulger, 2 April 1941

²⁷ *Ibid.*, O. C. Adagh, D.C. Karonga to Foulger, 9 April 1941

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Thatcher, Assistant D.C. Lura to Foulger, 27 June 1941

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Interview MD with Ephram Chawinga, P.G.V.H. Chilikunthazi, Chilikunthazi Village, 23 January 2009; Interview MD with P.G.V.H Mikule and David Chawinga, Mikule Village, 16 January 2009

³² Mikule refers to the tracks which are left behind when animals are dragged along the ground. It is a name which was given to the clan in reference to the time when the Ngoni came and took slaves from this area; it is said that the Ngoni killed Chimbavi and dragged him out of the village.

³³ Interview MD with Ephram Chawinga

³⁴ This role of chairman is said to have come in to being when Chimbavi, Chimwemwe and Yapatula, Mulindafwa's three children were brought back to Hewe after their father died in what is now Chipera in Zambia. They needed someone to preside over the chiefly successions and in these days (Chimbavi) Mikule was the one to do it. He was well respected and would receive the most valuable part of tribute including the skins of lions. See interview MD with Ephram Chawinga.

³⁵ He is said to have completed Standard 5 at Livingstonia in 1933 (MNA, NNM 1/24/10: *District Book, Mzimba/Mombera 1942*)

³⁶ Interview MD with Austin Mfune, Senior Group Village Headman Chembe, Chembe Village, 29 January 2009: "Elders made him become chief; they had to choose Mikule because they hadn't been chief before".

³⁷ Monga is a village located at the south-eastern corner of Hewe, several miles from his home in Mikule.

³⁸ Interview MD with Moses Khunga - sub Chief Zolokere, Chatumbwa Village, 4 February 2009

³⁹ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Foulger to Ellis, 4 February 1943

⁴⁰ A. Eckert, 'A showcase for experiments': local government reforms in colonial Tanzania, 1940s and 1950s", *Afrika Spectrum*, 34:2 (1999)

⁴¹ Eckert, A., A showcase for experiments

⁴² What distinguished this period from earlier decades was the amount of money available for development and agriculture. See Low and Lonsdale, 'Introduction', 12-16

⁴³ See E. Green, 'A lasting story: conservation and agricultural extension services in colonial Malawi', *Journal of African History*, 50:2 (2009), 247-267. He argues that this perceived 'step-change' was actually continuity in the conservation paradigm and the post-war period saw "no more accurate understanding of the dynamics of peasant farming" as there had been before. In that sense, the article provides a detailed case that supports Berry's conclusion that intervention in the post-war period in colonial Africa in general was not classified by any 'fundamental change in administrators' understanding of African social realities'. The article shows that it is possible to identify three periods of extension in Nyasaland. The first period (1920s to early 1930s) was characterized by a reaction among the colonial administration to

existing changes within rural communities, i.e. the expansion of cotton and tobacco production among peasants in the southern and central parts of the Protectorate. The central concern was not to increase production per se but to ensure the good quality of the crops through the establishment of commodity programmes. During the second period, the early 1930s to late 1940s, although constrained by the lack of financial resources, agricultural extension services slowly and modestly became an integrated part of the work of the Department of Agriculture. Yet, they were no longer linked to the question of enhancing commercial production – rather, they took measures against soil erosion. This was the beginning of the conservation paradigm. During the third period (1945–60), more funds were made available for agricultural extension services and programmes became more comprehensive. Yet the aim of intervention – to combat erosion – remained the same: that is, changes in strategy took place within the conservation paradigm.

⁴⁴ In other words: providing opportunities for agricultural commercialisation which would increase local people's purchasing power.

⁴⁵ This plan made new funds available which were earmarked for domestic economy investment and agricultural reform

⁴⁶ This was of particular importance in Nyasaland, and especially within the northern region, given the huge percentage of the population that was involved in labour migration. Exposed variously to migrant experiences outside of their homeland and to increasing educational opportunities within Nyasaland, the peasants of the Hewe Valley were able to access cash more easily than they had done before. With this new income a greater access to household items, bicycles, radios, clothing and foodstuffs was enjoyed by many.

⁴⁷ The measures slated to overcome the land problems were summed up as a combination of the following: partial rural depopulation; establishment of secondary industries; individual ownership of land; cooperative credit and purchasing societies; and trials in collective farming. All of these would be experimented with at some point over the next 15-20 years of Nyasaland's development.

⁴⁸ MNA, NNM 1/10/7: *Native Land Rights and Tenure 1945*, Circular Letter from C. Barker, Provincial Commissioner Northern Province to all D.Cs in Northern Province, 25th September 1945

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Notes on Native Land Rights and Tenure in N.A. Katumbi.

⁵⁰ Green, 'A lasting story', 262

⁵¹ C. Baker, *Development Governor: A Biography of Sir Geoffrey Colby* (London, 1994)

⁵² J.C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven and London, 1998), 2

⁵³ MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168): *Local Government and Native Administration policy 1950-57*, Extract from record of the tenth meeting of the African Protectorate Council held in the Council Chambers at Zomba, 10th-11th October 1950

⁵⁴ Eckert, 'A showcase for experiments'

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁶ Eckert shows that it was also agreed by Andrew Cohen, who was head of the Africa Section at the Colonial Office, that there ought to be a rapid advancement of Africans within the administrative services and more elected African members in the Legislative and Executive Councils.

⁵⁷ Sir Geoffrey Colby quoted in Baker, *Development Governor*, 81

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 85

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 82

⁶¹ *Ibid.*,

⁶² *Ibid.*, 81

⁶³ Though they were invested in by less than had originally been hoped. The colonial government had applied for grants of £7.5 million from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, with the idea that it would facilitate an increase in the number of Department of Agriculture employees to 500. As Green confirms, however, by 1946 "it was made clear that Nyasaland would be granted considerably less than was initially applied for, i.e. £2 million instead of £7 million. As a consequence of the reduced grant, the allocation to agriculture decreased from £768,000 in total to £406,000. The immediate effect on manpower was the reduction of staff from 500 to 200 and the shelving of the idea to hire an Assistant Soil Conservation Officer and a Surveyor" (Green, 'A Lasting Story').

⁶⁴ Baker, *Development*, 87

⁶⁵ MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168), Extract from record of the tenth meeting of the African Protectorate Council held in the Council Chambers at Zomba, 10-11 October 1950. Findings of R.S Hudson, a consultant charged by Colby with the task of investigating African local government.

⁶⁶ S. K. Kuwali, 'The role of chiefs in the rise of African nationalism in Malawi', *University of Malawi History Seminar Paper*, unpublished manuscript, 1972-3, 6

⁶⁷ J. McCracken, 'Marginal Men': the colonial experience in Malawi', in *the Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15:4 (1989), 537-564. For more about Native Associations see R. Tangri, 'Interwar 'Native Associations' and the formation of the Nyasaland African Congress', in *Trans-African Journal of History*, 1:1 (1971), 84-102

⁶⁸ MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168), 'Nyasaland Note on Native Authorities and African Local Government', V. Fox-Strangeways, Chief Secretary, to all Provincial Commissioners, 30th June 1950. This circular outlined the Nyasaland specific policy derived from the general legislation laid out by the Secretary of State in 1947 and 1948 at conferences about African administration. At these conferences it was agreed that local government was understood to be the control of the people by the people; the part of government which most affected the man in his 'local setting', the aspect of rule "which affects each individual in his village, in the town and in his garden, and therefore it is the part of the government in which each person, however unimportant and lowly he may be, should take an immediate interest because it concerns his daily life".

⁶⁹ MNA, NN 4/1/9: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province 1948*, Native Affairs, Mzimba District

⁷⁰ McCracken, *A History*, 235

⁷¹ MNA, NN 4/1/9, Native Affairs Report 1948, Mzimba District

⁷² MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168) 'Nyasaland Note on Native Authorities and African Local Government', V. Fox-Strangeways, Chief Secretary, to all Provincial Commissioners, 30th June 1950, my emphasis.

⁷³ Eckert, 'A showcase for experiments', 220

⁷⁴ MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168), Extract from record of the tenth meeting of the African Protectorate Council held in the Council Chambers at Zomba, 10-11 October 1950. Findings of R.S Hudson, a consultant charged by Colby with the task of investigating African local government.

⁷⁵ Eckert, 'A showcase for experiments', 220

⁷⁶ At the end of 1952 chiefs in Nyasaland, led by Chief Mwase of Kasungu, set up a Chiefs Council which was independent of the Protectorate Council and Nyasaland Council of Chiefs, which planned a delegation to go to London to protest against federation (*Power, Political Culture*, 62)

⁷⁷ Power, *Political Culture*, 62

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, *Political Culture*, 94

⁸⁰ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*

⁸¹ Berry, 'Hegemony on a shoestring', 337

⁸² The Provincial Commissioner Cosmo Haskard observed a particularly single-handed approach to leadership in Balowoka chiefs who had over the years "developed in them strong individualistic tendencies". (MNA, NN 4/1/21: *Rumpi District Annual Report*, 1951, 8 February 1952)

⁸³ C. Lentz, 'The chief, the mine captain and the politician: legitimating power in northern Ghana', in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 68:1 (1998), 46-67, 47

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ As has been argued, most *Balowoka* chieftainships, though their historical trajectories have distinct differences, were not loaded with the "customary obligations and rights" which Fields charges others such as the Bemba Paramount chief Citimukulu with having, or that Beinart discusses were the key to the Mpondo chieftaincy in South Africa. In northern Malawi personality politics played a much greater role in the production of chiefly authority, having the ability to alter succession and "load the genealogical dice" (Austin, "Capitalists and Chiefs", 76).

⁸⁶ Interview MD with Daniel Zunda, Village Headman Chitunguru, Chitunguru Village, 14 January 2009

⁸⁷ To "become a man" generally suggests that this person has been well protected and that as a result he was able to become successful.

- ⁸⁸ Interview MD with Dambazuka Nundwe, Dambazuka Village, 28 August 2009; Interview MD with Edson Chilembo, Village Headman Nchuka, Nchuka Village, 19 February 2009
- ⁸⁹ The stories that are used continually to connect his behaviour to his potentially magical sources of power revolve around his hunting of lions, his accumulation of wealth and, allegedly, his death at the hands of his nephew, who being a blood relative of the one who had fortified him in the first place, was one of the few people who could actually kill him.
- ⁹⁰ Interview MD with Thompson Nundwe, Principal Group Village Headman Chipofya, Chipofya Village, 19 January 2009.
- ⁹¹ Fields writes that Citimukulu ought to have built a new capital upon his accession to power. According to his people his failure to do so can be blamed for the economic distress which they experienced in the 1930s. His failure to build a new capital had not been about ritual error per se, but rather more on account of his loss in "customary resources". In other words he had been unable to gather the appropriate tribute labour to build his new capital; this had happened "because he had not been able to assemble the builders or grow the crops for their provisioning". With no money to pay the builders and the lack of authority to compel them to work for nothing the influence of his paramountcy was exposed as fragile and his ability to stand as an effective native authority was questioned (K.E. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (New Jersey, 1985), 64)
- ⁹² Fields, *Revival*, 63
- ⁹³ G. Bond, *The Politics of Change in a Zambian Community*, (Chicago, 1976), 58
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 133
- ⁹⁷ MNA, NNM 1/24/10: *District Book, Mzimba/Mombera District*, Supplementary notes to the original 1942 edition
- ⁹⁸ W. M. J. van Binsbergen, 'Nkoya Royal Chiefs and the Kazanga Cultural Association in western central Zambia today: Resilience, decline, or folklorisation?.' in E. A. B. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and R. Van Dijk (eds.) *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (Leiden, 1999), 117
- ⁹⁹ Bond, *The Politics*, 144
- ¹⁰⁰ Interview MD with Edwall Muwowo, Themba Muyombe, Muyombe, Zambia, 8 August 2009
- ¹⁰¹ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, J. M. Ellis, Acting Provincial Commissioner to H. C. Foulger, District Commissioner, Mzimba District, 31 January 1941
- ¹⁰² MNA, NN 4/1/8: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province 1947*, Native Affairs, Mzimba District
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Foulger to Ellis, 6 September 1940
- ¹⁰⁶ In the early years of independence this status is reflected by the state in giving Katumbi a position as a judge in a regional criminal court as a Provincial traditional judge.
- ¹⁰⁷ MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168), Extract from record of the tenth meeting of the African Protectorate Council held in the Council Chambers at Zomba, 10-11 October 1950. Findings of R.S Hudson, a consultant charged by Colby with the task of investigating African local government.
- ¹⁰⁸ MNA, NN 4/1/7: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province 1946*, Native Affairs, Mzimba District
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ MNA, NNM 1/24/10, Supplementary notes to the original 1942 edition, Entry in 'Chiefs and Headmen' section, 1946
- ¹¹¹ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Foulger to Ellis, 6 September 1940
- ¹¹² MNA, NN 1/20/1, Finding of a meeting of 41 native authorities and 25 councillors held at Lilongwe on 4 May 1938
- ¹¹³ MNA, NN 4/1/21: Native Affairs Annual Report 1951, Rumphi District
- ¹¹⁴ MNA, NN 4/1/8, Native Affairs Annual Report 1947, Mzimba District
- ¹¹⁵ MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Chief Katumbi to DC Mzimba, 4 September 1947
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, DC Mzimba to Chief Katumbi, 29 September 1947
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ G. Austin, 'Capitalists and Chiefs in the cocoa hold-ups in South Asante, 1927-1938,' *The International journal of African historical studies* 21:1 (1988), 63

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 78

¹²¹ McCracken, *A History*, 228

¹²² Interview MD with Chipofya Nundwe: "The chieftaincy ought to rotate but now we have a system where we know that this house has been sitting on the throne several times. Bongololo has been selected many times for example because they are more educated. When the Themba dies they (Bongololo) call children from abroad and they sit on the throne. They are the main family that is educated". Interview MD with NyaHarawa, Yiteta Village, 13 February 2009: "*aDukamayeke mbene Chawinga wena Mbiriawaka. Wakawakolanga ufumu nikuti mba sambazi. Chifukwa chakuti ndiwo mbeneko wa ufumu wa wa sibweni wawo*".

¹²³ Austin, 'Capitalists and Chiefs', 76

¹²⁴ Fields, *Revival*, 79

¹²⁵ Interview MD with Kawonga, 29 January 2009

¹²⁶ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 23

¹²⁷ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "The thin white line: the size of the British colonial service in Africa", *African Affairs*, 70:314 (1980), 25-44, 43-44

¹²⁸ Interview MD with Kawonga

¹²⁹ Kirk-Greene, "The thin", 43-44

¹³⁰ MNA, Transmittal Files, 2-27-10F (Box 8168), Extract from record of the tenth meeting of the African Protectorate Council held in the Council Chambers at Zomba, 10th-11th October 1950. Findings of R.S Hudson, a consultant charged by Colby with the task of investigating African local government.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 'Nyasaland Note on Native Authorities and African Local Government', Fox-Strangeways, to all Provincial Commissioners, 30 June 1950

¹³² Power, *Political Culture*, 31

¹³³ Apter, *Black Critics*, 94

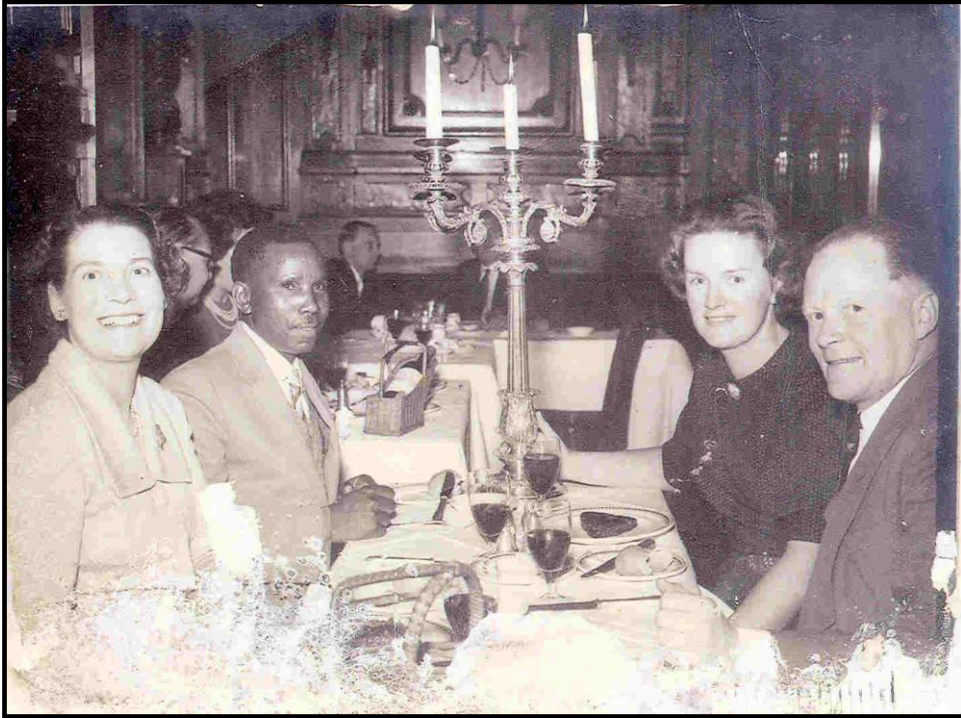


Fig. 1: Above, Timothy Chawinga at a formal dinner whilst attending the Festival in Britain in 1951 as a representative of Nyasaland. Photo from the private collection of Mary Chawinga

Fig. 2: Below, Timothy Chawinga delivering a welcoming speech to the Queen Mother on behalf of the chiefs of Nyasaland on the occasion of her tour of the country in 1957. Photo from the private collection of Mary



Chawinga.



Fig. 3: Above, Timothy Chawinga's house; building began on it in 1951. Taken by author in 2009.

Fig. 4: Below, Katowo Trading Centre, in 2009. The blue building on the left is the maternity ward built by Timothy Chawinga. Taken by author.





Fig. 5: Above, Themba Katumbi's office in Katowo, built in 1943 by Timothy Chawinga. Taken by author in 2009

Fig. 6: Below, the visit of the Queen Mother to Mzuzu, 24 May 1960. Timothy Chawinga can be seen third from left in the dark suit. From Cosmo Haskard's personal collection.





Fig. 7: Above, a view of Hewe from the foothills of Mwanda Mountain near Chisimuka. The Hewe River can be seen as a winding strip of light green through the centre of the photograph. Picture taken by the author in 2009.

Fig. 8. Below, the border post near Chikunguweya, where the Malawi Young Pioneer base was built in 1967. Picture taken by author in 2009.





Figs. 9 & 10: Above, left Abraham Munthali, right Elias Jato Kawonga. Picture taken by author in 2009.

Figs. 11 & 12: Below, left Jim Ngwira, right Austin Mfunu, PGVH Chembe. Picture taken by author in 2009.





Fig. 13: Above, memorial to Vinkakanimba in Muyombe, an annual celebration was started there in 1964 following Timothy Chawinga's inauguration of the Mulindafwa Ceremony. Picture taken by author in 2009.

Fig. 14: Below, Mulindafwa Day, the present Chief Katumbi, Kelvin Chawinga, can be seen on the right in the white robe, on the left sits Chief Kyungu of Karonga. The box contains the "Mulindafwa Stone" which is held up for all to see. Picture taken by author in 2009.





Fig 15: Above, SGVH Chilikunthazi and some members of his village. Picture taken by author in 2009

Fig 16: Below, a group of women from Wachipa Village in Hewe; they gathered so that we could record some of the songs they remember singing during the time of Timothy Chawinga's chieftainship, taken in 2009.





Fig. 17: Above, view of Mwanda Mountain, the ritual place of the rainmaker Mlomboji; seen from the road from Bwanyonga to Katowo. Picture taken by author in October 2008.

Fig. 18: Below, view of Mwanda Mountain from Zolokere. Picture taken by author in October 2008.



CHAPTER 4

Eating the land: Agricultural resources and the accumulation of power

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Re-evaluating the ‘Dead North’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hewe: Fertile but faraway

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chief Katumbi and the Natural Resources Board

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Safeguarding everyone’s interests

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Women and labour: The management of local landscapes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Provision and protection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Federation and political discontent: a change in atmosphere

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part two. Techniques for territoriality

Controlling labour, chasing pests, and hunting game

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hunting lions and elephants

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A local alliance: Themba Kamangilira and Village Headman Khutamaji

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

² J. Power, *Political Culture*, 94

³ *Ibid.*, 94

⁴ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 103

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

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

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

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

⁸ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 37

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8

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

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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

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

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 129

²¹ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

²⁶ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

³⁰ Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland', 747

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

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Jacobs, *Environment*, 31

³⁴ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴² Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 27-28

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵² Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 70

⁵³ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 85

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 86

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 82

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-91

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶³ Haskard to Brock, 18th September 2009

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

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

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

⁶⁷ Harvey, *Ten Years*

⁶⁸ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 93

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 94

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

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

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

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 98

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

⁸³ Springer, 'State power', 91

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹⁰ Berry, 'Hegemony', 337

⁹¹ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 14

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

⁹³ Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism', 14

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

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

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

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

⁹⁸ Berry, 'Hegemony', 337

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

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

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

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

¹⁰³ Interview MD with Nyanyasulu and others

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

¹⁰⁵ McCracken, *A Political History*, 185

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 324

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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

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

¹²² *Ibid.*

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

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

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

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, 145

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 146

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 144

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

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

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

¹³³ MNA, NN 4/2/2, October 1956

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁹ Interview MD with Thompson Nundwe

¹⁸⁰ Interview MD with Lyton Karua

¹⁸¹ Interview MD with Ephram Chawinga and Nyamfuno

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

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

¹⁸⁴ Boone, *Political Topographies*, 28

¹⁸⁵ MNA, NN 4/2/2, September 1956

¹⁸⁶ Mandala, *'Capitalism'*, 263

CHAPTER 5

Playing the long game: Maintaining credibility and customary control in a changing landscape, 1952-1960

Introduction

Timothy Chawinga knew when to stay silent. The tumultuous period of shifting allegiances, resignations and boycotts by native authorities which took place immediately before the Nyasaland Government was finally subjected to federation with Northern and Southern Rhodesia proved to be one such time; as the political intelligence report for May 1953 simply put it, the usually outspoken chief chose quite uncharacteristically to remain “on the fence”.¹ Chawinga had always been opposed to federation, and he made no attempt to hide this fact, however his taking a stance on this particular issue did not mean in any sense that he aligned himself with the Nyasaland African Congress or that he approved of their tactics. Chiefs like Mwase and M’mbelwa who took firm stands to ally with Congress by dramatically resigning their official positions or publicly leading non-cooperation campaigns would later retract their resignations and back out of boycotts, worried about the consequences these activities would have on their authority. Their vacillation on these matters sent confusing messages to both the Government and their people, and it made them prime targets for Congress manipulation on account of their seemingly weak-willed behaviour. Chawinga practiced moderation in dealing with these highly political matters; his only demonstrations of commitment up until 1960 were directed towards the needs of the people of Hewe; a useful tactic in times when the future direction of the nationalist movement was extremely unclear. This chapter will argue that Chawinga was able to ride the wave of political discontent and constitutional change on account of his continued public neutrality throughout the 1950s.

Taking a neutral stance was not a guaranteed ticket to a chief’s survival though; it did not work so well as a tactic in places where traditional authority was already being put under considerable pressure from other sources, and fence sitting would see them only lose more ground. As previous chapters have shown, reforms to native administration were putting chiefs’ institutionalized powers under threat. This threat was more keenly felt in areas where the experience of labour out-migration had prompted some people to resist traditional authority. Similar tensions were felt in Karonga where the co-operative movement, which had been extremely successful in establishing profitable schemes, enabled local elites to begin to rival the chiefs in terms of economic wealth. In such places leaders were forced to watch their backs. Across the border from Hewe in Chief Muyombe’s territory in Northern Rhodesia, the threat to the established order came from younger factions within the chieftaincy itself who saw the advantage of allying themselves with nationalist elements to oust the old guard. The pressures on chiefs and the threats which formed in the local context as well as on account of the national structural reforms varied greatly throughout the Protectorate. Whilst most of them were able to hold the ground throughout the uneven disorder of the 1950s, these often long-standing tensions between the chiefs and their people came to the fore during the State of Emergency which was declared in March 1959, and would last until the middle of June the following year; it

proved a perfect opportunity for unpopular chiefs to be removed and new faces to take their place.

In Hewe, despite increasing Congress pressure Chawinga continued to attend district and provincial meetings and refused to boycott official events. Meanwhile he spent this time also bolstering his traditional role, careful not to neglect the responsibility he had towards his people. There were economic and political threats of some importance but they were not yet organised or strong enough in the local setting to overwhelm his position; he had room to sit tight, and maintain a nonaligned status. Harvests were good, shortages were few, and as the officials noted: when this was the case the breaks were generally put on political activity.² In fact, rather than causing his chieftaincy to crumble the opening days of the State of Emergency provided the dramatic stage which Chawinga needed to bravely reassert his commitment to the people of Hewe, some of whom were starting to grumble about his dictatorial style.

When Chawinga did make a political stand, he did so once Hastings Banda had returned to Nyasaland to take over the leadership of Congress from the hesitant T.D.T Banda. Bearing an allegiance to Hastings Banda as an individual – who he had first met in London in 1951 when the chief attended the Festival of Britain and where Banda was practicing as a GP³ – rather than to the idea of the NAC per se, proved useful for Chawinga. When Banda returned to Nyasaland in July 1958, Hewe was one of the first places he went to hold a rally⁴ and he selected the chief to join him in Ghana at the All Africa Peoples Conference in December 1958, and then in London as his chiefly representative during the federal review process in 1960. Interestingly this decision to associate more overtly with the nationalists once Banda returned did not appear to concern the local administration too much. They seemed rather nonchalant about Chawinga's political dealings, probably realising that the ability he had to keep his people in check was too precious an asset to endanger in an atmosphere of great tension across the Northern Province.

Bearing in mind that chapter three has already analysed the structural threats to chieftaincy, this chapter will concentrate on how Chawinga managed to contain the challenges to his leadership whilst chiefs around him struggled to do the same during this eventful period of time (1952-1960); and how he negotiated his way through the myriad political alliances which each promised to protect the future of native authorities in different ways. Two key diplomatic moments sandwich this period, the discussions around federation in 1952-1953 and the arrangements for the 1960 federal review process; in these historical moments many chiefs entered into politics publicly for the first time, officially articulating their loyalties in correspondence, as part of delegations, and in resignations tendered. What becomes clear, however, is that it was not chiefs' interactions with national level politics that would see their future secured, more often than not what happened between chiefs and the local party faithful at these times was far more crucial in determining how their relationship with the future Malawi Congress Party would be shaped. The situation of local politics in Hewe was no exception; it is through this lens of analysis that the shifting fortunes of chiefs such as Chawinga ought to be examined, rather than through the endless changes which took place from 1952 to 1960 at the national level of both the party and the government.

Part one. Chiefs can no longer be kept out of politics

Fractured alliances and shifting agendas

In May 1953 the position which people in the Northern Province took in regard to the Nyasaland African Congress could best be described as “fluid”; a position which reflected the

organisation's own turmoil. A varying degree of opposition to the non-cooperation tactics that elements of Congress had been urging people to participate in as a protest against the dreaded Federation was noted, with most agreeing that the suggestion of a boycott of the Queen's Coronation celebrations in June was in particularly "bad taste".⁵ The previous six months had been times of great uncertainty for native authorities, many of whom had tried to avoid taking sides by doing what Chawinga did, attempt to act purely as a figurehead for their people, trying to voice only their people's opinion. This did not stop members of Congress from trying to turn chiefs towards their agenda and they worked on identifying the ones that were more easily persuaded to follow than others. John Hardy Gondwe, Themba Chikulamayembe, was approached as one such susceptible character. In April 1953 he had assured the Provincial Commissioner that he would warn all his people not to have anything to do with Congress, but by June he showed the first signs of rebellion. He is reported to have turned up four hours late to his own meeting and to have insisted that the District Development Committee and Education Committee were to be boycotted, as well as the Coronation celebrations and Provincial Council.⁶ Further north, Chief Kyungu in Karonga was reported to have "slipped into the hands of local Congress members", and M'mbelwa to the south was already working at a senior level within the organisation, with his "main motive" appearing to be "self-aggrandisement based on self-government".⁷

There is little evidence to show that local members of Congress set their sights directly on Timothy as a prospective ally in this their earliest non-cooperation campaign. The only source which shows that Chawinga rejected outright a call to boycott official meetings is his response to Chikulamayembe's letter which was an instruction to him to follow in his example; to this "Katumbi tore up the letter and said he would use his own judgement. Later, Katumbi and his councillor the Rev. Amin Msowoya attended the meetings".⁸ In the context of the bitter rivalry between the two chiefs this declaration of independence says rather more about local tensions than broader political affiliations.

However, paying heed to local politics and being influenced by the local agricultural and economic situation likely formed a large part of all chiefs decisions in this regard, a dynamic that can be illustrated by the desperate vacillation which many of them displayed when it came to actually seeing through what their grand public statements suggested they would. When the resignation of eight chiefs was reported in the British press on the 12th of June 1953, it seemed as though Congress' plans to capture the chiefs was working. However, the decision to pursue non-cooperation tactics made by Chief Mwase and "his followers" – which included preventing their people from being recruited as labourers to South Africa and distancing themselves from any decisions taken by the Legislative Council⁹ – belied the more complex matrix of options and restraints which chiefs faced. The fact that two of these rebellious chiefs retracted their resignations just days later and that at the same time an official chiefs' council passed determined resolutions to continue working with the Government and not to heed Mwase and Congress show that a range of choices, each with their own benefits, presented themselves to native authorities at this time.

After what seemed to have been a successful couple of months of recruitment the interest in Congress from earlier in the year dropped off significantly when good food harvests and a bumper crop of tobacco and cotton dissipated the building tension in April and May 1953. Decisions were also affected by the changing diplomatic situation; when the Secretary of State for Colonies visited, for example, and gave fresh assurance that federation wouldn't mean the loss of land for Africans the mood was also considerably lightened. It should be remembered that the general atmosphere in the country at this time, even just prior to federation, was not

one where angry anti-Government feeling dominated. As one senior official noted after having been away for some time, the “friendly attitude” of Africans towards him surprised him on his return to Nyasaland in June, especially having heard that things were taking a turn for the worst.¹⁰

For some Africans the question of federation itself had not even been settled, this was especially the case in the north where there was plentiful land and the impact of the Natural Resource Ordinance policies had not been so keenly felt. The African civil servants in Karonga might have been very resistant to the idea of federation but their influence was limited. It was reported that in “the rural areas of Karonga the majority of Africans have no definite opinion about federation, many have no knowledge of it, and others frankly confess that they are not interested; several were surprised to learn that federation was not yet an accomplished fact”.¹¹ There is even evidence in the colonial files that there were some farmers in Nkhata Bay and Mzimba who actively *desired* federation; their correspondence expressed the opinion that it would bring better schools, hospital, transport, food and more money¹² and that those chiefs and Congress members who did not want it were protesting on account of their concern for their own positions rather than the welfare of their people¹³. Whether these examples demonstrate anything more than government propaganda is difficult to know. What is sure is that this was a time when fragile alliances existed within the nationalist organisation, and between Congress and chiefs. Only a very few number of chiefs could be decisively pinned down as being either firm collaborators, or ardent resisters. The emergence of several other organisations professing to speak for “the people” or better represent native authorities is illustrative of this fragile landscape of shifting allegiances.

“Unconstitutional bodies”: the Nyasaland African Convention and Supreme Council

Chief Mwase, one of the most high profile of native authority chiefs, was behind several new “unconstitutional” organisations. It is useful to examine his shifting public inconsistency before comparing how Chawinga himself responded to these dramatic events which were reshaping the landscape of politics in Nyasaland. Having worked enthusiastically as a key member within the Nyasaland African Congress throughout the late 1940s, attending the Victoria Falls Conference to discuss federation in 1951 alongside NAC representatives and campaigning with them to make sure few people were persuaded by the plans to federate, by 1952 Mwase was organising the chiefs separately from the NAC and Protectorate Council; with sometimes confusing consequences.

His first rather contradictory display of behaviour was made in a speech against Congress in 1952. In a letter to the Provincial Commissioner of Central Province he openly derided the organisation for their taking freedom of speech away from the people of Nyasaland. He was unhappy about their “recruitment” tactics which included intimidation designed to frighten chiefs into membership and he told the P.C. that the “chiefs and native authorities are ill-advised; that the organisation will soon take over the Government and that the chiefs and native authorities are to be highly respected that they are now”.¹⁴ Despite this rather conciliatory letter towards the government just two days later he also resigned from his official position as native authority; it appeared that he was neither pro-Congress nor pro-government. In the context of a NAC riven with internal conflicts he decided to move to higher ground. He imagined that he might be able to do this by leading *chiefs* in protesting against federation in their own way, with their own agenda.

The first opposition party he started “for the good of my country man and woman” was the Nyasaland African Convention.¹⁵ Leading a number of other members of the African

Protectorate Council to also abandon their official positions, he stated that he had begun forming the organisation because the “time has come for chiefs in Nyasaland to take their own line with regard to federation”, and to no longer “follow blindly the lead of Congress”.¹⁶ Despite Mwase’s firm and persuasive statements, just two months later the impetus of this break-away was lost. Lost in its desire to distance itself from Congress – if this was indeed a serious motivation from the start and not a diversion tactic – and lost in its own “independent” campaign against federation.

The chiefs’ conference which Mwase had organised to be held on the 15th and 16th of November 1952 in Lilongwe, was said by him to have been a chiefs-only event, but for observers it was clearly “inspired and directed” by Congress and was full of its representatives who were set on influencing the course of events. At this event a National Chiefs Union was formed, with Mwase as president, and one of its first activities was to organise another delegation to the UK in order to present to the Queen a petition against federation signed by 83 chiefs. Early in the following year the Chiefs Union joined with the NAC and the Protectorate Council to form a joint committee which they named the Supreme Council of Action; in this they advocated Congress inspired non-cooperation tactics.¹⁷ Despite his vocal severing of Congress ties Mwase was evidently still working closely with at least some of its more radical leadership. On the basis of his behaviour as it is reported in colonial records it is difficult to pin down where his true allegiance lay; and this was something that the administration would find increasingly irritating.

Chiefs who had no pressing political agendas of their own to pursue had an easier time of it during the months of April and May 1953 when harvests were good and bumper crops of tobacco and cotton were guaranteed to sell well at market¹⁸; in such a context political agitation was down to a minimum and chiefs could concentrate on their usual administrative duties. Perhaps it was this lack of impetus among chiefs that led Mwase to become involved with the Supreme Council. It consisted of Chiefs Mwase, M’mbelwa, Gomani and seven other native authority chiefs, plus eight representatives of Congress including Willard Gomani, the very active son of Chief Gomani, and J.R.N. Chinyama, the then current President of the NAC.¹⁹ This organisation was essentially the crucible for the campaigns of civil disobedience which became the characteristic tactic of Congress throughout the 1950s. In May 1953 The Supreme Council took the decision to issue orders, which they pinned on trees and buildings, to boycott Government meetings and practice non-participation in all official activities, this controversially included the Queen of England’s coronation celebrations. These orders were accompanied by what the Government described as “widespread” intimidation: this consisted of threats that people who did not participate would have their throats cut, their houses burnt, or witchcraft would be used against them. This the Government found difficult to counter, having few channels to spread their own information among the people.²⁰

Whilst Mwase led the calls to boycott and perform acts of civil disobedience it was in fact Chief Gomani – encouraged by his son Willard and their close association with the radical minister the Reverend Michael Scott – who became the most famous of all chiefs who participated in these protests. The Natural Resource Ordinance had had a big impact in Ncheu, in which Chief Gomani’s chieftaincy was to be found; his was a ready audience who perhaps had not felt the benefit of the good harvests which other areas were experiencing at that time. Working closely with B.W. Matthews Phiri, another member of Congress who was involved with the Supreme Council, and pushed by his son Willard he warned his D.C that should federation come he would personally protest against it by handing back his tax and license books and refusing to undertake his duties. A fierce non-cooperation campaign was fought in Ncheu and Gomani was the first chief to be deposed on account of it.²¹ Unrest also took place elsewhere in

the south: in Thyolo, Mulanje, Port Herald, Chikwawa and the Lower Shire; blame was put on the instability of native administration in these areas and on the tensions which the forced labour tenancy system of *Thangata* had fermented.²² It also forced new fractures between those who believed that violence was needed to overcome federation and those who could not justify the death of Africans in order to attain secession.

The decision of people to follow either their chiefs and/or Congress' lead was not really an ideological one for most of the population or indeed for their customary leaders; this remains another aspect of this time. Some people were rather suspicious of their chiefs' motives for wanting independence, and made the suggestion that their chiefs were only fighting for freedom from the colonial regime so as to secure their own future and that they would not think twice about acting against the interests of their people once this was attained. They were convinced that once an African government gave them the space to fill the positions of their entourage with whomsoever they wanted they would immediately select only friends and relatives for the jobs. For this reason freedom from the colonial administration was, for these people, simply not worth fighting for; they were a much tougher crowd for the nationalists to appeal to.²³

Mwase's resignation in June, along with seven of his compatriots²⁴ was retracted soon afterward it was submitted. His decision to do so was understood by the administration to be the actions of "a worried man" who was "trying desperately to keep a foot in the Government camp".²⁵ The message he was sending out to the population, to other chiefs, and to the government was decidedly unclear; behaviour which suggests how difficult it was to be firmly in either one camp or the other:

"He campaigned to boycott the celebrations, yet at the last moment he produced an address of loyalty on behalf of the Africans in his area, and also sent a telegram to the Secretary of State, asserting his loyalty to the Queen. On the 19th of June however he took a prominent part in an attempt to prevent Africans from seeing a coronation film".²⁶

Other active members of the Supreme Council also began to get jittery. Strangely Chief M'mbelwa became more co-operative with the Government than he had been for some time, organising a very successful early tax drive in his area in June. The government's interpretation was that he had done this so as to avoid the embarrassment if Congress later pressed for non-collection of tax as a form of non-cooperation.²⁷ The difficult position of these chiefs was certainly appreciated by the administration but they did not believe that there was any excuse for disloyal behaviour or for "the formation of a quite unconstitutional body such as the Supreme Council and, through this, association with Congress in its call to, and campaign of, civil disobedience".²⁸ The government had come to the end of its tether with Mwase in particular who they charged in no small measure with "the bloodshed, waste of money, and damage to race relations"²⁹ which the non-cooperation measures brought about:

"He must now realise, and accept, that he will have to stand on one side of the road or the other, and that if he is officially to resume his office he must finally abandon his past policy of vacillation and in sincerity, for Government cannot tolerate it in a Native Authority".³⁰

So too had another group of chiefs come to the end of their appreciation of him. At a meeting of 15 senior chiefs and Native Authorities in the Southern Province, delegates passed firm resolutions not to break any laws made by the Government, and a group of chiefs from Chikwana and Port Herald sent a message to the Provincial Commissioner, "we will not allow

Mwase or Congress to give us orders”.³¹ One thousand people gathered at N.A. Chikowi’s headquarters for an anti-Supreme Council meeting on 24th June, including Chiefs Katunga (of Chikwawa), Ntondeza (of Thyolo), Chitera (of Blantyre), Chimombo (of Thyolo), Kuntembwe (of Chikwawa) and Ngabu (of Chikwawa); most of whom would be later punished by their people for “these acts of treachery”.³²

On the 10th of October, amid these tensions, Mwase decided to withdraw his *third* resignation; this was just another confirmation in the eyes of the administration that he was both “a master of duplicity” and a chief who was easily led.³³ This was not the last that would be heard of Mwase; he went on to play an extremely important role advising the young leadership of the more radical Congress and he saw out the Emergency emerging as more heroic than spineless, however it is difficult to get a sense of what might have happened to him in Banda’s Malawi as he died soon after the Emergency in 1962.

Keep on consulting and we’ll go on co-operating!

Although he was known to have been a good friend of Chief Mwase, Timothy Chawinga kept a low profile throughout the tumultuous period just prior to federation. His name did not come up as either someone who was obviously loyal to the Government or as someone who signed up to the activities of the Supreme Council. He did make his views on federation very explicit however. At the end of 1952 a special meeting of the African Protectorate Council was held. Chaired by Fox-Strangways the Secretary for African Affairs, it had been called in order to choose and brief representatives to attend the London conference to discuss federation in January 1953. Attending as one of seven delegates from the north Chawinga made his opinion on this matter clear:

*“If we agree to the suggestion that we send delegates to England it will mean that we are not representing the wishes of our people [who are opposed to Federation] [...] we have reached the stage when we feel that there is nothing good in the federation scheme, [...] I feel that had there been anything in it to benefit Africans, and had we continued to oppose it as in fact we have done, the scheme would have been dropped long ago simply because we did not want it”.*³⁴

This is, however, one of the very few public statements from Chawinga. Like most members of the African Protectorate Council he was opposed to the federation in principle and in detail and did not wish to participate in any forum that would be discussing the matter in any seriousness due to the disappointments which had occurred when chiefs had attempted to have their voices heard on previous occasions.³⁵ Several witnesses confirmed that he did not hold back from expressing his political position amongst his friends, teachers and colleagues in Hewe,³⁶ but he would never be drawn into a public debate about it. His name is notably absent in all of the political intelligence reports during this time and seems not to appear on lists where chiefs political affiliations were known. He continued to work through the “proper channels”, which he knew still gave him the best opportunity of getting the things done he wanted to get done in Hewe, and in giving him chances to have his voice heard the loudest and most effectively. The 1950s were, overwhelmingly, years where he committed himself to his administrative role as native authority and the period of federation was arguably when he was at the height of his powers.³⁷ As the previous chapter showed he excelled in organising agricultural activities during the federation period, and he wasn’t in any hurry to jeopardize the socially and economically important position that he had attained as an honorary game warden. The 1955 Annual report on Native Administration summed up his achievements as follows:

“In Rumpi District, Chief Katumbi completed another year of efficient administration in his area. In June he attended the ceremonial parade in Zomba on the occasion of the Queen’s birthday, in order to receive from His Excellency the Queen’s Medal for Chiefs in silver gilt, which had been awarded to him the previous year. Chief Katumbi was appointed a member of the Provincial Natural Resources Board and was largely responsible for the proposal that the Vwaza Marsh area should become a controlled shooting area. In May, [he was] also responsible for starting a welfare hall building in Katowo”.³⁸

In this same year his achievements were even reported in the vernacular newspaper Msimbi; an enthusiastic write-up sent in by the clerk at the Hewe post office, Chakhalira Chilembo about the plentiful harvest in Hewe was deemed a sufficiently important success story to be published.³⁹ Perhaps being able to maintain a reputation as an efficient and cooperative chief at this time when Congress was thought to have been harassing and intimidating the whole of the countryside was easier than might have previously been thought. The combination of Chawinga’s territorial success which had brought him some independence, as the previous chapter explained, and the internal crises which beset the nationalist camp, ensured that the Nyasaland African Congress was not an overwhelming force in Hewe.

The early 1950s were notoriously difficult years for the NAC. The organisation was at a “particularly low ebb”, its leadership “lacked unity and seemed to have lost its sense of purpose and direction” especially since the financial scandals and rumours of embezzlement which rocked the executive in the late 1940s created division and distrust.⁴⁰ With no strong leadership the campaigns against federation ran along factional lines and chiefs could strategically choose to shift their allegiances as the balance of power altered between the various main stakeholders. In this milieu there was opportunity for chiefs to take a lead of their own, as the example of Mwase showed. With no resolution on how to tackle the future of constitutional reform – which resolutions were enough for the African people and what were acceptable lengths to go to in order to get them – the “nationalist struggle” evidently had assumed a variegated and regionally specifically character. This character would continue even after the party was reinvigorated by the raft of young men who had been educated outside of Nyasaland. Chipembere, Chiume and Chisiza indeed brought a different perspective and a more radical strategy. By the mid-1950s Congress was more organised and determined not to make compromises. In 1957 under the leadership of T.D.T Banda the more moderate positions were no longer tolerated. Achieving anything less than secession and independence was not even contemplated, and Congress undertook this campaign by applying pressure on the government to increase the number of Africans in both the legislature and executive. This was considered by the leadership to be crucial and they worked hard for this change at the national level as they feared if this was not achieved in advance of the Federal Review conference which was to be held in London in July 1960 then an unrepresentative body of men would be left to decide the future of the people of Nyasaland.

However, whilst the organisation had clearly become a lot more focused since 1953, especially in terms of maintaining a strong leader at their helm – this began by getting rid of Chinyama in 1953, then Sangala in 1956, and then eventually T.D.T Banda in 1958 to make way for the return of Dr Banda⁴¹ – “on the ground” the local branches generally remained weak, except in places where tensions created by colonial and federal policy did exist (this is borne out by the extreme reactions that people had towards their chiefs in Southern Province where land was scarcer and agricultural measures since 1949 had taken their toll)⁴² or in places where the

more powerful Congress leaders had a specific attachment. As Kalinga points out, “even when Chiume, Bwanausi and others began to organize congress at grass roots level they did so at regular intervals but only in specific areas, usually in or near their homes or places of work”.⁴³ Often the first chair-people of Congress branches in the local setting were the less radical clerks and ministers who had graduated from Livingstonia, most of whom were committed to working through the traditional forums (in Hewe the Reverend Levi Kaleya was the first branch chairperson). In such a situation plenty of chiefs continued to go on working through official forums as they had always done, with little retribution; branch meetings were more often places of sedate discussion about politics than radical interpretations of nationalism. Along with the chiefs they generally found their own less overt ways of resisting the excesses of colonial rule.

Chawinga’s attitude was rather: if you keep consulting us chiefs about the matters of local and national importance, then we will keep co-operating with you whoever you are. He knew the benefit of working through official forums, especially because decisions made in small local arenas had the potential to affect change if they continued to be fed into higher levels of policy making. Working within the system did not mean that he did not vocally challenge how he thought it ought to be run, as the minutes of a meeting of the African Protectorate Council in 1952 reveal. At this meeting he was adamant that any legislation which affected African interests and was to be discussed at the Legislative Council should first be submitted to these local forums; if the Government introduces a law without consulting us, he warned, it “will affect the cooperation of the people”.⁴⁴ This was surely a way of safeguarding his own position as a contributor to the law making processes as much as it was a symbolic stance on behalf of his people. As major changes took place in the local government system he lamented the effects that this would have. When from 1956 Provincial Council resolutions were no longer passed through the African Protectorate Council he flagged up his concern. This process ought to be restored he said because “when Provincial Councils had something to suggest to Government it would carry more weight if it was forwarded through Protectorate Council, as it would show that the four councils were unanimous in their views”; it was his worry that if only the Northern Province African Provincial Council asked for something from Government, “the request would not be treated as well as if it had been submitted by all the Provincial Councils through the Protectorate Council”.⁴⁵ For understandable reasons Chawinga wanted chiefs to have control over as many of the decision making processes as possible⁴⁶ and when there were moves to curb this participation he was very vocal about it.

The local government milieu has been largely ignored as a place where sympathies were won and lost, but this was an important battleground especially as the changes in legislation opened up the system of native administration to political elements. Working through government channels to gain an advantage through grassroots support was a tactic not only pursued by Chawinga; Congress leadership also drew its influence and authority from these arenas. The Local Government (District Council) Ordinance was passed in 1954; granting them the right to sit on the councils as ex-officio members it was designed to bolster the role of chiefs who whilst they lost the power to make rules, retained responsibility for law and order, tax collection and land distribution. Reforms to local government also enabled activists to gain a foothold in the local administration,⁴⁷ especially after a revision in the constitution of protectorate and provincial councils which increased the quota for African members saw Congress win all five of the new seats available.⁴⁸

Whilst these shifts in local political representation had the potential to undermine native authorities, Chawinga continued to keep a firm grip on his administration. In 1955 and 1956, for example, he successfully held, on his own initiative, courses for his village headmen “at

which he lectured them about various aspects of Government activities and explained the categories into which village headmen had recently been graded".⁴⁹ The question is: *how did he manage to maintain this stance without jeopardizing his authority with his people as happened with many other chiefs?* This thesis continues by arguing that in the period leading up to the Emergency Chawinga maintained both credibility and control on account of three main factors: the nature of his relationship with state officials and Hewe's place in the colonial economy; Chawinga's maintenance and strengthening of tradition in the local setting; and on account of the limited economic threats to his authority. During the period of the Emergency itself the way in which he was able to successfully fulfill the expectations of both his people – customarily – and the state – by helping maintain its sovereignty – was crucial to his survival.

Part two. Maintaining credibility and control in crisis

Before the Emergency: maintaining good relationships and adhering to "custom"

As the previous chapter has explored, the content and technique of colonial policies were experienced differently on account of the personalities of those involved – African and European – the economic context into which they were brought, and the influence of the local political milieu. "Pockets of militarization"⁵⁰ might have presented the state, and the scholar, with a particular narrative of decolonization, but this was by no means the common experience. The population's reaction to chiefs' behaviour was based in many different factors; whether or not they were collaborators with the colonial state was generally quite far down the list. As such keeping on the right side of the administration during the years of decolonization did not necessarily condemn native authorities to deposition later on. As more empirical cases of chiefs are drawn up it will surely become clear that their future security could not at all be predicted simply on their choice of whether to follow Congress or follow the Government but rather in relation to the relationships they cultivated and maintained in the local setting.

Another of Chawinga's strengths was that he excelled in using tradition and custom to his advantage. The alienation which traditional councillors felt in Chikulamayembe's area was visceral and damaging; by choosing to consult the Reverend Edward Manda over and above the elders he alienated a potentially powerful body of people.⁵¹ Chawinga, having been advised by another Livingstonia trained minister, the Rev. Isaac Khunga, was warned that he should develop a very diplomatic and inclusive stance when it came to dealing with the elders in his own chieftaincy. Although Khunga died at the end of 1952 his legacy to Chawinga was an important one: he knew the history of the chieftaincy extremely well and he impartially guided the chief through the Chawinga family politics and potentially damaging clan rivalries.⁵² The longest serving headman Chembe Mfunu, who was also a contemporary of Chawinga's, remembered:

"Kamangilira followed the chiefly line and paid great attention to tradition. When people would choose a chief, before he was crowned by the Themba his credentials would be checked by Kamangilira to make sure he was of chiefly line and he would be crowned only after this had been 'proved'. Amongst his own family whenever there was a quarrel he would act the same as with everyone; he played no favouritism amongst the clans".⁵³

Within the royal family itself another key figure who played a large role in guiding Timothy through the minefield of succession and chiefly disputes was the Village Headman Thanila.

People in Hewe remember that he was passed over as a candidate for the Katumbi chieftaincy himself only on account of his limited education which was deemed by the 1930s a prerequisite to rule. This did not appear to sour his relationship with Timothy, however, with whom he worked closely as an adviser. He was seen to be such a stabilizing factor in the area that he was chosen on a number of occasions to act as chief Katumbi for interim periods; for the first time just before Timothy's crowning and then again after the sudden death of a couple of chiefs in more recent times.

What was of some additional help to Chawinga, in contrast to the situation Chiefs Muyombe, Chikulamayembe and Kyungu found themselves in, was the fact that there were many fewer headmen and councillors for Katumbi to manage⁵⁴ and at least up until independence he did a good job of keeping everyone of them on-side.⁵⁵ His relative youth and flexibility also meant that he did not fall prey to more radical or more conservative elements unlike some of his contemporary native authorities who were more easily co-opted on account of their infirmities or lack of education.⁵⁶ There may have been the odd disgruntled individual here and there but no significant party organisation to rival the leadership of Timothy emerged at this time in Hewe, neither did he allow the necessary space to open for new politicized elements to infiltrate the chiefly organization and co-opt disenfranchised traditional elements into their movements, at least not until the late 1960s when these tensions, backed by stronger central party support and resources – as well as the Malawi Young Pioneers – eventually gave Timothy some cause for concern.

Internal tensions within chieftaincies created dangerous spaces in which people with radical agendas could enter. Although the national political context was a little different, the ways in which emerging party political elements thread themselves into the Muyombe Chieftainship across the border in Northern Rhodesia – a chieftaincy which had shared much in terms of historical experience with the Katumbi chieftaincy⁵⁷ - demonstrates how well Timothy Chawinga held together the different agendas of his people in Hewe. In the kingdom of Uyombe, “where there was widespread dissatisfaction with the chief's policies”,⁵⁸ the young nationalist leaders were able to exploit it and set up in opposition to Chief Muyombe. They chose not to oppose the chief directly but rather induced his disaffected personal advisors and traditional councillors – key members of the ruling stratum – to join them, co-opting them into these emerging local party structures; as Bond highlights in his detailed ethnography, “the support of these powerful senior men was thought to be necessary to give the movement legitimacy”.⁵⁹ Essentially the local branch of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) found itself in a position to crystallize the long-standing opposition against the chief and provided “a channel through which popular discontent could be expressed”,⁶⁰ a discontent which would lead to the creation of a new post of Deputy Chief (taken up by Edwall Muwowo) a position which the party leaders infiltrated and thus became “important figures in the political life of the chieftain”,⁶¹ participating in the structures of traditional legitimacy. Such tactics were not uncommon across the continent during decolonization. In Ghana, Rathbone notes that in a good number of cases “rural Party branches were actually founded by members of embittered, losing factions (of the chiefly clan). Local grievances could now be re-written as elements of a national campaign. Aggrieved factions now used the relatively sophisticated resources of local Party branches to harass their opponents [...] In case after case it seems that the formation of rural branches of the CPP (the Congress People's Party) almost always coincided with a long-standing rural struggle for chieftaincy”.⁶²

Disenfranchised elements of chiefly clans might have benefitted from nationalist support but they also did not want to lose out on achieving the crucially important local

relevance. When the new Deputy Chief Edwall Muwowo introduced the Vinkakanimba ceremony in 1965, it was done so in order to shore up the chieftaincy's position in a landscape of political and social uncertainty. Bond noted that the introduction of this celebration of the arrival of the first royal chief by Muwowo had what he could see were several aims which besides from an attempt to gain popularity, meant he could "emphasize the position of the royal clan as the rightful rulers vis-à-vis the new politicians [...] Within the framework of the royal clan it would reinforce the claims of the descendants of Vinkakanimba, and it would bring the residents of the chieftdom to the capital, emphasizing it as the political and, for many, the religious center of the chieftdom".⁶³ Interestingly this chiefly celebration was known to have been directly inspired by Chawinga's Mulindafwa ceremony which had been first introduced some eleven years earlier in 1954.⁶⁴

Chawinga's constructed "timeless ceremonial tradition"⁶⁵ was designed to publicly circulate the narrative of his chieftaincy's historical legitimacy, as well as its continued relevance, and people were invited to attend from neighbouring chieftaincies as well as officials from the government so that its message could resonate beyond the territory itself. Behind the story and the symbol there were a collaboration of chiefs, advisors and councillors who had been re-writing history in order to shape collective memory as a tool to define their place in the polity.⁶⁶ The focal point of the celebration and the central symbol of royal sovereignty was the "Mulindafwa Stone"; a symbol immediately picked up on by the Nyasaland Times in which an article was published on the 12th November 1957 which presented the comparison of this stone with that of the Stone of Destiny (or Stone of Scone),⁶⁷ used since 1057 at the inauguration of all Scottish monarchs and then from 1296, after being captured by Edward I of England, by all English monarchs.⁶⁸ The article went on to describe the provenance of the symbol and how its history was performed at the ceremony; "The legend is that when the chief climbed to the top of Themba Hill to survey his new domain he sat on the stone. It was carried in procession through the main street at the present chief's headquarters during the celebration and was loudly acclaimed when Chief Katumbi held it high for all to see".⁶⁹ Staying in control of his future saw Chawinga insisting upon continual reference to the past, and to the importance of tradition as a legitimizing dynamic in his local authority.⁷⁰

The final important aspect which limited the damage to his authority during the lead up to the Emergency was that the local economy in Hewe had not provided much opportunity for the accumulation of substantial wealth; a crucial prerequisite for any potential challenger to Chawinga. Whilst it is certainly true that through various labour migration strategies the number of people who ran small businesses in Hewe did steadily increase in number throughout the 1950s (see tables 1 and 2), in contrast to places in Karonga, for example, where significant gains were being made by individuals involved in domestic cash cropping, individuals in Hewe were however quite unable to economically threaten their chief. The idea that the colonial economy "altered productive activity"⁷¹ in the countryside and thus also affected "the basis" of customary rule is much lauded but cannot be argued as being a universal dynamic (of wealth displacing or transforming customary authority); it is certainly not the case in the Hewe Valley. Furthermore the notion that it also "violated the logic of indirect rule by displacing people from their village economies into the paid labor force [...] withdrawing villagers from the moral and physical authority of the customary order" and creating "masterless men",⁷² is also perhaps overstated in the literature. Certainly in the case of Hewe, where there is not enough evidence to show that this was the case, this *general* increase in wealth and other dynamics associated with labour migration seemed to have little significant effect on the production of Chawinga's authority.

Timothy's image was more in danger of being dented by particular individuals' rather than from a society wide increase in wealth. One character Abraham "Supply" Munthali, whose activities will be discussed at greater length in the final section of this chapter, was able to accumulate substantial profits from his carpentry business and must have been an annoyance to Chawinga because he was able to demonstrate patterns of patronage, consumption and respectability that sometimes went beyond the chief himself. Given that the performance of prestige was vital for his big man status he monitored such threats carefully. In the event, Munthali had no political ambition or desire to usurp authority from the chief; he did not conform to the patterns of businessmen who were becoming involved in politics elsewhere in the region so was unlikely to have used the Emergency to his advantage.

What did the chiefs do next? Maintaining "order" during the Emergency

Dr Banda returned to Nyasaland in July 1958 to lead the NAC through a long process of diplomatic negotiations with the Governor Robert Armitage and the Secretary of State for Colonies Lennox-Boyd about constitutional change.⁷³ With nothing resolved after six months the pressure on Banda to deliver something positive to an expectant and agitated population awaiting some change grew. The radical leaders who had called Banda back but had vowed to throw him out should he divert from the strategy of the party grew concerned that he would start to make compromises on their behalf. Furthermore because he rarely divulged any detail about these meetings to the population, who were hanging on Congress promises, they too began to worry that he would leave them in a more difficult situation than before. This was certainly the concern of many chiefs who expressed their fears that their own future constitutional role would not be secured by Banda. The atmosphere in the country began to take a turn for the worse and Armitage warned Lennox-Boyd in October 1958 that something would happen in the country in or before 1960.⁷⁴

In the meantime, these fears about Banda's potential to compromise on constitutional reform were also being picked up on by Youens, the Chief Secretary, and interpreted as a vulnerable point worth pressing.⁷⁵ In the event Banda was willing to shift his position on having a majority in the executive council but in January 1959 he told Youens that he was determined to attain a majority in the legislature, a resolve which may have been strengthened by his attendance at the All African People's Conference which was held in Accra in December 1958 and at which the necessity of using violence against the colonial state was discussed; from this time onwards Youens was convinced that Banda in fact *wanted* to go to jail. In Nyasaland non-cooperation reached new heights at the end of 1958 and agricultural orders were widely disobeyed; in order to control the imminent threat to order whilst Banda was away in Ghana new measures were brought in to deal more harshly with the protestors.⁷⁶ Banda came back to his country buoyed up by pan-Africanist rhetoric and told his people that they should be ready to be imprisoned, as he was, for the sake of freedom.⁷⁷ Whilst Chipembere made threatening speeches warning people that if they sided with Europeans in the times of crises then they would feel the wrath of Congress Banda kept up the public appearance that he was not in favour of violence. The lack of resolution to the constitutional amendments eventually led to an ungovernable situation where a State of Emergency became inevitable.

The political fallout from the Emergency was felt at many levels but especially among the chiefs whose response to the crisis had serious implications for their legitimacy, as well as in relation to the moral authority both Banda and the party gained on account of their high profile participation in the struggle. Banda began his conversion into the father of the nation whilst he was incarcerated in Gweru prison in Southern Rhodesia, and the support for the party from

amongst the grass roots grew exponentially after the Emergency. The Malawi Congress Party was born out of the ashes of the banned and divided Nyasaland African Congress at the end of 1959, whilst the Emergency regulations were still in place. With the help of its active youth league, the support of women and much better organisation at the provincial and district levels, the number of local branches grew from 52 in December 1959, to 77 one month later, reaching an incredible 223 by February 1960 only three months after its inception⁷⁸ and something like a quarter of million members.⁷⁹ In the light of these changes the outcomes of the conference to discuss the federal constitution, held in London in July 1960, were destined to swing much more in favour of the Africans, at least as far as the Nyasaland delegation was concerned. Before the discussion turns to look a little at the make-up of the delegations who attended the conference, and how chiefs became politically involved in this debate, it is necessary to make some suggestions as to why certain chiefs maintained credibility with their people during the Emergency, and why others did not.

First it is useful to start such a discussion by emphasizing that the government had resolved to deal with native authorities in the Northern Province differently to those in the south and central regions where pro-Congress chiefs could be much more easily deposed. Youens made it clear that action against native authorities in the north ought to be undertaken with extreme caution as here “all chiefs are anti-federation and it would be dangerous to adopt any preventative measures against them”;⁸⁰ memories of the aftermath of Gmani’s arrest in 1953 played on the government’s mind and it was assumed that the arrest of any out-spoken chiefs would end in disaster.⁸¹ Chiefs might have all been anti-federation but what has emerged from the few studies that have been done on specific native authorities in the Northern Province is that in the eyes of their people this was less relevant than the way in which they acted during the chaotic and unsettling time of the State of Emergency. Both Kachapila-Mwazizwa and Kalinga have argued that chiefs in Nkhata Bay and Karonga respectively suffered a loss of popular support after the Emergency because they failed to live up to the “customary responsibilities” that their people had for them at this time.⁸² It was at this time, when the nominal support of the state failed them, that bubbling crises of local legitimacy came to a head.

Peter Mwakasungula, Chief Kyungu in Old Karonga District, had always worked well “*within the system* as the main spokesman of the people of the northern portion of the Karonga lakeshore”⁸³ defending his people against certain excesses of colonial rule, however the manner in which he attempted to solve the problematic situation during the Emergency did not resonate well with Ngonde custom and tradition. The expectations the local people had of their leader was to be “their defender and promoter of harmony in the body politic [...] The key issue was that during the crisis many of his people no longer perceived him as their champion; in their view, he had encouraged discord, and had failed to lead them at that crucial time”.⁸⁴ In Hewe, on the contrary, it is remembered that “Kamangilira [...] rescued us from [the Colonial government]” during the Emergency. He had explained to his people that they should not fear the whites because “if they did anything we would get rid of them”.⁸⁵ In Old Karonga local political leaders were quick to pick up on the increasingly conservative acts of Kyungu and emphasised his opposition to decolonization. In doing this they caused major splits in the aristocracy and amongst the headmen.⁸⁶ In Hewe there was no significantly well organized younger political elite ready to take advantage of the dilemma which the logic of indirect rule created for their chief at this time, furthermore the disenfranchisement amongst the old elite – a key element bolstering authority amongst *Balowoka* chieftainships like Katumbi – which had been a necessary factor in building the legitimacy of new political cadres in the countryside had not taken place in Hewe as it had done in other areas.

In this context, the popular memories of Chawinga's behaviour during the State of Emergency in Hewe, the heroic scene that was recounted at the very introduction of the thesis, indicate that at this crucial moment he responded to the core of his people's needs. People in Hewe accepted the contradictory behaviour which Timothy displayed; with no one to point out his weakness he was able to hold these tensions, and this seeming paradox, from undermining him. He did this a great deal more successfully than some of his compatriots. "He was partly for the people, partly for the government" said Lyton Karua of Chawinga's actions at this time.⁸⁷ Samson Mumba confirmed this contradiction he was able to maintain: "Kamangilira was working with the government but when he came back to his people he was telling them to do bad things to the government".⁸⁸ The Government officials on the other hand also had had enough experience of his local authority to believe Timothy when he was able to promise that his area would be returned to calm, so much so that they released him from custody not long after his arrest during the Emergency; when the priority of the colonial officials – who themselves had always had some concerns about the benefits for Nyasaland of federation⁸⁹ – was not so much the prevention of secession, but rather the maintenance of order, and the desire to maintain the monopoly over violence within their boundaries. In this regard, Chawinga was the perfect man for the job. The benefits of his maintenance of territorial control extended to the colonial state as he had persuaded his own people not to go with guns to the Boma at Rumphu.⁹⁰ He was a useful chief as far as the colonial administration was concerned yet in the local setting he was also a defiant chief with his people's interests at heart.

The rather flamboyant sacrificial image that the 'line in the sand' rumours from the State of Emergency continually reiterate goes beyond the notion that this was a chief doing his duty in the face of grave danger though.⁹¹ It serves as an extremely effective piece of public relations. The rumour presents a definable moment which is easily narrated as proof of leadership qualities; it resonates with other stories of individual heroic defiance in the history of resistance spoken and written throughout the world, not least the representations of Banda's own acts of valor undertaken for the sake of the Nyasaland people. Chawinga gained much from this moment, it was an opportunity to improve his image and regain some much required humility in the face of a growing number of accusations of selfishness. This narrative has had a powerful effect, and the represented actions of this chief have been oft-recounted throughout the Valley as a confirmation not only of this chief's bravery but also his legitimacy.⁹²

Practically things did start to change for Chawinga after the Emergency however. For a while he was able to maintain the territorial behaviour which had been enabled by the colonial state as well as by using the techniques for local legitimacy described above; in these ways he kept a lid on discontent, something which his association with Banda helped to contribute towards. However, once colonial state sovereignty was weakened after the 1961 elections, at which the MCP won a landslide victory, new threats emerged, some of which he was able to successfully counter and others which would begin to test his leadership skills more fundamentally. His strong personality politics, which thrived in the setting of indirect rule, eventually fell out of favour with the local branch leadership of the MCP who began to contest his territorial hold on Hewe.

Part three. After the Emergency, new landscapes of discontent

One of Banda's chiefs

As chiefs in the surrounding areas appeared to be losing everything on account of their co-operation with Government, Chawinga seemed more determined to be seen to implement their plans. After the Emergency had been declared Chief Mwenewenya was sent for by the District Commissioner of Karonga. He arrived at the D.C's camp who reported that "his clothes were dirty, his face unshaven and he had been drinking. He took no heart from our visit since he knew we would leave at once and if he identified himself with us he would be condemned by the politicians (...) I wanted him to be encouraged by my visit, by showing our flag. But he knew that the old authority – ours and his – was gone".⁹³ At the other end of the country in the Lower Shire Chief Tengani was undergoing his own crisis in authority; labelled by Congress as "the quintessential collaborationist chief", his court was eventually boycotted by his people in 1962, "and he was left with no option but to resign".⁹⁴ In the midst of this "political strain" and partial boycotting, Timothy Chawinga was still receiving praise, for example on account of his excellent chairmanship of the education committee which he kept running smoothly, reaching "sound decisions" in 1960.⁹⁵ Such behaviour seems to suggest that Chawinga was more aligned to the conciliatory attitude of the African members of the Legislative Council than the new radical Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and its new Secretary General Aleke Banda who had assumed the role following the imprisonment of much of the leadership.

As the majority of Africans prepared to boycott the Monckton Commission in January 1960,⁹⁶ Chinyama, a former President of the NAC who had himself condemned the non-cooperation riots in 1953 and since 1956 taken up an official position in the Legislative Council, and T.D.T. Banda who after also having been ousted from the leadership of the NAC formed the short-lived Congress Liberation Party (CLP), rather urged them not to, saying that it would be a mistake for people to decide not to give evidence. The rallying cry from the newly formed MCP was that the Commission's terms of reference were simply not wide enough to accommodate the possibility of secession from federation, and furthermore that the continued incarceration of Dr. Hastings Banda following the Emergency put him at a great disadvantage for properly preparing their case for the constitutional review process.

The MCP believed that whilst the State of Emergency was still in place it was "impossible for Africans to consult freely and to know how rank and file thinks";⁹⁷ it therefore believed the process should not be supported. Wanting nothing less than self-government it had been their strategy to intimidate witnesses to prevent them giving evidence to the Commission as part of their campaign. They were successful in persuading first the politically inclined, and consequently the bulk of the population to stay away from the Monckton Commission. Chiefs boycotted the consultations en masse either on account of their principled unwillingness to be associated with the colonial government or for the more fearful reaction engendered in response to the intimidation tactics. When questioned by the government about their persuasion towards the commission chiefs like Chikulamayembe feigned ignorance.⁹⁸ However, whilst Timothy Chawinga was described as being not "at all anxious to attend" the consultations the District Commissioner did manage to persuade him to discuss meeting some of Glyn-Jones' approved list of Monckton Commissioners⁹⁹ along with some of his councillors. His preparedness to hold a meeting with his village headmen was noted by the DC in his ulendo diary entry for 4th March 1960, where he concluded that "the issue is still an open one for them".¹⁰⁰

Chiefs became masters of negotiation during this tumultuous period; most rejected both the clearly pro-colonial stance of Tengani, but few took up the protesting zeal of Gomani, involving themselves instead, as the examples of Chikulamayembe and Katumbi show, “in a delicate set of manoeuvres through which they attempted to avoid risking the displeasure of the government while [...] retaining the support of their subjects”.¹⁰¹ Since many Nyasaland officials had their doubts about the fairness of the conditions under which the Monckton Commission took place, most could forgive chiefs’ decisions not to take part in the process, but the reappearance of banned agricultural practices and the targeting of farmers taking part in the Master Farmer scheme or in growing tobacco could not be ignored.¹⁰² Whilst reports show that Chawinga continued to perform his duties with “considerable energy in his area”, and he “welcomed most government activities”, finding the “time and opportunity” said the D.C. to give “active support to the Agricultural and Veterinary Departments” as well as “the affairs of the District Council and its committees”,¹⁰³ a concomitant general decrease in co-operation from farmers across the northern region was emphasised. An “extensive opening of visoso gardens” and increase in slash and burn cultivation was reported in Rumphi during 1961,¹⁰⁴ as well as a huge increase in tax defaulters,¹⁰⁵ an indication that people no longer felt threatened by the ramifications of undertaking these outlawed practices.

For a short time after the Emergency, when a freer political atmosphere meant rules and orders were much less strictly enforced in the courts, there was more room to demonstrate dissatisfaction with native authorities.¹⁰⁶ Chawinga did not escape this time unscathed, in Hewe he too became the target of criticism. Yet, the accusations leveled at Timothy were oriented around more local matters; his possible involvement in corrupt activities, in particular an alleged embezzlement of funds which had been supposedly contributed to the Native Treasury for the clearing of the airfield at Chiteshe,¹⁰⁷ and his manoeuvring to exploit the game in the Valley whilst denying others the opportunity to manage pest control by owning firearms.¹⁰⁸ He jealously guarded his position and was keen for no one to excel above him in economic or social standing, “he only gave chances to himself to kill game and he wanted to possess everything”.¹⁰⁹ His pursuit of objectives with a single-mind might have given rise to his famous praise name but it did not make him popular with everyone; something that emerged for the first time at this juncture.

Some tried their luck in bringing him down after the Emergency. During an ulendo to Hewe in February 1960 the D.C. was met by a villager Benedicto Lonje who openly criticised Timothy with no holds barred, bizarrely attacking him over matters that the government had already concluded that he was extremely competent in. His “enthusiasm for agriculture is very limited” Lonje complained, he called him “backward” and bitterly accused him of holding back others. He railed against the fact that Hewe was now a place “where the chief is more than his people, and must be treated accordingly”,¹¹⁰ something that was no doubt much nearer the mark. Others complained that he didn’t grant them their gun licenses, or that he was monopolising the businesses operating at the trading centre, whilst increasingly his judicial decisions were contested by Hewe people who took their cases to the D.C.¹¹¹

These points of contention became much more present in the discussion of his leadership from this time onwards; a notable change from an earlier colonial period where his chieftainship received little internal criticism, at least as far as can be gathered from the colonial records. In the case of Chawinga, the challenges were neither concerned about his cooperation with Congress, nor were they sufficient to affect his local standing at this time, especially since his association with Banda brought him timely relief from these decidedly gentle pressures. From the point of view of the administration his close co-operation with the MCP did not go

unnoticed but, perhaps surprisingly, it is presented by them as neither contradictory nor worrying. His local campaigning was largely ignored by the D.C, one example of which occurred after his ulendo to Mwachibanda at which point he writes that he left Chawinga to “hold a political meeting in a church [...] I only hope I didn’t turn a blind eye too obviously”.¹¹² The tone describing his political activities becomes almost congratulatory: on top of all his official work he also managed to “visit England twice as a member of Dr. Banda’s political team”.¹¹³ His contribution to the sovereignty of the state’s monopoly of force surely has to have been one of the main reasons for his continued popularity with the administration.

He may have been a hesitant contributor to the discussions about Nyasaland’s future as far as the Monckton Commission was concerned, but when he was chosen by Banda to join him in London as an MCP representative Chawinga could not have been a more willing participant in the process around constitutional reform. It is difficult to know how the relationship between Banda and Chawinga developed in-between 1958 and 1960 but clearly the new leader thought a great deal of the chief. The decision to take chiefs to participate in the Federal Constitutional Review came after long months of native authorities who were concerned that their future position would be in “jeopardy unless they have opportunity to make representations to [the Secretary of State for the Colonies]”.¹¹⁴ It was a confronting process; chiefs still maintained such a wide variety of positions that the choice of which ones would attend necessarily lifted the lid on the box that tried to “keep chiefs out of politics”¹¹⁵ and directly pit them against one another as official and party representatives. At first it was hoped that putting together an official delegation was the solution which would avoid the chiefs having to obviously take sides. In doing this chiefs acting as advisers or members of party delegations of the United Federal Party (UFP), the Malawi Congress Party and the Congress Liberation Party would be excluded. Chiefs should speak their opinion, agreed the Secretary of State for Colonies but they should do so “in their own right as chiefs, rather than in the capacity of advisers to myself, yourself, or anyone else”.¹¹⁶ In the event, the creation of an “official” delegation only brought the divisions more starkly to a head. Each party argued that their interests could never be adequately represented in such a group and decided that they would each take their “own” chiefs as advisers, something which prompted the Government to have to do the same. The Secretary of State was desperately keen, however, for everything to be done to avoid them appearing as “government” chiefs, as opposed to “Malawi” or “U.F.P” chiefs.¹¹⁷ However it grew increasingly impossible to maintain the façade that chiefs were apolitical, especially as they themselves wished to be involved in the conference. In this situation they could not safely be denied their role in the discussions;¹¹⁸ once they started laying their cards on the table it could be quickly seen that they could not be neatly slotted into having either pro- or anti- government positions.

The concern then of those in the leadership of the MCP, namely Orton Chirwa, was that any official delegation might nominally represent the interests of each party but it would not do so in a way which reflected reality; it would be too weighted in favour of the UFP he said and given that “we represent the great majority of the population, we are entitled to the largest delegation”.¹¹⁹ After meeting Banda privately in London before the conference the Secretary of State did eventually manage to persuade him to add an MCP chief on to the official delegation, but whilst it was expected that he would add it from one of the nominated three chiefs which the party was bringing as their advisers,¹²⁰ as the others had done, a new member of the team was selected; “on the directions of Dr. Banda, the party has nominated Chief Katumbi of Rumpi as representative for official chiefs delegation”.¹²¹ They could do nothing to change his mind on this matter and Chawinga arrived in London, at Government expense, on the 22nd July ready to take part in the conference as one of Banda’s chiefs.¹²² The selection of Chawinga to undertake

this task is telling not only of his ability to effectively represent party views but also on his diplomatic skill, which was a great asset when having to work alongside other chiefs with differing views, as would be the case with the official delegation.

The personal backing of Chawinga by Banda in this instance guaranteed that his immediate future was secure however in the end it would be in the context of local politics not national acclaim, where his authority would eventually be put in jeopardy. The events around the State of Emergency had created a platform not only for him but for other nationalist heroes to emerge, even if on the very smallest of scales. The local branches of the Malawi Congress Party bristled with ambition, and the politically minded members of the Hewe branch were no exception. People like Jim Ngwira and Jato Kawonga, who had been extremely active in galvanizing the people in their area before the Emergency and who were eventually arrested themselves on the 3rd of March, became notable if diplomatic critics of Chawinga's approach.

Political people in Hewe

Jim Ngwira posed no substantial threat to Chawinga's chiefly authority in the closing years of colonialism but he would eventually become the biggest thorn in the chief's side. Born in 1920, by his teenage years Ngwira had taught himself to repair bicycles and build rudimentary shotguns which he sold to people in the area so that they could control pests in their gardens and hunt game when they needed to. His services were in such great demand that he was asked by the then chief Dukamayere to set up a stall offering his bicycle repair skills in the new trading centre which had built up at Chiteshe.¹²³ His social and economic position dramatically improved throughout the next couple of decades and once he became a Master Farmer in the mid-1950s his advantages were secured. Under this scheme he was one of the few farmers in Hewe to greatly benefit from the change in policy by the agricultural department to "concentrate on the more progressive elements of the population and not to dissipate its energies on trying to convert the more conservative villagers".¹²⁴

Ngwira explains that he was selected for the scheme because "whenever there was a meeting or a course on agriculture to remind farmers, I was there." His participation increased and before long, by 1956, he was receiving bonuses "of 38 pounds, and a plough".¹²⁵ He went to Mbawa training college "to learn about livestock for two weeks [...] I learned quickly and the government made us role models for the people". Through this scheme not only did he grow in stature, by 1958 he had accumulated six pairs of oxen for farming in 1958 and was given the opportunity to raise cattle, pigs and goats for milk production and meat on 58 acres of land. Unsurprisingly the benefits to him and his family were significant:

"I educated the children; all seven children have secondary school education. I had no problems paying fees, I even sent some daughters to a private primary; we assist girls so they can school safely. I had lots of cattle. After selling a cow I could deposit money to the account of each of the children and the children could learn without any problems. The eldest child went up to university. This house that you see, I paid the builder who built this house a cow. Even though I have worked for the court for 35 years this house I built because of the cattle before I started working. To enable my four sons to marry, it is down to these cattle. When the daughters are getting married I provide a cow for the wedding and those they get married to just wonder".¹²⁶

The Master Farmers not only received special benefits, they interacted one-on-one with government officials and could by-pass the chiefs on certain matters. This position not only enabled him to establish significant farming activities it brought the motivated and self-made man local respect and extra prominence in the community (as well as the inevitable jealousy). It

was his vocal and active participation in the political battles for independence though which secured his future opportunities as the death knell was rung on colonial rule. Through his activism and eventual arrest by the colonial authorities he gathered the necessary credentials for his future role in the MCP organizational structure.

Having been the MCP District Chairman Ngwira says that he was elected, under the new constitution, to become court magistrate for Hewe in January 1963. He attended a short course which he did well on, so much so that he was sent to college to learn “legal English”. By 1967 he took on appeal court duties and became chairman of the District Appeal Court in addition to his day-to-day duties in Hewe he would manage any appeals in the wider district. By assuming the judicial function that had long been in the hands of native authorities his presence was greatly resented by the chief. It is said that Ngwira had a few run-ins with Chawinga in the latter years of his chieftaincy¹²⁷ and in relation to Timothy’s leadership, though diplomatic, Ngwira did not speak with the same enthusiasm or unreflective praise as most other people did about their former chief; mysteriously he commented that “[Kamangilira] could do some evil things but I wasn’t counting”.¹²⁸ In answer to questions about Chawinga’s reaction to this loss of responsibility he avoided answering directly but tellingly his response shows where he knew the power was beginning to lie: “there was no chance for anyone to accept or refuse these things. The law says that an appointment can be revoked any time and you cannot make any appeal [...] and this is what happened to the chiefs. The chiefs were very angry but they had no chance because there was nowhere to go instead they were against court proceedings”.¹²⁹

Ngwira’s story shows that it was possible to navigate an independent path in rural areas where chiefs had reigned supreme. It was not his economic standing that threatened Timothy’s position, at least not during the colonial period, his success in creating his own spaces of empowerment through his commercial mindedness – gun making, bicycle repairs and especially farming – meant that he was simply less subjected to the same structures of control as others; he chose not to interact with customary authorities and on account of his economic position this was possible. He had regular correspondence with government officials, this was especially easy for him in his role as Master Farmer in the colonial period, and Magistrate during Independence. Few individuals managed to negotiate themselves into an independent position in Hewe as successfully as Ngwira had done.

Another character who was on less than amicable terms with Timothy during the years of early independence was a youth leader from the local NAC branch, Elias Jato Kawonga. Largely on account of his activities during the nationalist campaigns, and in particular his 11 month imprisonment along with Ngwira at Kanjedza during the Emergency in 1959-1960, Kawonga would also eventually take up a prominent role in the local MCP organisation on Independence. Having been organizing secretary for the Hewe branch of the Nyasaland African Congress during the 1950s he was given the position as court clerk in 1963 – again serving alongside Ngwira - up until his retirement in 1996:

“I was arrested in 1959 and put in Kanjedza for eleven months. I refused to go back into teaching when I returned as I wanted to know why I had been arrested. So I continued politics with Chiume until Independence – I was an area organising chairman. Then in 1963 I was chosen to be a court clerk – until 1996 I was a clerk”.¹³⁰

The performances of these people in the build up to the State of Emergency protests, and their direct punishment by the colonial government, gave them a significant footing in the nationalist organisation; they were local heroes honoured for their participation in the

campaign for freedom and the incarceration this led to. In a report on discussions between Hastings Banda and the Chief Secretary, the Governor Glyn Jones pondered that Banda's imprisonment "was a necessary stage in his progress towards leadership of his people in a free Nyasaland";¹³¹ similarly the harsh conditions that Kawonga and Ngwira endured in Kanjedza elevated them for a time into political heroes in Hewe.

"These local leaders met secretly in the bush, only a few knew about what was going on the rest were drunkards", remembers Lyton Karua.¹³² Kawonga himself, one of those local leaders, also recalls that those who were "politically minded" in Hewe were relatively few, and those who got involved with the Nyasaland African Congress at an organizational level were fewer still; as a result the reputation that they had as 'political activists' in the area was prominent. "Very old people and those who were not educated [...] did not know politics, they were only staying and eating", says Kawonga, "we the party leaders, Chamang'anga, Ngwira, Chafwakali - went around villages telling people that you have to show that you are not happy with colonial rule".¹³³

Chawinga managed to see out the colonial years as a popular figure in Hewe, but for Ngwira and Kawonga this was a period in which their loyalty to the MCP was cemented. Not much is known at present about how these characters worked together with the chief in the run up to the Emergency, and whether their agenda's were in fact the same, but whilst they might all have desired independence once this had been attained it was there their co-operation ended. The ascent of characters in Hewe such as Ngwira and Kawonga reflect how much the Nyasaland African Congress had changed by the middle of the 1950s. Gone was the influence of the educated ministers and clerks of the 1940s who believed that the politics of tradition was the most effective way of carving out political space in the local setting, and they were overtaken by young people who had not left Hewe either for work or education but had been captured by a new radical politics as represented by Chiume, Chipembere and Chisiza.

The ongoing transformation which took place in the relationships between Chawinga and the local NAC branch members will be considered to some extent in the next chapter. However it should be noted that figures at the district level such as Mikeka Mkandawire, from Bolero, need to be looked at closer if a more complete understanding of the challenges to Chawinga's authority is to be reached. A leading light in Congress during the 1950s, Mkandawire went on to become the first MP for Rumphu before being later deposed by Banda during the cabinet crisis. His activities in Hewe and those of his presidentially-endorsed replacement Daniel Mkandawire present notable gaps in this history; deeper insights into their influence would add a great deal to our current understanding of Chawinga's management of Hewe at this late colonial stage.

Despite the increasing influence of these overtly political characters, the role of the educated elements in the village did not lose its importance and characters such as John Mwangonde and Levi Kaleya,¹³⁴ the teachers at the school in Katowo, played an important role in Hewe for both the chieftaincy and the nationalist struggle, propagating the message and giving intellectual support. Mwangonde had an impressive reputation in the region having risen to become one of the first African headmasters in Nyasaland and the reputation of the primary school in Hewe, which he had been brought in by Chief Dukamayere to run, had been an influential factor in the local politics of the chieftaincy and the importance of the area in the early colonial period. He had, therefore, a longstanding association with the Katumbi chieftaincy.

Mwangonde's friendship with Chawinga was an important source of information, guidance and support; in some ways he was Timothy's right-hand man. Mwangonde was a

regular visitor to Chawinga's home, as Chawinga was at his. The teacher had a library of books, regularly received the newspapers and news from abroad, and was one of the only people to have a saucepan radio in the early 1950s; as a result his home became a place where people gathered to listen to the BBC and where many discussions about the future of the Protectorate took place. The school was the destination for many other African teachers in the 1950s¹³⁵ and as a result there was a keen atmosphere of debate in which the work of the Nyasaland African Congress, the problems of Federation and the trouble with the agricultural conservation rules were discussed by teachers and students alike.

Aside from his professional duties Mwangonde became directly involved in the preservation of the chieftaincy and the administration of the native authority. Along with Levi Kaleya, who would later become the first M.P from Hewe, Mwangonde assisted with the gathering of information for the Livingstonia publication *Midauko*, a history of the area. And on a less high profile set of historical questions the teachers were said to have helped in the preparation of the Mulindafwa narrative, the central part of the annual ceremony which Timothy inaugurated in 1954 and which would cement his authority firmly in 'official' history. He often drafted letters to the government from Chawinga and even became a court assessor. Like his father before him, who had helped mediate disputes in Nkamanga for Chikulamayembe, he played a central role in mediating the border discussions between Katumbi and Chikulamayembe. He petitioned the Government on Timothy's behalf and on any matter of importance the chief requested Mwangonde's help, "they worked together a lot".¹³⁶ Mwangonde understood the difficult position that Chawinga found himself as the contradictions of indirect rule became harder to manage, and having also been the beneficiary of significant assistance from the mission at Livingstonia and the Colonial administration he was sympathetic.

Their relationship, however, was not without its tensions. In allowing Mwangonde to contribute all these things to his leadership the chief also put himself in a position of indebtedness, a position he hated to be in. As one of the few people in Hewe who had the resources buy the most prestigious luxury items he also represented a threat to Chawinga's economic prestige and his own attempts at aggrandizement did not always appear so special in comparison¹³⁷. As a person who selected people to go and further their studies Mwangonde gained prestige by paying and investing in education, an increasingly valuable display of largesse. He also benefited when these educated people returned and were happy to return the favour to their teacher, it was help that was never forgotten. Unlike Timothy his manner meant that he was much more approachable "he spoke a lot [...] and told many jokes", and he knew how to look after himself so as to avoid the inevitable jealousy that such a position in society provoked; "of course people spoke a lot of things, but ufwiti can only get you if you are careless, drink and eat anywhere. But he was clever and knew what to do".¹³⁸ Mwangonde was in a much freer position than Timothy and although his civil servant status meant he could not be openly pro-Congress he was able to lend his support to the political activities of the nationalists in Hewe, among the key members his brother Donald.¹³⁹ But whilst Mwangonde was clearly a person who had influence like the previously mentioned Abraham Munthali, he was not in a position, or in possession of the desire, to wrench any political authority from Timothy; in that Chawinga was secure for the time being.

Competing with a respectable and wealthy man

"The African who believes that Jesus is preparing for him a glorious mansion in Heaven will endeavour to build for himself a decent house on earth", a young missionary is quoted by John Iliffe as having said in 1858.¹⁴⁰ As Iliffe has highlighted, all across the continent this need to

demonstrate respectability was achieved by Africans through a variety of moral and material achievements which taken together could be seen as a “cultural package” which “displayed their distinction”.¹⁴¹ One of the few characters in Hewe, beside Chawinga, to achieve this level of distinctiveness was Abraham Munthali.

Munthali had been selected in around 1935 to go to Livingstonia Mission by John Mwangonde, in order that he should “learn shop”. His training to become a carpenter lasted five years and would set him up to become an extremely successful businessman in the district. Equipped by his teachers at Livingstonia with not only the knowledge but the material tools of his new trade, and a loan to establish his first workshop, once he had established his own woodlot Munthali quickly became a truly independent entrepreneur.

Starting out with a bicycle, the first thing he bought after leaving the mission, his business grew from its initial small scale operation, “at first we just made chairs for 3/9p and people from the village were buying them”,¹⁴² he recalled. As men returned from the mines and farms with some small disposable income Munthali began to regularly benefit as many spent their money on ordering these chairs and eventually tables, cupboards and benches too. His own growing wealth reflected a more general increase in the consumption of ‘luxury’ household items that some years before would have been impossible to find in people’s homes. With such items in mind men went back to South Africa and Northern Rhodesia to earn more money, and as they gathered it some were even in a position to buy the increasingly sought after European style doors and bed frames from his store. The carpenter provided the first wooden coffins to the people of Hewe, and they quickly became the most popular item, something that has remained the same to this day.

“Supply” quickly gained an excellent reputation in the wider region for his fair prices and craftsmanship of such goods and with Hewe’s position so close to isolated communities in Northern Rhodesian he is said to have captured the market across the border too. People came from Muyombe and Malambo to buy products from his shop and would then sell these original items on in their own stores at higher prices.¹⁴³ He won contracts for the building of new school blocks, the welfare hall and renovations to the maternity ward which saw his business grow beyond carpentry to construction, and in this he also cornered the market with his greater access to resources, transport, and investment capital.¹⁴⁴

By establishing several shops and eventually providing training for a number of young men from the area he was by the end of the 1950s probably the wealthiest person in Hewe, aside from perhaps Timothy Chawinga himself, and local respect for this disciplined, self-made man was significant; his prominent position was reflected in the fact that his was the first house by some years to have a full iron sheet covered roof, the materials for which he had purchased in Mbeya, Tanganyika, in 1953 at “10 Kwacha per sheet”.¹⁴⁵ Other mission trained craftsmen from the area such as Joseph Munthali’s father left the village setting to practice their trade elsewhere, in Northern Rhodesia or South Africa.¹⁴⁶ Munthali, however, remained local with his production and distribution; and with no one else around to compete with his experience, the decision to remain in Hewe proved a most lucrative choice. Efrida Mhango, the woman whom Abraham had married whilst undergoing his training at Livingstonia in 1938, remembered distinctly the feeling her family had on account of her husband’s business: “we were on top of the world”.¹⁴⁷ Without any conscious attempt to do so, his “cultural package” of respectability inadvertently undermined Chawinga.

In addition to his carpentry business the shop he had established, which stocked many sought after goods, meant that it was Munthali’s name that became synonymous with prosperity; “People called us rich because everyone bought clothes from our store”¹⁴⁸, Efrida

recalls. However, staying 'local' came with its own difficulties. Jealousy was a difficult aspect of life to manage and caused many problems for Munthali's family who were regularly the targets of witchcraft, theft and other threatening behaviour. And the jealousy did not only come from the poor relatives and neighbours, one of the people who began to get distressed by his accumulation of wealth was Timothy Chawinga. Reflecting upon the chief's reaction to the Munthali's newly iron-roofed properties Efrida Mhango remembers that he had not been too happy about it. "My husband told Chief Zolokere and Kamangilira" about his new purchase and whilst "Zolokere said he had done a good thing, because he was developing the area, Kamangilira kept silent [...] he didn't even really know about iron sheets at that time";¹⁴⁹ within months he too ordered up iron sheets for his own roof from Abraham, who had been charged to collect these prestige goods from Tanganyika on his behalf. Whoever was able to was "investing almost as heavily in cement and corrugated iron as in education", it was deemed that important.¹⁵⁰

Timothy still purchased items from Munthali, increasing the carpenter's own fortune as he did so but he also had to ensure that he was able to distinguish himself from his population through the display of new goods; European furniture, for example, that "only a square house could accommodate".¹⁵¹ Munthali remembers the chief purchasing many items which "no-one else in Hewe could have done".¹⁵² Yet, he also felt that the carpenter was beginning to undermine his own prestige and efforts at patronage. As *msambazgi* (a wealthy man) he, like Timothy, was socially obliged to pay school fees for relatives, buy necessities for neighbours and help various other people in the area when they were in difficulty "munthu uyu walela wanthu", *this person assisted many others*, it was said by several community members.¹⁵³ There is no denying that belief and investment in education formed a part of the modern Christian man's package; and "educational benevolence" was greatly admired.¹⁵⁴ Iliffe's example of a Ugandan chief, Kibedi Zirabamuzale, who "reportedly paid the school fees for ninety-eight young people who reached university",¹⁵⁵ was not an unusual display of largesse during this period in African history; both Munthali and Chawinga were capable and obliged to contribute to their community in such ways.

Interestingly, Munthali started using fertilizer on his crops well before anyone else, including Chawinga. People had been skeptical at first, saying that they didn't want to use chemicals on their garden, but after they had seen how his maize grew with this novel input it was to his example they looked. His wealth had given him the opportunity to take risks, and enabled him to set an example in agriculture as well as in business, something Timothy had always striven to do. Furthermore the colonial officials also worked with him, using his office as a place to discuss local affairs and land disputes in the area whilst they were on ulendo.

With the profits from his carpentry business, grocery and maize mill Abraham even attempted to register himself eligible to vote for the 1961 constitutional elections.¹⁵⁶ 20 out of the 28 seats for the Legislative Council were decided by the predominantly African lower roll electorate at these elections; "the nature of the franchise strongly favoured people with education, money or status. On the lower roll over 10,000 chiefs, headmen and councillors were enfranchised as a consequence of their position. Others were required to be literate in one of a number of languages, to have a minimum income, or to possess a certain amount of property".¹⁵⁷ In the end the government was not convinced by his claims of having an income over £700 per year, the requirement for the franchise, so he was denied the opportunity.¹⁵⁸ There is not enough evidence to suggest why he was not believed, or whether he had earned such an amount. What is known is that in this same year he had been able to purchase a new car in Blantyre for £400 and had built bridges for his car to pass by within Hewe, organising and

paying for the local labour himself in order for him to be able to drive all the way to his front door. He was a man of significant standing yet he never seriously threatened Chawinga's authority, primarily this was because he did not have the political ambition that the 'new men' Bond describes in Muyombe did or like those that threatened the Kyungu chieftaincy in Karonga.

One reason why Abraham Munthali was not so grave a threat to the authority of Timothy was due to his Christian faith; his major objective being not the attainment of power in this world but the attainment of salvation in another. The message of the Gospel, which he had taken authentically onboard during his time at the C.C.A.P Mission at Livingstonia, underpinned his living and working life;¹⁵⁹ his example represented everything the missionaries had wanted their graduates to be and his financial successes marked him out as the perfect illustration of what a dedicated Christian work ethic could achieve. His ex-teachers regularly came to visit him, especially as they prepared to go on leave or as they departed from the colony for good, in order to encourage him in "this work that is not easy" and to spur him on to "have courage" in his material and spiritual labours. They warned him of the many others who had received the same opportunities but who had fallen under the influence of alcohol once they returned to the village, squandering their chances in the process. "Be brave with your shop, they told me, you will encounter many problems! Remember to remain with our teaching".¹⁶⁰

Monopolising major profits

Aside from the example of Munthali, a particularly successful individual, the opportunities to make money within Hewe were limited to the running of small stores, maize mills and some cash-cropping. The general level of wealth in Hewe may have risen significantly throughout the colonial period – mainly on account of money from labour migration which was used to invest in small businesses – but the growth was relatively even and, as table (i) in the appendix clearly demonstrates, the only significant earners at the close of the colonial period were Munthali and Timothy Chawinga. Besides these no-one made more than £120 in the year from their business and 19 out of the 36 stores in Hewe made less than £61 in the year in question, 1962. Even the impact of the co-operative movement in Hewe was limited and no individual gained a lot in personal status through these initiatives, as the table shows the combined efforts of the co-operative did no better than the most successful individual. In Rumphi, and in particular at the Chikulamayembe's headquarters in Bolero and in the Rumphi Boma itself, there were many more businesses; coffee co-operatives, maize mills and hotels, as well as the ubiquitous and ever-expanding selection of stores whose fortunes ebbed and flowed over time.¹⁶¹ Some commoners were able to establish two or three maize mills and were able to stump up the significant amount of tax which was required to run such businesses. In Rumphi aside from L & B Coy of the Bookers Group (Kandodo) and the Africa Lakes Corporation (Mandala stores) who had made over £600 in 1962, there were the Asian traders A.L.H Osman and the Geloo Brothers who made between £300 to £600 in their stores.¹⁶²

In 1962 only three maize mills existed in Hewe. Two of them were positioned in the busy area of Chisimuka and only one was constructed in the more central Katowo trading centre; this one was owned by the chief himself and it made double the profits of those in Chisimuka. Aside from his extremely lucrative hunting exploits this was Chawinga's main income generating activity and he was keen to protect its advantageous position near to the road and main stores. More mills may have been introduced throughout the 1960s but as far as Timothy Chawinga was concerned he fought to protect the monopoly he had on grinding maize in his area right up until his deposition in 1974. One case was discovered from May 1973 which

highlights this protectiveness; just a few hundred metres from Chawinga's maize mill Joffrey Kachari had set up his own near to Kabrufu school. No sooner had it been erected then it was ordered by the Themba to be moved away from the area of the trading centre:

*"Chief Katumbi stopped him from grinding he sent a messenger to tell Kachari to go down to sub-Chief Zolokere. But Kachari refused and is still refusing. I also agree with Kachari because he has got buildings and a garden of cassava and potatoes around his grinding mill. People with all vge headmen around the grinding about 1 sqr mile like the machine not to move and go down Zolokere. I agree with them because people at sub-chief Zolokere are near by Kabulufu T center and they also appeal to Chief Katumbi not to worry Mr. Kachari because of refusing to come to Zolokere. They say that Kabulufu is near why for Chief Katumbi to worry? Please would you settle the matter"?*¹⁶³

Timothy's son disputes the fact that his father had been this monopolistic in his business activities, saying that he also liked people in his area to be rich and powerful¹⁶⁴ but the evidence suggests very much otherwise. Whilst this behaviour may have been viable in his position as Native Authority in the setting of indirect rule, it quickly became untenable as his base from which he could produce authority weakened.

VH/place	Number of stores		Number of maize mills		Other business	
	> £61	< £61	> £61	< £61	> £61	< £61
V.H Makanga	3					
V.H Makula/Kaduku		2				
V.H Kasalika/Katowo	7	3	1			
V.H Mikule/Katowo						1 (hotel)
V.H Chipofya/Katowo	3					
V.H Kampuzunga/Katowo	1					
V.H Thanila/Katowo		1				
V.H Zolokere/Katowo		2				
V.H Mgungu/Katowo		1				
V.H Mwachibanda/ Chisimuka	3	5	2		1 (carpentry shop)	
V.H Chembe/Chisimuka		2				
V.H Mteweta/ Chisimuka		3				

Table 1: Distribution of stores in Hewe 1962¹⁶⁵

Name of taxable person	Ward and Place of Business		Type of business	Net earnings for previous year (1962)	Amount of tax payable
<i>Hewe Co-operative Society</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£200-£300	£7: -: -
<i>Abraham Munthali</i>	Katowo	Mwachibanda	Store and carpentry shop	£200-£300	£7: -: -
<i>Themba Katumbi (Timothy Chawinga)</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Grinding mill	£120-£200	£4: 10: -
<i>Simon S. Luhanga</i>	Katowo	Makanga	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Clement Mfunne</i>	Katowo	Makanga	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Brown J. Mhango</i>	Katowo	Makanga	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Gibson Mtambo</i>	Katowo	Chipofya	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>J. M. Nundwe</i>	Katowo	Chipofya	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Jackson B. Mfunne</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Tenson Chisi</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Rodwell D. Chavura</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>C. N. Kalea</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>B. W. T. Mvula</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Lighton Harawa</i>	Katowo	Kasalika	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>John Nundwe</i>	Katowo	Chipofya	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Sandress Mkandawire</i>	Katowo	Kampuzunga	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Stephen Mfunne</i>	Katowo	Mwachibanda	Store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>K. W. Mkandawire</i>	Katowo	Mwachibanda	Maize mill and store	£61-£120	£2: 10: -
<i>Lennard Chilambo</i>	Katowo	Mwachibanda	Maize mill	£61-£120	£2: 10: -

Table 2: Hewe residents with taxable businesses in 1962¹⁶⁶

Spiritual authority and chieftaincy in the context of British Central Africa

Highlighting the interpretation of chiefs' actions during the Emergency as representing some kind of customary failure to protect their people opens up the need for another discussion about the possibility of regaining a position in the local context through custom. When the promise of Independence forced a renewed attempt to find authority and support at the local rather than national level, there were questions raised throughout much of the Protectorate about the spiritual authority of customary leaders. The emergence of the witchdoctor *Nchimi Chikanga*,¹⁶⁷ who began practicing his divinations from his home village Thete, in the Northern Province of Nyasaland, spoke to these vulnerable places of chiefly authority; Timothy's own response to such a witch-finding movement as Chikanga's, and to the issue of witchcraft in general, is worth noting. Maintaining a powerful spiritual authority, whether it was drawn from customary narratives or mission values, was fundamental. Unlike many chiefs in surrounding territories his refusal to allow Chikanga to come and practice in his area encourages a re-examination of these movements from the perspective of different chiefly authorities.

Lighton "Chikanga" Chuma was born in Rumphi District in 1934, at the age of 19 it was said that he had died from witchcraft only to be resurrected soon afterwards equipped with the divination skills required in order to "rid the world of sorcery".¹⁶⁸ His headquarters was not 100

miles from Themba Katumbi's own chiefly base and the most intense part of the spirit-medium's career in Nyasaland spanned the Federal period (1953-64) with his powers at their height during the uncertain years after the Emergency and just before independence, 1959-1963.¹⁶⁹ At this time regular bus services were known to have transported people from all over the country straight to his headquarters for "treatment"; and not only from Nyasaland, people came to him from Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Zaire, Mozambique, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, "even the Masai of Kenya came here", he remembered.¹⁷⁰ Headmen and chiefs wrote to the Nchimi for a variety of reasons including to see if a death in their village was caused by witchcraft, to cleanse a village where many people were dying, to help discover the culprits in cases of theft, to discover who had bewitched a person, and to prepare medicine for victims of sorcery.¹⁷¹

Of course Chikanga's activities were not without precedent in Central Africa. Similar "witch crazes" had occurred at various times which often coincided with major health crises, cultural shifts and/or economic change.¹⁷² The rise of Chikanga, as well as that of Alice Lenshina and her semi-religious cult the Lumpa Church in Northern Rhodesia,¹⁷³ could more likely be related to the dramatic *political* change that was underway in the closing years of colonial control in British Central Africa, and with the renewed feeling of insecurity around customary authority that this brought.¹⁷⁴ Commonly a proliferation of witchcraft accusation has accompanied the liberation of African nations, periods of civil unrest or civil war and at other times of extreme spiritual and/or social uncertainty which were most often characterized by the collapse, or gradual disintegration, of institutions.¹⁷⁵

The crisis in customary authority which was at its height in British Central Africa in the 1930s was reflected in the spread of the *bamucapi*, arguably the most famous witch-cleansing campaign of the colonial period,¹⁷⁶ it was a movement which dominated district commissioners thoughts and village processes of justice. The activities of *bamucapi* forced a rethinking of the Witchcraft Ordinance which had been created a decade or so earlier in both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland territories. It questioned the practicalities of this law which had "removed the offense of witchcraft from the purview of the law altogether", turning witchcraft "from the status of a crime to the status of a superstitious belief that merely generated recognised crimes".¹⁷⁷ By doing this some colonial officers came to a realisation that now these portents of "social disorder", being neither chargeable by customary leaders in colonial courts¹⁷⁸ nor controllable by them through the more traditional application of poison ordeal, would make a mockery of these leaders local authority, the very basis of indirect rule; the colonial regime had "chosen chiefs and headmen as executors of colonial order; it was up to them to control social evil in their own terms and up to the local administrations to support them",¹⁷⁹ but without the wherewithal to punish such threats they were left a little bereft of authority.

Bamucapi had operated effectively for a time in this "new world of colonial space", existing "outside the powers of chiefs and traditional diviners, as new cultural bricoleurs and entrepreneurs"¹⁸⁰. Fields demonstrates that there was also a fair amount of "enthusiasm" amongst chiefs and headmen to the *bamucapi*; this is a crucial point.¹⁸¹ The loss of control over the spiritual well being of their communities added to a more fundamental loss of "resources" which had been guaranteeing the authority of customary leaders. Fields analyses these spiritual "crises" in the same terms as she looks at the loss of customary control of labour, or marriage and divorce proceedings: it formed a part of a wider erosion of customary standing which undercut the moral and political influence of chiefs and headmen who were trying to implement indirect rule.¹⁸² Chiefs had enthusiasm for these witch-cleansers because, if Fields' argument is

to be followed, if they did not welcome these external arbiters of justice into their territory their own place in the political order would be under threat.

Whilst this particular movement was eventually suppressed by the British and petered out by 1935, the contested spaces of customary power remained vulnerable to further economic and political ‘shocks’. Chikanga’s campaign, much like the slightly earlier “modern anti-witchcraft” movement of Bwanali-Mpulumutsi (1947-1949) behaved quite differently to the more commercially minded *bamucapi*¹⁸³ and with their use of Christian symbol and ritual, emphasis on divine inspiration and back-to-God philosophy they evoked more of a religious revivalism.¹⁸⁴ However there were similarities; Behringer describes the mode or organisation of these campaigns “as supra-national movements” which “served the purpose of exonerating the village elders from their legal responsibility, imposed by the colonial – and post-colonial – justice administration.¹⁸⁵ As with *bamucapi* there was much pressure on chiefs, and much benefit to be gained from, allowing Chikanga in to their villages to cleanse them.

Witch-cleansing and authority in Northern Nyasaland

Chikanga was not welcome in Hewe. This is perhaps all the more surprising for the fact that the paramount chief of the Mzimba Ngoni, M’mbelwa Inkosi ya maKosi, Katumbi’s powerful southern neighbour, was more than happy to invite the diviner into his territory to perform a general cleansing in 1959 when he “ordered that all the people under his jurisdiction in Mzimba district should be searched”.¹⁸⁶ Chikulamayembe was known to also have “considerable belief in Mr Chikanga”,¹⁸⁷ and he admitted to the D.C in 1960 that he had told everyone in his area to attend Chikanga who was “a good man”.¹⁸⁸ Despite the fact that the DC had warned him against such threatening orders and that “nobody who told people their houses would be burned down if they did not attend could be a chief”,¹⁸⁹ he continued to lean heavily on the diviner’s judgments and there is evidence that he deposed village headmen on the basis of his divinations.¹⁹⁰ As McCracken has put it a large percentage of the population in the northern part of Nyasaland “were at least as much caught up in Chikanga’s crusade for spiritual cleansing as they were in the struggle for political independence”.¹⁹¹

Chikanga’s activities were not initially popular with the Nyasaland administration who envisaged that he would break villages with his witchcraft accusations.¹⁹² However, by the early 1960s he was no longer so sidelined by them, whilst they abhorred forced trial by Chikanga district commissioners did not mind people going to see him out of their own volition and he was also sometimes even allowed to be called in to investigate criminal activities within his local district council¹⁹³. Such was his reputation that the district commissioner in Rumphi began to receive calls – sometimes from people in other countries – asking for the Nyasaland government to send Chikanga to hastily proceed to see them; “The services of Nchimi Chikanga are now much in demand and the boma has frequently to advise callers that it is not his agent”,¹⁹⁴ the DC reported in August 1963.

To understand Timothy’s less than enthusiastic response to Chikanga, and for that matter witch-doctoring of other kinds, it is worth remembering one of the most significant sources of his authority was based in his management of spiritual landscapes within Hewe. Timothy trod a very careful line; on the one hand he was a “morally upstanding” Christian, this was very much part of his public – or at least ‘official’ – persona, on the other it was “well-known” that he had his own extremely powerful protective medicine; these two *sources* of his authority both required his rejection of Chikanga’s activities. He was, in fact, consistent to both when he refused Chikanga to cleanse villages in Hewe.¹⁹⁵ The language of the Katumbi chieftainship, and its political highs and lows, is consistently associated with witchcraft. The

narrative of struggle against enemies within and external to the chieftainship has been a strong one and having the ability to overcome material and spiritual enemies is still a fundamental attribute for successful leadership in Hewe. Chapter three described how Timothy's rise was accounted for locally on account of his spiritual strength which is a key motif in the narrative of his chieftaincy. But whilst his predecessor Dukamayere had been happy to advise people to go to the witchdoctor to garner the source of their personal and economic problems, Kamangilira was more likely to order the witchdoctors out of the village; he "didn't want to hear anything about witchcraft cases, he believed witchdoctors bring in lots of confusion", said Dambazuka Nundwe.¹⁹⁶ Whilst Samson Mumba reflected that he had heard Chawinga was involved with such things himself, but he did not accept it from others, "today it is worse", he said "people freely accuse one another all the time".¹⁹⁷

Perhaps it was easier for him to manage the local landscape of witchcraft, and the insecurity it suggested, in the relatively small area of Hewe than it would have been for Chikulamayembe and M'mbelwa. In any case it is not easy to garner whether or not this control lead to less occurrences and accusations of witchcraft in Hewe, people certainly suggest that with Timothy as chief a definite lid was kept on these "malevolent" forces. He was less tolerant of the way people talk of it and freely accused others of it. Once, in order to demonstrate to his people that witchdoctors had no authority in his area, he arranged that a performance of 'witch finding' be undermined publicly. Chawinga had been handed some cloth which had been dropped by a woman from Chisimuka who had purchase it at the trading centre in Chiteshe, near the chief's own home. He predicted that the woman, not imagining that the cloth could have just been innocently picked up, would immediately cry that this was a case of witchcraft and seek out the witchdoctor – at this time it was likely to have been a man called Mung'anja Munthali – in order to get some knowledge as to whom had stolen it from her. Knowing that this man would say that it had been stolen by magic and that he would look for medicine to bring it back the Themba called for a big meeting, asking all village heads to come with one person, he also called the woman who cried witchcraft and the person who had found the scarf on the road.¹⁹⁸ At this meeting he is said to have exposed the lies of the witchdoctor and demonstrated that such people were not to be trusted with such things.

It should not be underestimated how significant such a demonstration of authority would have been. The causes of most non-medical troubles were referred to witchdoctors or *nchimi* like Chikanga in this part of Nyasaland. The reason being that because "lost or stolen personal effects may be used by a *fwiti* to fabricate *nyanga* capable of ensorcering their erstwhile owner", a suitably qualified person was needed to deal with the spiritual threat which such a theft posed.¹⁹⁹ Since it often cost more for people to travel to see famous *nchimi* than the value of the item stolen it is evident that the concern for people was not the good itself "but over its possible use by a sorcerer".²⁰⁰

As well as dealing with these accusations in his own way, Chawinga would also refer cases of witchcraft to the police, in accordance with the anti-witchcraft legislation.²⁰¹ Whether such practices demonstrate his show of keeping the colonial authorities on side by occasionally sending them appropriate cases, or indeed was one of his ways of showing that he had no tolerance for such practices, it is clear that he would have rather sent for the police than Chikanga. Yet this was not the whole story, privately he was said to have indulged in his own magic practices which ensured his own protection in the short term. As well as the widespread rumours about the medicine he had got from Zambia, or Tanzania, which ensured that nobody could kill him, some heard that he had a "maginet", some kind of crystal ball through which he could see when witches would visit his house, and also that he was friends with powerful people

who could bewitch those who were looking to take his life.²⁰² He understood that “access to spiritual power” ensured his “social effectivity”; furthermore, he was aware that this very same spiritual power had the ability to “place limits on the hegemonic power of the state”.²⁰³ It had the potential to assist his ambitions vis a vis the government and with his people. Ironically, however, dabbling in these very same activities might indeed have contributed to his downfall.²⁰⁴

The religious foundations of chiefly authority

The customary responsibility of chiefs to deal with uncertainty was not only expressed in terms of witchcraft. Fields’ contention that the growing power of missionary institutions within the territories of chiefs affected customary authority detrimentally is also interesting to consider. She writes how by “displacing the religious foundations of African rulers’ legitimacy”, mission activity violated the logic of indirect rule as keeping the colonial peace.²⁰⁵ However, in the case of Timothy Chawinga, the influence of converts such as Munthali and the work of Mission teachers and church leaders within his area – in the arena of spiritual authority in any case – had the effect of actually being quite useful to him. The aspects of custom that the C.C.A.P. wished to influence: marriage, the consumption of alcohol, praying to ancestors, were not at odds with Timothy’s own public agenda as chief whose commitment to an ordered disciplined population who took responsibility for their families and eschewed idleness was celebrated.

As has been discussed in previous chapters his authority did not rest so fundamentally on “customary foundations” but on a more territorially based, historically determined, economic monopoly, which was dynamic though it drew upon traditional motifs. The “religious foundations” for legitimacy had never customarily been in the hands of Katumbi. The role of rainmaker had enabled the chieftaincy to distance its ritual authority from possible weaknesses created by colonial and mission values. Though the rainmaker, and the rainmaking family was crucially connected to Katumbi in terms of both kinship and political ritual, the foundational underpinnings of legitimacy in the land was out-sourced and thus the chieftaincy itself was less affected by ritual disruptions to it. It existed in another landscape, so whilst the rainmaker could be criticised for the lack of rain during crises and other “natural disasters”, Katumbi himself could get away with limited culpability for the loss of order, and even for its ritual restoration.²⁰⁶

Timothy managed to convert mission authority by co-opting it as his own, taking a position as church elder within the C.C.A.P. and maintaining the dominance of this one particular church within the area. The Watchtower Movement didn’t get much of a foothold in Hewe, and Timothy famously clashed with the Catholic Church when there were plans to build a large station in Hewe; in both instances he played the tune of the colonial administration for his own benefit. His ability to be adaptable ensured the mission did not undermine his authority. It was only after the people in Kabrufu complained bitterly that his refusal would also put pay to a primary school being planned in the early 1960s by the Catholic missionaries, and that more opportunities for paid labour in this area would be lost on account of this, that he finally conceded to have a small presence of Catholics in the area, which he nevertheless continued to monitor carefully, and certainly not allowing their activities to expand beyond his control or for a full-blown mission station to be established.²⁰⁷ The result of this tension saw much distrust and competitiveness between the pupils of the Catholic and C.C.A.P. schools and a tense relationship between the chieftaincy and the areas in which the Catholics had a following.²⁰⁸

Conclusion

As the introduction to the thesis made clear and chapters three and four have illustrated, Chawinga policed the boundaries of his political space meticulously, and was able to do so largely unhindered during the colonial period. The mediation of his territorial ambition became less and less viable, however, after the State of Emergency as his opportunities to accumulate personal wealth decreased and the growing politicisation of his area brought more attention to it. Increasingly Timothy retreated into tradition convinced that claims to historical legitimacy would bolster the position of chiefs, at least from the point of view that local people would be encouraged to stay loyal. In addition to 'tradition' Chawinga leaned more strongly upon the narratives and rumours of his spiritually significant sources of power. With his judicial power dwindling, his access to wealth production and his territorial independence curbed, these spiritual and traditional aspects of his authority became increasingly important in enabling Chawinga to keep the bubbling threats in the local context at bay. Those individuals, who perceived that they had been wronged by the chief in the latter part of the colonial period, and the ambitions of the local party faithful, were given increasing opportunities to make their voices heard. These elements which had been irritating to Chawinga before began to become thoroughly undermining as he entered the last decade of his rule from 1963 to 1973. As the spatial emphasis of the post-colonial state's administrative and economic designs altered, his chieftaincy no longer occupied a space which lay outside of state interest, in fact by the late 1960s Hewe was anything but peripheral to the eye of the one-party government of Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The techniques which had been successful in establishing and maintaining his authority throughout the 1940s and 1950s were decreasing in effectiveness as a new landscape of power and politics was being shaped.

¹ PRO, CO 1015/464: *Monthly Political Intelligence Reports, Nyasaland 1951-1953*, May 1953

² *Ibid.*, April 1953: In reference to the Protectorate as a whole, the report suggests that "with the biggest tobacco crop in memory, and a bumper cotton crop likely, political affairs tend to find little place in the average peasant's mind".

³ "In the late 1940s and early 1950s [...] Kamuzu was a successful London family doctor, with a concern for his homeland" (A. Ross, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi*, (Zomba, 2009), 129). At this stage Banda was not explicitly political but was interested in Nyasaland's progress and would support people there with school fees and other educational assistance. This was the man as Chawinga would have met him in 1951.

⁴ Informal email communication with Dickson Mzumara, 27 March 2011

⁵ PRO, CO 1015/464, May 1953

⁶ *Ibid.*, June 1953

⁷ *Ibid.*, April 1953

⁸ *Ibid.*, June 1953

⁹ PRO, CO 1015/86: *Federation, Subversive Activities of Africans, 1952-1953*. Extract from the Manchester Guardian, 12 June 1953.

¹⁰ PRO, CO 1015/464, June 1953

¹¹ *Ibid.*, April 1953

¹² *Ibid.*, September 1952. Laxon Z. Chunga of Zakeyo Chunga village, Mzimba, wrote to the Provincial Commissioner of Northern Province on 26 August 1952: "To federate the two Rhodesias to Nyasaland will mean a greater change of life. Why should Nyasaland stand along while there is amongst the wisest people of the World a need to unit (sic) the whole World into a single Government. [...] We want better schools, better hospitals, better transport, better foods and better money [...] I am not afraid to speak this to my fellow Africans".

¹³ PRO, CO 1015/464, September 1952. The complaints of Lawlen Laban of Usisya were published under the title "Poor Man Favours Federation" in the newspaper "The African Weekly", dated the 23 July 1952:

"I challenge the leaders of the Nyasaland African Congress who say that they are fighting for their country when in fact they are fighting for good jobs for themselves. They fear that if federation comes white people will take their nice jobs. [...] I support federation because I am a poor man who realises that if more White will be more jobs and people come to Nyasaland their wages for Africans (sic). The people in the Congress are working for their names and not for their fellowmen".

¹⁴ PRO, CO 1015/86, G.S. Mwase to P.C. Central Province, 2 September 1952

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ PRO, CO 1015/464, September 1952

¹⁷ Kuwali, 'The role of chiefs', 9

¹⁸ PRO, CO 1015/464, May 1953

¹⁹ J. R. N. Chinyama had played a very active role alongside G. S. Mwase in setting up Native Associations in the Central Province of Nyasaland in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1950 he was elected President of the NAC a position he remained in until 1953 when the direction of congress moved towards a more radical approach which he was not able to agree with. After condemning the anti-federation rioting he felt forced to resign. He remained in politics, elected as one of the African members of the Legislative Council in 1956, but after the MCP were victorious in the elections of 1961 he disappeared from the political scene. For more on the rise and fall of individuals who formed the leadership of Congress during the early 1950s see J. Power, 'Building relevance: the Blantyre Congress, 1953 to 1956' in *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28:1 (2002); J. Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha* (Rochester NY, 2010); O. J. M. Kalinga, 'Resistance, politics of protest, and mass nationalism in Colonial Malawi, 1950-1960', in *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 36:143 (1996), 443-454; J. M. McCracken, 'Democracy and nationalism in historical perspective: the case of Malawi' in *African Affairs*, 97:387 (1998), 231-249

²⁰ PRO, CO 1015/464, May 1953

²¹ For more on this episode see Ross, *Colonialism*, 73-74; R. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964* (Harvard, 1965), 259

²² Kalinga, 'Resistance' 448

²³ PRO, CO 1015/464, March 1953

²⁴ Mwase and Kaluluma resigned on 8 June and Kapeni of Blantyre on 10 June. Msamala and Kumtumanji resigned too, though these two withdrew their resignations. Malemia and Mlumbe of Zomba threatened to resign but did not go through with it. (PRO, CO 1015/86, 17 June 1953).

²⁵ PRO, CO 1015/464, June 1953

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ PRO, CO 1015/86, Chief Secretary to PC Central Province, 29 September 1953

²⁹ *Ibid.*,

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

³¹ *Ibid.*, Governor Colby to Secretary of State for Colonies, 17 June 1953

³² Kuwali, 'The role of chiefs', 9

³³ PRO, CO 1015/86, Fox-Strangways to Marnham, 19 October 1953.

³⁴ PRO, CO 1015/250, Minutes of the 15th Meeting, held at Zomba, 4 December 1952.

³⁵ At an earlier conference in Salisbury the delegation of chiefs was labeled as silly by Welensky, and when a previous White Paper on Federation had been discussed in London in April 1952 the African representatives (Mposa, Muwamba, Kumbikano, and Gondwe) decided to boycott the conference as they had been denied a separate meeting with the Secretary of State beforehand. Now Congress was suspicious of getting involved with any official discussions, the conclusions of which they considered to have been already reached. See PRO, CO 1015/250, Minutes of the 15th Meeting, held at Zomba, 4 December 1952.

³⁶ Personal email communication with Dickson Mzumara, 27 March 2011

³⁷ Discussion with Joseph Munthali, Nguwoyang'ombe Village, 29 January 2009.

³⁸ PRO, CO 626/32: *Annual Report on Native Administration*, 1955

³⁹ Msimbi, 11 August 1955

⁴⁰ Kalinga, 'Resistance' 445

⁴¹ See Power, 'Building Relevance' 49

⁴² During disturbances in Port Herald, Mulanje, Chikwawa and Lower Tshiri, "chiefs, perceived to be supporters of government and the new federal dispensation, became the main targets of violence. This was also the case in Chiradzulu where the roads leading to Chief Kadewele's court were blocked, and police force was used before the traditional rulers could be freed" (Kalinga, 'Resistance' 448)

⁴³ Kalinga, 'Resistance' 447

⁴⁴ PRO, CO 1015/250, Minutes of the 14th Meeting, 25-27 August 1952

⁴⁵ MNA, NN 4/1/11: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1959-1960*, Local Government Section

⁴⁶ He had been very critical of the Government after hearing a rumour that a bill which was introduced to limit the ability of people to raise funds from the public was being passed in order to specifically prevent Congress from raising money. Deeply suspicious of their motives he challenged the viability of their cover excuse for this, that the bill was intended to apply to all races, not only Africans, by pointing out that when it had been introduced as a district specific set of rules it had in fact applied to no other races, and why was this. See PRO, CO1015/250, 14th Meeting 25-27 August 1952.

⁴⁷ Kalinga, 'Resistance' 450

⁴⁸ Kuwali, 'The role of chiefs', 12-13

⁴⁹ MNA, NN 4/2/2, August 1956

⁵⁰ O.J.M. Kalinga, 'The 1959 Nyasaland state of emergency in old Karonga District', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36:4 (2010), 743-763. Kalinga explains that in areas such as Kaporo and Misuku there was heavy violence during the Emergency. The reasons for this he puts down to the fact that they were areas where pockets of economic empowerment had grown up. Whilst the NAC was not very influential in Karonga the impact of the co-operative movement had the effect of politicising a cadre of people. Many of the trained teachers were from these areas (Rubadiri, Nyasulu, Orton Chirwa), as were the clerks who were employed in the health sector and postal service. When these sectors were federalised much discontent was fermented in Karonga in particular.

⁵¹ MNA, NN 4/1/6: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province, 1945*: "The dominating personality in Chikulamayembe Council is Rev. Edward Manda. One is forced to conclude that Chikulamayembe is much less intelligent than he appears. Lacks ability and driving force, no tact with subordinate chiefs". See also MNA, NNM 1/14/8, Chikulamayembe's tendency for expressing his opinion and having conflicts with his sub-chiefs is mentioned in the notes and instructions given to the new assistant DC at Nchenachena when he assumes the position in 1947. Questions should be asked whether or not this had the effect of giving Congress, and in particular the MCP later on, a foothold in traditional politics as had happened across the border in Chief Muyombe's area?

⁵² Personal email communication with Dickson Mzumara: "During his stay at Livingstonia and during his time as a chief up to 1952 Timothy had been receiving advice from Rev. Isaac Khunga". See also the emphasis of the article published in 'Msimbi', 11 February 1953 which reported what a greatly respected man he was. The article explains that at his funeral in Hewe over 500 people came, including seven white missionaries who travelled from Livingstonia to attend. He had been an influential character in the area, and the eulogy given by Timothy Chawinga expressed his high regard for the man: "We really knew that this man was an intercessor/advocate for many things here, working together with the Mission and Government [...] he didn't use his intelligence to become a more important person, rather he used it to help".

⁵³ Interview MD with SGVH Chembe, Austin Mfuno

⁵⁴ Interview MD with Acting SGVH Thanila, Godwin Chawinga, Thanila Village, 16 January 2009. He claimed that during this time chiefs were greatly respected on account of their being very small in number. Nowadays, he said, there are ten headmen in Thanila alone, in the past there was only one: Thanila himself.

⁵⁵ One of the more difficult relationships Chawinga had to deal with was with the Councillor Zolokere. This became increasingly problematic in the post-colonial period and Chawinga is said to have tempered the tensions by arranging for him to be given sub-Traditional Authority status. Ultimately this also came with benefits to himself both in terms of the financial reward and the prestigious image which having a sub-TA gave him. He was able to honour difficult chiefs with ritual roles and included many of them at his Mulindafwa ceremony proceedings. He consulted them about the history of the area, if only for show. He was fully aware of the benefits of playing the "tradition" card when it came to keeping headmen on side.

⁵⁶ During the 1950s Timothy was of a different generation to his neighbouring chiefs. The Chikulamayembe had been chief since the early 1930s, Muyombe from 1928 (to 1965); Kyungu assumed his position in 1926 (and reigned also until 1965). The vision of an independent nation had loomed on the horizon the whole time he had been chief so he was more adaptable having the language to speak to both old and new generations. Chawinga spanned both eras, and whilst it is difficult to know what would have happened in the MCP era to many of the old chiefs, as many of them died in early 1960s, it is unlikely that they would have been so adaptable.

⁵⁷ The two chieftaincies were structurally similar. There were several royal clans and a rotating hereditary system, education had played an important role in the selection of chiefs, and both had developed long standing relationships with the Livingstonia Mission.

⁵⁸ G. Bond, *The Politics of Change in a Zambian Community* (Chicago, 1976), 91-92. "Punyira, who had become increasingly conservative, had done little for the development of schools and medical facilities. In addition he had alienated his "traditional" advisers and other important headmen by not consulting them. As the head of the Native Administration court he had given arbitrary and, at times, partial decisions which estranged many of his subjects. In 1960, he also alienated those of his personal advisers who were traders and shop owners by giving permission to an Asian to open a shop in Muyombe; he withdrew it only in the face of vehement protest. Thus, it was not difficult for the new leaders to persuade many of the chief's advisors to support the founding of a UNIP branch in Muyombe".

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 91

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 109

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 93

⁶² R. Rathbone, 'Kwame Nkrumah and the chiefs: the fate of 'natural rulers' under nationalist governments', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6:10 (2000), 45-63

⁶³ Bond, *The Politics*, 144

⁶⁴ See Msimbi, 7 October 1954; Interview MD with Edwall Muwowo, Chief Muyombe, Muyombe trading centre, 8 September 2009

⁶⁵ D. M. Gordon, 'The cultural politics of a traditional ceremony: mutomboko and the performance of history on the Luapula (Zambia)' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46:1 (2004), 63-83, 64

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ The Nyasaland Times, Tuesday November 12, 1957: "Stone of Katowo"

⁶⁸ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stone_of_Scone, 2 August 2011

⁶⁹ Nyasaland Times, "Stone of Katowo"

⁷⁰ When Chawinga visited the United Kingdom in 1951 for the Festival of Britain he was not only exposed to the high modernist visions of Britain's future in exhibitions, architecture and design, amidst all these experiences he observed the importance of the Royal Family in Britain. He was already aware of this in Nyasaland because, as Cannadine points out in reference to the Empire more generally, the cult of the Royal Family was embedded in the colonial landscape (D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their empire* (Oxford, 2002). He was said to have been freshly inspired to create his own celebration by the coronation celebrations of the Queen of England in 1953, see interview MD with Kawonga, 29 January 2009.

⁷¹ Fields, *Revival*, 64

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ The reasons for Banda's return to Nyasaland are discussed in more detail in Power, *Political Culture*, 123-135.

⁷⁴ C. Baker, *State of Emergency: Crisis in Central Africa, Nyasaland, 1959-1960*, (London and New York, 1997), 5-6

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10

⁷⁶ Baker, *State of Emergency*, 9

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 9

⁷⁸ Power, *Political Culture*, 146

⁷⁹ Baker, *State of Emergency*, 203

⁸⁰ Youens, Chief Secretary speaking at an Intelligence meeting 7 Oct 1959 quoted in Baker, *State of Emergency*

⁸¹ Kuwali, 'The role of chiefs', 14

⁸² Papers discussed at the 50th Anniversary of the State of Emergency in Malawi conference held at Chancellor College, Zomba, 27-28 July 2009: H. Kachapila-Mazizwa, 'Operation Jambo; Chiwaliwali Village and the 1959 Nyasaland State of Emergency'; O.J.M. Kalinga, 'The State of Emergency in the Old Karonga District'.

⁸³ Kalinga, 'The 1959 State of Emergency', 762, my emphasis.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Interview MD with Karua

⁸⁶One example of this was the tension between headman Katolola and Mwakasungula. When Mwakasungula tried to calm the situation by saying all the good things that the Europeans had brought the headman's response was angry; "our people have died" he said, "and I am surprised that you think we should continue to die".

⁸⁷ Interview MD with Karua

⁸⁸ Interview MD with Samson Mumba

⁸⁹ Informal discussion with Cosmo Haskard, Bantry Bay, 5 November 2009

⁹⁰ Interview MD with Julius Zgambe, 4 February 2009. Zgambe said that Kamangilira did take part in this unrest but he advised Chikulamayembe not to go with guns otherwise they would all be finished. He said that Kamangilira took all the guns and the people went to the office to fight without them; Interview MD with Austin Mfune, SGVH Chembe: Chembe said that the organisers of the protests wanted us to go to Rumpi but Kamangilira refused saying that they had guns so we should not go and fight.

⁹¹ The historical facts reveal that Federal soldiers were not simply shooting people for resisting arrest or non-cooperation in general, although events at Nkhata Bay might contest such a picture, it is widely believed in the main the soldiers fired on people only when protests were violent and overwhelming.

⁹² Interview MD with Dambazuka Nundwe, Dambazuka Village, 28 August 2009: Kamangilira was very brave, during the state of emergency he saved lots of people by volunteering himself in the front line.

⁹³ Harvey, "10 years of Freedom"

⁹⁴ Power, *Political Culture*, 103. The most detailed analysis of Molen Tengani's chieftainship can be found in Elias Mandala's *Work and Control in a Peasant Economy: A History of the Lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859-1960* (Madison, 1990)

⁹⁵ MNA, NN 4/1/13: *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province, 1960*, Local Government Section

⁹⁶ Realising that changes would need to be made to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland if it was to survive the implications of the Emergency disturbances, and knowing that the nationalist force was growing ever stronger, the Monckton Commission was set up and charged with gathering information for a review into the constitutional future of Federation. The findings were to be presented at the Federal Review Conference planned for later in that same year, 1960; a meeting which Katumbi attended as a chiefly representative.

⁹⁷ PRO, CO 1015/1723: *Proposed Boycott of Monckton Commission*, Aleke Banda, Secretary General MCP to all members and branches, n.d. circular No 2, 1959

⁹⁸ MNA, Transmittal Files. 3-12-4F (Box 9564), Diary entry, 9th February, Chikulamayembe said that he "had not heard" of Monckton.

⁹⁹ The Monckton Commission was not entirely well received even by the colonial administration in Nyasaland. Jones "Approved List" included "Monckton, Hartley Shawcross, Elspeth Huxley, Aidan Crawley, Arden Clarke, John Moffat, Menzies and the Canadian". See, MNA: Transmittal Files. 3-12-4F (Box 9564) *Ulendo West Rumpi*

¹⁰⁰ MNA: Transmittal Files. 3-12-4F (Box 9564), diary notes 4th March 1960

¹⁰¹ McCracken, *A Political History*, 229

¹⁰² MNA, NN 4/1/13, *Provincial Annual Report, Northern Province, 1960*, Local Government Section. Antagonism towards Master Farmers receiving government subsidies accompanied the boycott, as well as towards growers of Turkish tobacco, who were labeled 'federal' because the crop was purchased by a firm with headquarters in Salisbury. As a part of the more general disruption people protested by refusing to dip cattle and inoculate dogs against rabies.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ MNA, NN 4/1/11, *Northern Province Annual Report, 1959-60*

¹⁰⁵ MNA, Transmittal Files. 3-12-4F (Box 9564), diary notes 9 February 1960

¹⁰⁶ MNA, NN 4/1/11: *Northern Province Annual Report, 1959-60*. The general policy of the agricultural department has been to concentrate on progressive elements, and not to dissipate energies on converting others, as a consequence "few people were prosecuted for offences against the natural resources legislation".

¹⁰⁷ Interview MD with Jakob Chawinga, P.G.V.H. Chikunguweya, Chikunguweya village, 15 January 2009. Chikunguweya mentioned that some say he embezzled the money which was intended for the airport but there is no evidence of this. Some say that he bought his car with the money but there is no proof; Interview MD with Efron Zgambo, G.V.H. Nthawathawa, Nthawathawa village, 15 January 2009. Whilst Zgambo said that he had done nothing bad a neighbour interjected that he had dispensed with the money given to him by a white man to build the airport. Interview MD with Austin Mfune, S.G.V.H. Chembe: Chembe also said that he received money for the airport that should have been used as labour costs to clear the land. He said that everyone speculated that he used the money to buy his Landrover. In fact it is likely that Chawinga was given a loan to buy the car, but it is nevertheless interesting to hear how people interpreted his possession of these new prestige items.

¹⁰⁸ Interview MD with Kawonga and Joseph Munthali, 29 January 2009; MNA, transmittal files 2.2.4F, (25390) *District Monthly Reports Rumpi, 1966-1975*

¹⁰⁹ Interview MD with Kawonga and Munthali

¹¹⁰ MNA, transmittal files 3-12-4F (9564), 11th February 1960, complaint lodged by Benedicto Lonje with Assistant District Commissioner

¹¹¹ Manuel Mfuni, Nickson Mfuni, Fighton Mfuni took a case to appeal in early 1960 (MNA, transmittal files, 3-12-4F (9564), *Native Authority Court Matters*, DC Rumphu to Chief Katumbi, 4 February 1960). Chawinga responded to their accusation of his refusal to review their case; “If they say I refused this appeal that is a lie”.

¹¹² MNA, Transmittal files, 3-12-4F, box 9564, 6th March 1960

¹¹³ MNA, NN 4/1/13, 1960

¹¹⁴ PRO, CO 1015/2376: *1960 Conference on Nyasaland Constitution*, Governor Robert Armitage to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 July 1960

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 July 1960

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 July 1960

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 July 1960

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 July 1960

¹²⁰ The MCP brought three “chiefs” as advisers: Kabunduli of Nkhata Bay; Kuntaja of Blantyre and the officially deposed Mr Willard Gomani of Ncheu.

¹²¹ PRO, CO 1015/2376, Armitage to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 July 1960

¹²² The government sent Chiefs Chinde (Mzimba), Masula (Lilongwe), and Makanjira (Fort Johnston); the MCP selected Chiefs Kuntaja (Blantyre) and Kabunduli (Nkhata Bay), as well as Willard Gomani from Ncheu; and the UFP chiefs were: Somba (Blantyre), Chikumbu (Mlanje), Chakumbira (Ncheu); the CLP representatives were Y.M.L. Chirwa, Wellington Phiri and G.C. Namangwiyo.

¹²³ Interview MD with Jim Ngwira, Thiti Farm, Chivwalankwende Village, 20 January 2009

¹²⁴ MNA, NN 4/1/11: *Annual Report Northern Province 1959*, Land Use

¹²⁵ Interview MD with Jim Ngwira, 20 January 2009;

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Interview MD with Roosevelt Mwangonde. Mwangonde remembers that Ngwira and Kamangilira were not on the best of terms and that they had a conflict about something.

¹²⁸ Interview MD with Jim Ngwira, 20 January 2009; he made it clear that he thought that Chawinga was not the only one doing good things in the area, he was keen to declare that there were many others like him.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Interview MD with Kawonga, 29 January 2009

¹³¹ “Report on discussions between Banda and Chief Secretary Youens”, Glyn Jones to Monson, March 1960, quoted in McCracken, *A Political History*, 364

¹³² Interview MD with Karua

¹³³ Interview MD with Kawonga, 29 January 2009

¹³⁴ Much more information on both needs to be known.

¹³⁵ Orson Mkandawire for example whose autobiography (Mkandawire, *Face to Face with My Life*, 2004) provides interesting descriptions of this work and the wider world that he, and others like him, was connected to.

¹³⁶ Interview MD with John Mwangonde, Katowo Trading Centre, 24 September 2009

¹³⁷ He had been the first person to buy something from the carpenter Abraham Munthali when he set up his shop in 1939; a bed and chair that it was said had gone for 10 shillings, this was a fact confirmed by John Mwangonde in an interview.

¹³⁸ Interview MD with John Mwangonde

¹³⁹ Jato Kawonga recalls that he along with Levi Kaleya, and John’s brother Donald Mwangonde, also a teacher, were some of the leading anti-Federal campaigners.

¹⁴⁰ J. Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, (Cambridge, 2005), 252

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Interview MD with Abraham Munthali, Kawulumira Village, 22 September 2009

¹⁴³ Interview MD with Efrida Nyamhango, Kawulumira Village, 22 September 2009

¹⁴⁴ Abraham Munthali recalls that he “won a tender for building school blocks at Chisimuka and thought that some of the young men can come and learn carpentry so I invited some to come and mold bricks and Kamuzu sent us some iron sheets” (Interview MD with Munthali).

¹⁴⁵ Interview MD with Efrida Nyamhango

¹⁴⁶ Discussion MD with Joseph Munthali, 29 January 2009.

¹⁴⁷ Interview MD with Efrida Nyamhango

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ J. Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, (Cambridge, 2005), 252

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Interview MD with Abraham Munthali

¹⁵³ Interview MD with Efrida Nyamhango

¹⁵⁴ J. Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, (Cambridge, 2005), 253

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ MNA, 17.15.4F (41265): *Hewe (I) Rejected 1961*

¹⁵⁷ McCracken, *A Political History*, 378

¹⁵⁸ MNA, 17.15.4F (41265), *Hewe (I) Rejected 1961*

¹⁵⁹ Confused by the apparent contradiction of the teachings he had received at the mission and the command that was made of him to be conscripted into the army, Munthali objected to being drafted saying that he had been taught not to kill. It was only on account of the goods and services his carpentry shop promised to provide that he was spared the fate of many of his contemporaries (see Interview MD with Abraham Munthali)

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ The trading licences listed in archival files produce just a snapshot of the type and number of stores in Rumphu. Licences were revoked or people simply had to close their stores on account of not being able to pay the fees for trading. Less successful stores came and went, licences were granted and revoked continually. If it was located less than 200 yards from the road then a £10 licence had to be sought. If more than this only £3 would be paid for a general licence. One trader, James Zgambo, complained about the way in which the Boma levied fees; "I thought you will come and measure the distance from my store to the road. Does the Boma think that everybody who is in the District is on the main road? [...] I am far from the main road. The distance where my business place is, is probably twice 200 yards. I now realize that without that the Boma does not want people to do business. Without sending the people to come and measure the distance, I shall not pay the £8. According to your letters received I should like to let you know that you should come and close the store this year, and not next year" (MNA, 3-12-4F (9564): James Zgambo to Government Agent Rumpi, 10th November 1963). Yakobe Chawinga of Chikunguweya ceased trading on the 3rd April 1964; Elton Sinyiza of Ntawatawa Village ceased trading 13th April 1964; and Patrick Zgambo of Ntawathawa had a store "near the Main road to Fort Hill" but "because of the £10: - licence he has moved his store from the Main road which is now three quarters of a mile and he wants to pay for his £3: - licence" (MNA, 3-12-4F (9564): *Licences: Trading Licences 1963-64*).

¹⁶² MNA, (NA 1/3/38, DC Rumphu 1952-89), 3.12.4F (9564), *Tax Rural Ass Board Minutes 1963-64*

¹⁶³ MNA, (NA 1/3/38 DC Rumphu 1952-89): 17.15.2R (41258), letter from C.J Muwowo (Cllr Vwaza Ward) to DC Rumpi, 28/5/73 complaining about Katumbi. It is not clear from the archive what happened next in the dispute but with Chawinga's arrest coming only a few months later the outcome becomes rather irrelevant in terms of observing how it affected his future authority.

¹⁶⁴ Interview MD with Norman Chawinga

¹⁶⁵ Based on figures found in source: MNA, NA 1/3/38 DC Rumphu 1952-89: 3.12.4F (9564), *Tax Rural Ass Board Minutes 1963-64*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Nchimi* translates as 'diviner'

¹⁶⁸ W. Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge and New York, 2004); B. Soko and G. Kubik, *Nchimi chikanga: The battle against witchcraft in Malawi. Vol. 10.* (Blantyre, 2002), 45-48 and 207

¹⁶⁹ His popularity and influence was significant enough for Hastings Banda to summon Chikanga soon after Independence in 1964, in order to restrict his activities. His work encouraged much cross border movement which Banda was keen to stem.

¹⁷⁰ Soko and Kubik, *Nchimi Chikanga*, 50

¹⁷¹ A. P. Wendroff, "'Trouble-Shooters and Trouble-Makers": Witchfinding and Traditional Malawian Medicine", Unpublished PhD thesis, City University of New York, 1985, 106

¹⁷² Behringer uses Apter's description of the Atinga Cult in Yoruba society in his control of female traders to show that, contrary to traditional anthropologists assumptions about the provenance of collective witch cleansings, sometimes it was used as "language to reinterpret economic control" (Behringer, *Witches and Witchhunts*, 207-8)

¹⁷³ See A. Roberts, *The Lumpa Church of Alice Lenshina*, (Lusaka, 1972)

¹⁷⁴ Chikanga is quoted in Soko and Kubik (2002; 50) as saying, "many thousands of people came to Thete Village and the climax was during the years 1959-1964. Although this was also the peak of political

activities in the country against Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, this did not disturb my work in any way”.

¹⁷⁵ The Kabenga-Benga Movement in Congo, for example, spread in early 1950s and reached its height in October 1958 just before independence; in the Portuguese colony of Angola “guerilla fighters, from 1961 onwards, aided the local population in killing witches and practically served as an anti-witchcraft movement”; in Zimbabwe “witch-hunts reached a zenith during the war of liberation, partly due to the collapse of traditional as well as modern institutions, partly because of the importance of spirit-mediums during the guerilla war”. Behringer argues that witch-hunting in Zimbabwe became an act of liberation in itself. (Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts*, 209)

¹⁷⁶ The *bamucapi* were first given scholarly attention in 1935 by Audrey Richards whilst she was working amongst the Bemba in North-Eastern Rhodesia. She observed that this anti-witchcraft revival, which had in fact been underway since around 1930, saw men “who dressed in European clothing” go in to villages to which they had been called and, by using small mirrors which could catch the reflection of the spirit of a person, they could find those responsible for witchcraft (P.J. Stewart and A. Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip* (Cambridge, 2004) 60-61). On discovery, the guilty party would be made to drink the *mucapi* liquid, a red solution the soapy appearance of which is said to have given rise to the name of the movement since the Nyanja for washing clothes is *Kuchapa*, after which they were unable to go back to practicing their craft as if they did it would mean certain, and horrible, death (M. G. Marwick; ‘Another modern anti-witchcraft movement in East Central Africa’, in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 20: 2 (1950), 100-112)

¹⁷⁷ Fields, *Revival and Rebellion*, 76

¹⁷⁸ Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery*, 62

¹⁷⁹ Fields, *Revival and Rebellion*, 78

¹⁸⁰ Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery*, 62.

¹⁸¹ At first – and in the final instance - the colonial administration on the other hand treated these “medicine men” as much a part of the witchcraft-complex as the local ng’anga and, in 1933 in both Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, the *bamucapi* were prosecuted in large numbers under the Witchcraft Ordinance. However, by the next year, after some debate at a Provincial Commissioner’s conference, many officials in Nyasaland changed their mind about the impact such men were having; for a period of time it was decided that as long as they didn’t interfere with “public order and good government”, they were better left off alone (Fields, *Revival and Rebellion*, 84).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 67

¹⁸³ The Mucapi movement was more easily able to be controlled by the Europeans and as such the subsequent movements adapted their behaviour and practices to avoid being the subject of similar control. Mucapi had made patients drink medicine, evoking in the colonial mind the poison ordeal which had already been suppressed. Furthermore they made direct accusations of witchcraft conflicting “with the requirements of European Administrations whose concern to keep the peace had made them declare accusations of witchcraft illegal”. They also sold medicines and charms, making them open to prosecution (Marwick, ‘Another modern anti-witchcraft movement’, 111)

¹⁸⁴ Marwick; ‘Another modern anti-witchcraft movement’, 101

¹⁸⁵ Behringer, *Witches and Witchcraft*, 208

¹⁸⁶ Soko and Kubik, *Nchimi Chikanga*, 51

¹⁸⁷ MNA, transmittal files 9-16-5R (52343), Government Agent Rumpi to Office of the PM: Re Themba Chikulamayembe’s Dismissal of GVH Kawazamawe, 2 March 1964

¹⁸⁸ MNA, transmittal files 3-12-4F. (9564), Notes from a meeting between the DC and Themba Chikulamayembe at Bolero, 9th February 1960

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ In 1964, after having developed a serious illness the Themba sought out Chikanga’s advice as to whom had bewitched him into this state and it was reported, by the D.C., that “the Witch Finder, [...] told the family of the Themba that the Themba’s sickness is due to the making of two Village Headmen in one village”. His divinations were heeded and at a Chiefs Council meeting the matter was discussed at some length: “Nchimi Chikanga has said that this illness has been caused by Kawazamawe [...] I therefore depose him from GV Headmanship because he refuses to come to my call” (MNA, transmittal files 9-16-5R (52343), Chikulamayembe Chiefs Council, Bolero on 22 February 1964)

¹⁹¹ McCracken, *A Political History*, 126

¹⁹² Soko and Kubik, *Nchimi Chikanga*, 40

¹⁹³ MNA, NN 4/2/19, *Rumphi District Report 1956-63*, August 1962. Chikanga was called in to investigate a missing £50 from the councils safe.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, August 1963

¹⁹⁵ This is not an unusual case. Take for example Jonas Savimbi's leadership in Namibia; support for him should be looked at in light of the notion that a ruler's power was based on control of secular *and* spiritual forces. Behringer points out that "whereas supporters of Savimbi stressed his attempts at eradicating witchcraft, his opponents saw him as a witch himself" (Behringer, 210).

¹⁹⁶ Interview MD with Dambazuka Nundwe; he had a policy whereby you could not keep accusing people of being *fwiti*, if you were caught doing this then you would be called into his office, in this way *ufwiti* was reduced during his time

¹⁹⁷ Interview MD with Samson Mumba

¹⁹⁸ Interview MD with Norman Chawinga

¹⁹⁹ Wendroff, 'Trouble shooters', 100

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ MNA, (NA 1/3/38 DC Rumpi 1952-89) transmittal files 3.12.4F (9564), *Court Matters 1953-62*, Katumbi to Officer in Charge Rumpi Police Station, 14 October 1959. He sends a letter to the Officer in charge at Rumpi police station dated the 6 October 1959 asking for assistance: "I can see that the case is a threat to witchcraft. Will you go over it and if you think it is worthy for me to try such a case, please inform me". In another incident in the same file reported a couple of years later on the 3 July 1961, Chief Katumbi writes to the police again: "Will you send a Constable to investigate a case caused by Village Headman Chipofya who used Muabvi [...] According to Witchcraft Ordinance Cap.8 of 1933, Section 7, I report this matter to you for your action".

²⁰² Interview with anonymous informant, 29 January 2009

²⁰³ Berry, *Chiefs Know their Boundaries*, xxv

²⁰⁴ He lost peoples trust and as one anonymous informant suggests, "people were afraid and many believed that he was using charms and that they could not confront such a powerful person. If you rely very much on practicing magic you don't care about anything and only think about yourself".

²⁰⁵ Fields, *Revival and Rebellion*, 73.

²⁰⁶ A more detailed history on the rainmaking institution, the clan histories surrounding it and the relationship which it was to have with the Katumbi Chieftainship needs to be further expanded

²⁰⁷ Unfortunately there was no archival evidence discussing this issue though many people confirm this story. Several interviewees brought up the fact that Timothy Chawinga refused at first to have a catholic school in Hewe, at Kabrufu. Perhaps because he feared they would grab all the land and he would lose control over it. Of course Chawinga was a member of the Livingstonia Mission's Church of Scotland church and this might have had something to do with it, however the people in Kabrufu wanted a school there and were not happy with his decision. See Interviews MD with Samson Mumba; Efron Zgambo; and various informal discussions with people in Kabrufu area. This tension between the Catholic mission and Timothy Chawinga was also confirmed by one of his right hand men at the time Austin Mfune when interviewed on 29 January 2009. Whilst a school was eventually built and a church established on the proviso that ownership of the land remained in the hands of the government, it is known that he flatly refused for a Catholic mission station to be built.

²⁰⁸ Interview MD with Austin Mfune, SGVH Chembe; Interview MD with Benson Chimsewu, GVH Mzelemeka, Kaduku Village, 14 May 2009.

CHAPTER 6

The nation in the locality: Exerting territoriality in the Hewe Valley 1961-1974

Introduction

On 25 March 1965 an alarming letter was sent to the Rumphi District Secretary of the Malawi Congress Party, Timothy Chawinga was copied in:

*“You should be very careful to look out strange faces in the district mostly those entering Malawi. The rebels are intending of also attaching [sic] Rumpi this is Kanyama [Chiume] group and they want to enter by the west of Rumpi mostly Hewe area of our Themba Katumbi”.*¹

This warning given by J.C. Nyirongo, Chairman of the League of Malawi Youth in Chitipa, highlighted imminent threats which were allegedly posed by the rebellious Cabinet ministers of the first independence government. All but one of these ministers had resigned or been dismissed by Banda during an episode, less than three months after the official declaration of Malawian Independence, now known as the ‘the Cabinet Crisis’.²

After fleeing into neighbouring countries for refuge these former close allies of Banda now presented a serious threat to state security. Zambia and Tanzania, Malawi’s western and northern neighbours not only “harboured” these malcontents they were thought to be working with them against Banda who had adopted quite a different ideological stance to them, choosing to maintain diplomatic and trade links with the white minority regimes of Mozambique and South Africa.³ For a chiefdom such as Katumbi’s which lay on the border with Zambia, the postcolonial diplomatic milieu completely redefined its relationship with the state. No longer left alone, as a remote place, it had become a possible entry point for rebels and thieves and as such had to be monitored closely.

In one respect these “external” threats could be seen to have increased the value of efficient and effective chiefs to the government; such figures were now relied upon to ensure security and to help maintain state sovereignty especially in the more inaccessible border areas. However, as chapter three and four illustrated, chiefs did not only look directly to the state for their continued relevance; where they could they exploited their territories to increase their own material and political resources which were fundamental bases for their *local* authority.

Under colonial administration there were prevalent opportunities for Chawinga to shape and exploit the space of Hewe on account of its limited relations with the government. The colonial state was less concerned to compete with chiefs for territorial control at the very local level and rather more interested in using their authority to its advantage: stemming political radicalism and ensuring a more conservative countryside, as well as enabling and policing agricultural production. The “indirect rule” chief, who had been all the stronger and more influential for his ability to develop a local territorial identity, was, however, at odds with Banda’s vision.

Whilst the President did turn, soon after the “Cabinet Crisis”, to re-embrace traditional African institutions as the basis for his own brand of Malawian democracy, and resolved that the institution of chieftaincy had a crucial part to play in nation building,⁴ he also made it clear that

chiefs would not be able to act alone in their isolated territories as they had done formerly; as he reminded an assembly of chiefs from the Southern Region in 1966:

*"If we stay the way our forefathers used to stay or live – this tribe by itself, that tribe by itself, this chief by himself, that chief by himself, - we will never develop this country. One tribe is not enough to do everything by itself in this country. One chief is not enough to do everything by himself".*⁵

In the light of the troubled relationship which the period running up to independence had engendered between traditional leaders and African nationalists, Banda's public statements about the role of chiefs in the development of the country proved reassuring for many, at least in the short term. Chiefs would be "real chiefs" in his Malawi, he exclaimed, not the "glorified messengers" or "clerks" to the district commissioners which he concluded they had become by the time he arrived in Nyasaland in 1958.⁶ This had the effect at first of increasing their self-confidence, especially when dealing with the young and educated members of their communities.⁷

However, as agricultural reforms and marketing controls began to squeeze the peasants and Banda increasingly looked to invest in private capital in order to run the state, chiefs came to be cast more as clients in need of his patronage. Building on the personality cult which had been developed for him during the final years of the nationalist struggle, and now with his most threatening rivals out of the picture, he turned increasingly towards patrimonial rule. He developed a "system of rewards that would co-exist with the threat and reality of punishments", which he would finance through the resources derived from his tight control of the state.⁸ In this context "real chiefs" came to be supported by the state not according to the legitimacy which their customary credentials brought them, but rather whether they were loyal supporters of Banda's leadership style.

Timothy Chawinga experienced firsthand the benefits which a close relationship with Banda brought. As the previous chapter showed, theirs was a relationship that had its roots in the final years of the nationalist struggle. Though it is unclear how they first met and how often they corresponded, the first sign of Banda's courting of Chawinga was when he was chosen to accompany him to Ghana for the All African People's Congress in 1958 and again as a hand-picked representative of the MCP in the official chiefs delegation to the constitutional talks in London in 1961. In the new Malawi Chawinga might have been less able to act territorially but he was led down other pathways to accumulate personal power. For some years he remained a "real chief" in the President's eyes and he made considerable gains as a result, most notable were the unofficial salary increases he received and his being made a traditional judge at the new provincial level court in 1967.

Being close to the President though also came with significant disadvantages; as Banda himself announced later in a speech in 1976: "so far as I am concerned, the nearer to me anyone is the worse for him. Yes anyone near me must keep up to my standards. If he or she does not they just have to go".⁹ Timothy Chawinga's time to "go" came following the annual party conference of 1973 which was held that year in the northern town of Mzuzu. When delegates were asked to say freely whether they thought one of Banda's former colleagues, Manowa Chirwa, should be allowed to return to Malawi from exile, Chawinga along with a few other chiefs – including Mwase Kasungu, Malenga-Mzoma, and Mankhambira – agreed that indeed he should. Power describes that they were "beaten then and there, expelled from the party, and deposed".¹⁰ Chawinga's arrest and detention followed a few months afterwards.

In light of this picture of national politics it would be easy to interpret the maintenance and then fall of Chawinga's position in the first decade of independence as a story solely related to Banda. However, as the rest of the thesis has argued, a full picture of what happened and how it took place is missing if his downfall and arrest are not contextualised in the political economy of authority at the local level. This can be useful not only in understanding Chawinga's story but also in how changing agricultural policies interplayed with the local economy, and how the party machinery operated amongst the grassroots.

Observing the relationship and struggles between Timothy Chawinga and the Malawi Congress Party (M.C.P.) from 1961, when the party won a landslide victory in the General Election, will reveal some more complex dynamics which take into account the varying paths of change which were unfolding in the context of very *local* politics. In Hewe, as elsewhere, the Native Authority now jostled for position alongside a plurality of different institutions at the local level and tried to hold onto a legitimacy which was being wrestled from it by various elements of the Malawi Congress Party. An array of overlapping jurisdictions emerged. The most serious of threats in Hewe eventually came from one of the youth wings of the Party, the Malawi Young Pioneers (M.Y.P.); working alongside the new court magistrate, former Master Farmer Jim Ngwira, they developed their potential to undermine Chawinga's authority throughout the 1960s.

Whilst the period running up to Independence, was generally characterized by a move away from chiefs as the main implementers of change in the local setting, Banda's support for Chawinga surely shored him up during the difficult years in-between 1961 and 1964 when the future of chiefs was unclear and local Party members took advantage of their dwindling formal authority. This stood him in good stead when there was a more determined return to use the chiefs from 1964 to 1968 in the context of Banda's personalized rule. Independence brought with it a growing concern with the tightening of security at borders and a clearer *national* territorial vision, something which chiefs could be used to enforce. However from 1968 individuals who were profit-focused were prioritized by Banda, and the interests of the general population fell by the wayside. Borders were shut down and a dramatically increased presence of party machinery appeared in the countryside. This chapter will argue that Banda's approach to nation building, in addition to his agricultural and foreign policy, diminished Timothy Chawinga's power to shape and exploit his territory, cutting off some of his main sources of authority.

Part one. To reign and not rule: Chiefly institutions in the transition to independence

"They have no future": a transitional discourse on chieftaincy

In the period from 1961 to the end of 1964 the expectation of the newly elected administration regarding the future of chiefs in an independent Malawi was that they would continue to hold a position in their local communities – if they were wanted – but with greatly reduced responsibilities. The policy of indirect rule, which placed traditional leadership at the helm of local politics, was considered by 1961 to be too riven with “divided loyalties” to operate effectively. It was thought that the chiefs' dilemma during the nationalist struggles to support either the government or the NAC left them open to criticism and attack from one side or the other; an untenable position to carry into an independent Malawian civil service.¹¹

Whilst it was made clear that it would be up to the people themselves to “make up their minds as to what they themselves require of their old traditional leaders”¹² it was thought that the people would most likely only chose to retain their chiefs as customary figureheads. The ineradicable connection which many of these traditional leaders had forged with the colonial regime in the decades before was surely enough, they thought, to relegate these indirect rule leaders to obscurity; they could not possibly still be seen by people as their true representatives.

These assumptions that were made about the impact of nationalist politics upon native administration laid the groundwork for a bundle of reforms in which “chiefs and traditional authorities as a class” were to “be placed in a state of suspended animation”.¹³ Plans were drawn up to “respectfully” do away with them; chiefs would essentially be pensioned off in their official state-endorsed capacity, with any opportunities to assert significant influence on the system of local government closed to them.

Chipembere, the first African Minister of Local Government, announced new policies which sought to make local politics “more representative”, most significantly through the democratisation of the District Councils. As a part of this reform chiefs were no longer able to automatically stand as unelected ex-officio members and voting was introduced with a universal adult franchise;¹⁴ the outcome of which saw many MCP representatives elected onto the Councils. This was clearly a major boon for the Party, as Chipembere proudly announced in a speech not long after the changes had been put in place. One of the “many remarkable things” which these local reforms had achieved, he exclaimed, was that they “have been accepted by the public, by the African people, as leaders of their wards under the general umbrella of the Malawi Congress Party”.¹⁵ There is not a great deal of evidence to draw upon in order to establish how these changes were felt in Hewe but in the sources that are available it is reported that village headmen were happy that these councils would represent their needs more successfully. In Mwachibanda during the elections for the district council in February 1962, it was recalled in the district commissioner’s ulendo notes that the headmen were saying that “the best men” had been chosen for the job in hand.¹⁶

In keeping with a policy which had gradually been reducing the duties of chiefs throughout the 1950s, the Local Court Ordinance was also passed in 1962; this had a major impact as it officially “separated the hitherto largely inseparable functions of the judiciary and the executive”.¹⁷ In doing this the government not only cut back on the chiefs’ responsibilities in the community, they crucially severed an authoritarian link which they had over their community by curtailing what appeared to be their main source of authority, the position they held as “native judges”. By formally removing the powers native authorities had to make rules and orders – which were then enforceable in the native court – this piece of legislation left chiefs with responsibility for little more than the collection of tax, the settlement of local land disputes, and in matters concerning tribal law and custom; tasks made less easy for them as many of the new district councils had also elected to get rid of their old employees. With their tax clerks, messengers, and advisors laid off the retinue of chiefs was much reduced at this point, and as a result so was a significant and visible source of their authority.

Criticising and competing with Kamangilira 1961-1964

During this ambiguous time native authorities found themselves in a potentially difficult situation: most of the responsibility for the general maintenance of law and order in the countryside continued to lie with them, but now they had no official capacity to meet out punishments which kept their population in-line, nor had they the security of a future role in the

civil service planned out for them; both of these aspects had the distinct potential to erode their position amongst their people and therefore their ability to practice power.

One of the ways in which the day-to-day administration of native authorities was most affected was with the encroaching of Party members, and in particular the Youth League, over the task of tax collection. Alongside their often violent efforts to force people to buy Party cards¹⁸ - a new priority - these radical youth also began to take on the role of bringing tax defaulters to justice; some 1500 to 2000 were recorded as having been brought to court in Rumphu "with the assistance of the Malawi Congress Party"¹⁹ by as early as November 1962. This immediate and direct affront to chiefs' authority was organised by the emerging local political elites who, buoyed up by their affiliation with the M.C.P., sought to use their new position to revenge some of the excesses of chiefly behaviour which they remembered sorely from throughout the colonial period.

The posturing of local Party branches, "intoxicated with their new found power",²⁰ showed how the transitional reforms around local government had opened up new spaces in which people, tried to wrestle a bit of control from the traditional authorities. It was a situation which Terence Ranger had predicted; writing anonymously in his radical newspaper *Dissent*, in 1960, his concern had been how this inevitable tension between the interests and influence of headmen and "'emergent' Malawi branch officers" would play out and be reconciled.²¹

One of the major ways in which these new tensions manifest themselves in Hewe was with a growing confidence amongst the people to be more vocal about highlighting their chief's shortcomings where they had hardly ever dared to before. As the previous chapter showed, some of Chief Katumbi's more self-interested intentions had been annoying those for whom it had serious implications. Complaints about his heavy monitoring of gun ownership emerged as people who had struggled to control pests in their own fields found alternative channels, often through the local branches of the M.C.P. and through the Youth League, to vent their evidently long-standing grievances.²²

The farmers in the rather remote village of Mowa, which lay close to the border with Zambia and was perhaps ten miles from the trading centre and administrative headquarters at Katowo, held increasing hostility toward him over his refusal to allow them to own shot-guns. Suffering badly from the plentiful number of garden pests and game which were running amok in amongst their crops these villagers are recorded as having pleaded with the D.C in 1962 to have the tools to more effectively scare the animals away:

"They complained bitterly of elephants, bushbucks and pigs eating up their crops. It is true that no one in this village owns a gun. The Village Headman told me that Themba Katumbi would not allow anyone with a gun in that area because he did not wish to see anyone shooting in the whole of Hewe even for the sake of scaring the animals that were eating crops except himself. The people have looked on their chief as a selfish chief".²³

Chawinga's Katumbi chieftainship, faced with the challenge of operating within the framework of an emerging new government who were legislating around the idea that chiefs ought to be "seen to reign rather than rule",²⁴ began to be accused of "backwardness" in agriculture and over-confidence in leadership; Chawinga was not the chief with a monopoly of force that he had once been, he was now charged more openly with thinking himself "more than his people".²⁵

A further challenge to his position came as the M.C.P. began to take a greater interest in directly intervening in local agricultural matters. The new African leadership was aware that in

order to gain more support in the rural areas the basic needs of the population would have to be addressed by them. Whilst the colonial state had relied upon the native authorities the M.C.P. government proposed to be far more present in the basic aspects of people's lives, and by using the local branches, which had proliferated in the final years of colonial rule, they could be. In becoming more involved, which they did increasingly, they displaced chiefs' from the forums and processes of agricultural development which had been such a key role for them during the colonial period. The sources of authority that were to be found through managing the agrarian landscape and the relationships of labour and exchange at the local level were significantly affected, as the former rather authoritarian stance of chiefs like Chawinga was undermined by the force of the Party in his area.²⁶

Observing how the building of political power could be enhanced through creating a framework for securing people's livelihoods at the local level, the M.C.P. began endorsing more directly the popular policies which helped people protect their crops. With pest control measuring high amongst the concerns of local farmers, it was identified as a useful way by which people could be won over. As was discussed in chapter four, controlling pests, of every variety, had been one of the most significant ways in which Timothy developed his reputation and built his authority in the local community.²⁷ In one example of this new commitment Kanyama Chiume, one of the leading nationalist politicians from the Northern Province, came out to inaugurate the Rumphi district wide baboon hunt in 1962;²⁸ it just so happened that this was timed to coincide exactly with the district council elections.

This increasingly hands on approach to local issues and concerns impinged on chiefs' *modus operandi*; they had used the indirect system of native authority rules and orders, which organised and framed such activities in the past, to build their authoritative advantage. The colonial government had a vested interest in perpetuating the false impression that these agricultural rules and orders were done on chiefs' initiative rather than theirs; the oral evidence from Hewe shows clearly that this was the case as people spoke highly of Chawinga's "biggest achievements" being his organisation of pest drives. The implication being that the majority of activities he undertook throughout the colonial period were inspired by his own moral ambition as guardian of his people's livelihoods. The new African government saw the benefit to them of getting more involved in people's day to day lives. In fact, such activities still remain fundamental to the success of any political campaign in Malawi; which is why the Malawian government of today, for example, regularly distribute fertiliser coupons at election time.²⁹

Consistency in confusion: the practice of chiefly authority, 1961-1964

Whilst there may have been some grand gestures in the countryside during this transitional period, many of the early speeches and policies of the M.C.P. turned out to be largely rhetorical. The promise of new infrastructure, for example, was undermined by limited resources and was, in the event, not easily able to uproot a well-established and surprisingly adaptable system of chiefly control. In light of more cuts in spending on the civil service at this time³⁰ the government could not afford to rely entirely on a new cadre of elected African elites to carry out all of the aspects of local governance that the native authorities had been implementing for many decades. This lack of funds meant many ambitious early plans remained unfulfilled; extension services did not operate as they had been planned and District Councils also lacked impetus; all of this meant that responsibility soon pragmatically fell back to traditional leaders for the organisation of local government policy.³¹

Despite the ambition of the national leadership, the behaviour of party members in the village setting also saw to it that people's hopes and expectations of a more lenient and fairer

new government were tempered from an early stage. Chawinga easily maintained his reputation amongst the more conservative members of the community in Hewe as more and more complaints were levelled at the Malawi Youth League over their handling of the most basic of tasks. In one instance “the youth of Malawi League” who were newly charged with arranging the facilities for visiting government officials, “did not arrange for enough food for an African officer and his carriers to eat”; in this they proved themselves extremely unpopular amongst the local village headmen.³²

Furthermore, there was a lack of uniformity when it came to policy objectives and much ambiguity when it came to understanding what people’s responsibilities were in the local branches. An early statement delivered by Chipembere, the first African Minister for Local Government, insisted that members of the Legislative Council were “working hand in hand with District Councils giving them advice and giving them guidance without trying to dominate them”.³³ Yet, as courts were reformed and district councils elected more confusion occurred over who represented what. People were treating members of the Legislative Council (M.L.C’s) as the local officials of the party political organisation and saw the chairmen of District Councils as the executives of Central Government at Provincial and District Level.³⁴ The division of functions between the party cadre, district councils, native authorities, local courts, and later District Development Committee’s, was not a simple matter. Each one overlapped with the others in terms of roles and responsibilities and the early period of Independence involved much negotiation over the practicalities of these reforms.³⁵ This led to much disorder in the organisation of the Party itself. Such a lack of clarity played into the hands of Timothy Chawinga who continued to work consistently through the cracks in this period of transition.

Whilst Ching’ola Chirwa, the first African Justice Minister – one of the politicians later removed from office by Banda during the Cabinet Crisis and re-labelled a ‘rebel’ – promised that the long awaited reform of the native court system would bring people “freedom from the arbitrary treatment which was frequently associated with those courts”,³⁶ more confusing remits and limited resources saw to it that little changed. If anything the framework of discipline and punishment was less even-handed than before as it was members of the M.Y.P. who were tasked with bringing it about; accusations of prejudice were soon directed at local branch leaders of the M.C.P. who had begun administering the court fines, using the youth leaguers to brandish their own form of justice.

Seeing, perhaps, that the role of the native authorities was being diminished local members of the party saw a chance to interpret the law themselves, and in some cases even attempt to change it.³⁷ Ching’ola Chirwa implored local court presidents to notify the community that now no one was “exempt from normal processes of your court”, including those employed by it,³⁸ but the opportunities for these same people to operate corruptly, and without remonstrance, remained significant. What was promised at the national level: fairness, equality and impartiality, filtered down to the people differently at local and regional level on account of rivalries and personal ambition amongst party members. This created a lot more tension than the Party leadership cared to admit.

Constitutional changes which took place between 1961 and 1964 may have weakened traditional authorities institutionally, which can be seen in their reduction in salary³⁹ and the growth of importance in District councils and magistrates courts, but local traditional sources of authority continued to exist. The reforms which promised uniformity in the practice of local governance was an ambition never to be realised during this transition to independence, in many ways it only created more confusion. The national discourse about chieftaincy, which was

responding to the pressures of decolonisation and which forced a discussion about their value as a group of people, was quite different from the practical reality of local governance.

“Real chiefs not glorified messengers”: recasting the role of chiefs after the Cabinet Crisis

The four year period of self-government up until the “Cabinet Crisis”, a time soon after independence, was a time in which the powers of native authorities and district commissioners were diminished, district councils “democratised”, and new magistrate courts established. The political game changed, however, when the young ambitious ministers were cleared out of the cabinet; whatever the causes of this constitutional crisis might have been, what is undisputed is that it proved the perfect opportunity for Banda to establish a political culture centred on his personality and from this point onwards no criticism was tolerated. For chiefs this initially proved to be a useful turn of events. As McCracken has recently pointed out, after the “Cabinet Crisis” Banda began to lean increasingly on the “traditionalist” sectors of society;⁴⁰ his strategy was to actively go after the chiefs’ support “as a way of reducing reliance on the educated elite”.⁴¹

At the M.C.P. Convention in October 1966 Banda was explicit that the party would respect chiefs. He stressed that there should be “co-operation” between party leaders and civil servants such as chiefs; “there must be no interference with the work of the civil servants anywhere by any party leader, no matter what his rank in the party...no civil servant must be forced to attend any Party meeting by anyone, not even by a Minister or a Member of Parliament”.⁴² Furthermore, he stressed that these positions could co-exist quite easily: “Party leaders are popular political leaders in their respective areas and districts. Chiefs are traditional rulers. The two are complimentary (sic)... [The chief’s role] is to look after the area or the district in those aspects of life where custom and traditional laws still function or are still operative”.⁴³

Yet, reaffirming chiefly importance did not mean reaffirming their right to rule their own territories as they had done before. In fact, the recognition of chiefs was done in the context of a central government that was extending its arm ever further into matters of local administration. By 1966 the decision had been taken to abandon the much lauded democratic elections for district councils and to move instead to a system of patronage in which Banda himself made the appointments. Chiefs were no exception to this, and he began to embark “on a policy of selecting and deselecting chiefs according to his own interpretation of Malawian history”, consigning them to operate within the context of the Banda autocracy and subject to his interpretation of loyalty.⁴⁴

The activities and choices of traditional leaders during the years of nationalist struggle and during the transition to Independence were not quickly forgotten and the importance of the allegiances which had been forged during these times was demonstrated in a speech made by Banda also in 1966:

“When I came here in 1958 the government tried to stop the chiefs from having anything to do with me and the Nyasaland African Congress. But they did not stop at that. When we were going to London in 1960, to the constitutional conference, the Government and the Constitutional Party joined hands and persuaded a number of chiefs to go to England to oppose me at Lancaster House [...] chiefs opposed me, opposed me strongly [...] ‘We don’t want self-government [...] because if self-government comes by Dr Banda, we chiefs will be nowhere’ [...] But we had chiefs too.”⁴⁵

It is certainly true that Timothy Chawinga had been one of those chiefs which Banda saw as on his side. Having first met Banda in London in 1951 they became more closely acquainted in Ghana in 1958 at the All Africa People's Conference. There is limited information about what Chawinga was doing during these trips, what was required of him and what his interaction was like with Banda, but as the previous chapter outlined since Banda's return to Nyasaland in 1958 there is evidence that the two men had respect for one another. After Banda was released from detention Chawinga worked with him becoming involved in the consultation processes in the run up to the signing of the new constitution in 1961. He went with Banda to Guinea in 1961 and to Ghana again in 1963 to discuss constitutional change.

Yet, at the same time, Chawinga had had his own ambiguous relationship with some of the "rebel" ministers who were blacklisted by Banda in 1964. He had regularly hosted Kanyama Chiume in his home where they are said to have spent evenings discussing the nationalist struggle and the future of Malawi. It is difficult to know what he really thought of Chiume but it is probably the case that given the strength of both these characters, each with their own ambitions, whilst they probably respected one another they might have struggled to agree if their ambitions clashed. If there was little trust between them it didn't appear so, although their "friendship" could have been a case of keeping ones nearest rivals and biggest enemies closest to hand.

As has been demonstrated Chawinga was a man who could be extremely pragmatic and his relationship with different politicians would have been no different. Although at times a very principled man, Timothy Chawinga was ultimately a chief wedded to his territory, and he took decisions and stances based on his desire to defend his land, and to further his ambition for it; this proved quite beneficial for Banda in the early years of his leadership. During this time he showed willing by agreeing to police his borders strongly against these "enemies of the state"; an aspect of governance to which we will return later in the chapter.

Rewarding loyalty, punishing subversion

So then connections to the President became increasingly important and as Dr Banda had promised to all chiefs, loyalty was rewarded.⁴⁶ In the increasingly patrimonial context of Banda's rule the official role of "the chief" turned out to be highly malleable. Banda maintained a creative tension in the practice of chiefly politics by restoring certain functions to traditional leaders, whilst providing incentives and warnings designed to strengthen or weaken their own individual position.

When he turned to the subject of chiefs at the 1966 M.C.P. Convention, in keeping with his reprioritisation of traditional elements in society, Banda tackled the subject of chiefs' emolument and salary, and his general dissatisfaction with the system of remuneration.⁴⁷ "At present" he said, "there are chiefs who are getting more money when they have fewer people than other chiefs who are getting less money than they are getting. This is unfair".⁴⁸ However, behind the scenes, the reality of Banda's patrimonial politics was unfolding; he was already in the process of raising Timothy Chawinga's salary to within £14 of Chief Chikulamayembe, a chief who had significantly more people under his authority. This happened despite the animosity that had already been acknowledged this would engender, and the fact that Chikulamayembe's area was almost three times as large.

This recognition of certain chiefs over others – distinctions which were neither based on the size of territory nor the number of subjects – saw unofficial hierarchies emerge between chiefs or further differentiation to take place between already historically tense relationships. Furthermore, these decisions were taken quite apart from any official statement that was being

made on the matter. The discussions around the raising of Katumbi's salary present a clear case study which shows up the gulf that was emerging between discourse and practice.

When Chawinga wrote to the District Commissioner, in May 1967, to ask the Government to raise his remuneration from £267 by an increase of half, he was told that such a significant increase was highly unlikely. It was agreed, however, that an increase of £62, raising his salary to £329 "would be reasonable".⁴⁹ In pursuit of this increase Chawinga continued to argue his case that the salary was "insufficient in accordance with the present cost of living".⁵⁰ He used his experience during the "struggle" for independence and his credentials as a stalwart supporter of the M.C.P. to look for recognition:

"The colonial Government did not consider me due to political urgency (sic) about Federation and in 1959, my salary was even up held for three months and I really suffered. I am always working together with the Government as well as with the party".⁵¹

The tensions over salary, which threatened to disrupt the district officials "development" plans, were discussed at some length by the DC Rumpi and the M.C.P. District Secretary in 1968. With people still creating trouble over chieftainships in the area, the DC wrote, any elevation of Katumbi's salary ought to be undertaken with caution. He feared that any unfair remuneration would see old arguments re-surface.⁵²

'Official' correspondence displayed reticence over these salary demands, scribbled notes in the files reveal a district administration that was concerned by the local tensions between the two leading Tumbuka chiefs. "Chief Katumbi already receives a substantial salary by comparison with chiefs and sub-chiefs of Rumpi District", explains a note from an unclear source about a memo which was to be sent to Dr Banda, "The increase he seeks from 257-329 would bring him very close to Chief Chikulamayembe who has three times the population. The memo is accordingly so loaded as to indicate to H.E that to accede to this request would cause difficulties".⁵³

Indeed the memo warned that although Chief Katumbi was "the most influential Chief in Rumpi District, population-wise the area of his responsibility is far smaller than that of Chief Chikulamayembe".⁵⁴ A tone was set in these notes that, with Chikulamayembe's salary standing at £336 per annum, it would be a dangerous move to put Katumbi so close to it. However, patrimonial decisions made by the national leadership took little account of the local political context, and the deeply held narratives of local disputes were of little interest to the Party bureaucracy. The President was evidently not dissuaded from approving a significant salary raise; his motivations can only be guessed at but it is clear that for one reason or another he wished to reward Chawinga in some way. His notes on the returned memo agree fully to the salary increase and it was finally put in to effect in the July of 1967.

Inevitably it did cause some upset. The level of Chikulamayembe's salary was now a concern of Gondwe the district commissioner who wrote to Mr Kalilangwe, the Secretary to the President and Cabinet:

"This has caused great unrest and suspicion as to what would have caused this over-look. My suggestion is that as from 1st January, 1968, NA Chikulamayembe should also be given some consolation by increasing his salary to or nearer £460 p.a in order to appease him. NA Chikulamayembe has several times complained to me over this issue but I have always dodged his questions because I did not know the main reason for this variation and still now I am not in a position to answer him. Could you please enlighten me on this vital question?"⁵⁵

Kalilangwe replied quite simply, that Katumbi's pay rise had not been a part of the general review of chiefs' salaries which had been carried out in 1967. This decision was a "separate and later direction by H.E", which had arisen directly, he said, "out of a special recommendation" by the D.C himself,⁵⁶ bizarrely and confusingly the very same Mr Gondwe who was now arguing for a better deal for Chikulamayembe too. The discussions around Chikulamayembe and Katumbi's salary continued to drag on for a number of years. In the see-saw of local politics these early years of independence did not weigh in the favour of Chikulamayembe who received few favours from the Government.⁵⁷

In simple terms, the attitude towards chiefs at this time was that they were either greatly rewarded for their loyalty, or seriously punished, should they prove subversive and irreverent in any way; and the President's ability to take action against such chiefs was made legal in 1967 with the Chiefs Act. In Section 8 (1) of the act it is plain to see: "The President may, by order, withdraw recognition accorded to any person under this Act if he is satisfied that [...] the person has lost support of majority of people in his area; or if it is necessary in the interests of peace, order and good government".⁵⁸ If chiefs worked effectively and loyally for Banda, and the nation, then they would see rewards which were not contained within policy documents and official discourse. As the report from one chiefs' seminar summed up, "A chief who is behind His Excellency the President the Government and the Party has nothing to fear from Government. Government will protect all those who abide by the law".⁵⁹

The discussions about Chawinga's salary increases over the period 1967-1968 give some indication that Banda was impressed by the chief's loyalty. This can also be seen in the elevation of Chawinga to one of Banda's new traditional court judges at the provincial level (the creation of these new courts to dispense justice according to "custom", alongside the magistrate courts at district level, was one way in which Banda tried to court traditional sectors of society). In sum, the arenas in which chiefly authority thrived in the post-colonial period were quite different. During the colonial period Timothy Chawinga's attendance and performance at local government committee meetings, for example, had been crucial to his identity as a "progressive" and co-operative chief; an identity which enabled him to excel in at least one of the arenas where their authority could be sourced at that time, as a civil servant. In the post-colonial setting where his negotiation of patronage politics mattered more than his participation in the state as a civil servant, he no longer found it a priority to participate regularly at the D.D.C. meetings and other local committees for example, where he was often notable by his absence.

Chapter four concluded that Timothy Chawinga's authority was greatly dependent on the socio-economic context in which he performed his duties as chief. Given that his management of the agrarian and ecological setting of Hewe was an important aspect of his power base, it is pertinent to suggest that as the post-colonial era ushered in a very different approach to small holder farmers, to the production and marketing of crops, and indeed to the links that border communities had with one another, the ways in which Chawinga responded to these changes was crucial in his ability to maintain tight control over his territory. The following section will critically examine the impact of the Malawi Congress Party policies on day to day life in Hewe and why changes in attitude towards agricultural development ultimately had such a big part to play in the reduction of Chawinga's status and authority.

Part two. Agricultural change, communal labour and MCP control in the countryside

A new approach to agriculture: the Rumpi Development Plan

“The way to reach our target [of development] is for all holders of land to turn farming into a money making business”,⁶⁰ so stated the Rumpi Development Plan of 1963-65;⁶¹ in an independent Malawi, it was decided early on that the building blocks of change would have to remain firmly within the realms of agriculture.⁶² The principles behind the development plans differed little from colonial approaches which were designed to increase the productivity of the land, to increase the wealth of local farmers and to ensure a functioning economy that would not have to rely on outside support. As the colonial D.C’s, agricultural officers and extension agents before them had also advocated, the designers of the Rumpi Development Plan promoted the adoption of suitable and “recommended cultural practices” in order to increase the amount of exportable agricultural produce. It was in the plan that by using these approaches family income would increase by a staggering ten-fold after two years.⁶³

Yet the same old difficulties dogged the Northern Province and “the physical barriers of distance, terrain and sparse population” remained major factors militating against the much hoped for development which was laid out in the plan.⁶⁴ Whilst long term objectives included the much needed establishment of better trading and communication links between areas of surplus and shortage in the north, as well as a reshaping of the ways in which peasant crops were marketed, in the short term responsibility for development continued to be placed on District Councils and the Farmers Marketing Board.⁶⁵

They had a difficult job on their hands as the extension services which they had inherited from the colonial administration were now seen to be “totally disillusioned” and the land reform and reorganisation schemes had nearly all collapsed in the context of the anti-colonial campaigns.⁶⁶ Agricultural officers in Rumpi noted a significant decline in enforcement by extension officers as early as 1961 when agricultural regulations were being widely disregarded and many of the prohibited activities, such as the opening of visoso gardens, increased throughout the district. Part of the reason for this was that it had been vitally important for Banda to distance his new government from the harsh regulations which had characterised the colonial period.

One way he did this was by replacing the Natural Resources Ordinance, the crucible of so many of these regulations, by the Land Use and Protection Ordinance in 1962. This proved a significant change for chiefs like Chawinga who had greatly benefitted from the framework of control which the Natural Resources Ordinance had offered. The population at large, however, who had greatly disliked the ways in which the Ordinance had regimented their agricultural activities had reasons to celebrate when Banda, derogatorily comparing it to systems of organisation that one might find behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains, swiftly put an end to it.⁶⁷ The emphasis was shifted away from the strict conservation of soil to increasing the potential of soil that was there with fertilisers. The direct management of farms was ended, and increasing importance was placed on the “slow process” of “education”;⁶⁸ something that the Malawi Young Pioneers would become implementers of and in so doing would undermine yet another aspect of chiefly concern; something that will be explored in more detail later in the chapter when communal labour activities are discussed:

The “soil is our mine”

With the government desirous of a step change in production more attention was placed on the use of agricultural inputs such as fertiliser. Alongside this came the need for increased training around its use, as well as the adoption of other inputs such as improved seeds. At first farmers had to be “persuaded” of the benefits of these new technologies, mainly through the tours of extension workers, without whom it was concluded “villagers could do nothing”.⁶⁹ Announcements were broadcast on the radio and courses were run by the District Development Committees (DDC), where advice and reassurance were given to farmers who could not see its benefit. At one such course for Rumphu and Chitipa Districts held in September 1966:

“The importance of early fertilizer application was explained, and also that it could not be applied with the seed as it would burn. Farmers were unfortunately suspicious or even frightened of new ideas. One reason which they gave for not using fertilizer was that it made weeds grow more vigorously. Wood ash was a good manure in itself, but tended to wash away very quickly. It was also wasteful, because it used 20 years’ growth of trees for one year’s fertilizer.”⁷⁰

The Government had established District Development Committees (DDC) in 1965 as a way of improving the extension services needed to distribute the technical advice regarding these new inputs, and they became the important channels through which farmers were taught. At the M.C.P. Convention of 1966 the Permanent Secretary for Natural Resources, R. J. Dewar, was praising the activities of the DDC, boasting that as soon as the Committees became involved in administering advice, local leaders were realising how important the uprooting and burning of cotton, the application of fertiliser and the early preparation and planting was and their “response was immediate”.⁷¹

This rather rosy picture was backed up by the Minister at the convention with a reeling off of impressive crop production statistics: a record crop of 40,000 tons of groundnuts was bought in 1966; tea had the highest production yield on record; and a surplus of 50,000 tons of maize, acknowledged as the most important crop in Malawi, was sold to the Farmers Marketing Board (FMB). These achievements, he said, reflect “the call for better husbandry and the use of fertiliser [...] our economy is dependent on the level of production of cash crops and I am delighted to say that this year the F.M.B. have paid out about 6 million pounds to the farmers”.⁷²

This state managed marketing board became a very important institution in the north, and soon becoming a key determinant within farmers’ decision making. Not only did it control the distribution of artificial fertilisers and hybridised seed, having aggressively advocated that these improved technologies were the only way to improve yields, quality and exports, but it had also become one of the only reliable suppliers of surplus crops when food insecurity was imminent. Furthermore, at the same 1966 DDC course where application techniques had been explained, it was emphasised to farmers that the F.M.B. had not only “promised to supply 5 ton loads of fertilizer to farmers’ clubs, etc. when called upon” but would also “provide transport for this”.⁷³

As well as transporting the items to and from rural centres, permanent markets and stores began to appear from where fertiliser, equipment and produce could be bought and sold on their behalf.⁷⁴ Many farmers took the opportunity to sell their crops through these channels but with these services came a growing expectation on the smallholder farmer to not simply produce more crops but to make sure that they were of much higher quality. The F.M.B. helped the local farmer in buying his crops, but would only continue to do so if they put more effort into increasing the quality of their yields; the offers of fertilisers, farm carts, spraying machines and

insecticides were pushed onto the farmer as a means of doing so.⁷⁵ Reminding the farmers of their duty to the Board, Katengeza the F.M.B. General Manager, reminded them in 1966 that 120,000 bags of fertiliser had been sold the previous year to farmers at less than half the cost price,⁷⁶ but that now farmers should think about “quality first and then quantity”.⁷⁷

Market mechanisms and the beginning of the end of populist agriculture

These market mechanisms of controlling crop production and sales began to take more control away from the farmer, however. This would become increasingly important in the move away from peasant agriculture as the foundation of Banda’s plans for economic growth shifted towards individual profit focused farmers, individuals who were invariably loyal and influential members of the party. In this context peasant growers became increasingly subject to corrupt practices at local markets where certain marketing board liaison committee members, board members, M.P.’s, district area and branch chairman and members of their committees sometimes “used their position to dictate or meet their ends in various ways at some of our markets”.⁷⁸

The Farmers Marketing Board was haphazardly organised after independence. In Hewe it was reported in 1966 that farmers “were unable to sell their crops due to the fact that the FMB left the area before everybody sold his or her crops”.⁷⁹ The farmers’ distress at the stagnation of F.M.B. markets urged them to request that the Board make proper arrangements for them in future years. However farmers were not only losing out in these local contexts, “with a complete monopoly in the marketing of most smallholders’ cash crops, the Farmers Marketing Board (later A.D.M.A.R.C.) was in an ideal position to squeeze the African farmer”.⁸⁰

The idea that Colby had had when he introduced the marketing boards during the colonial period was that the money drawn off from the peasants through these mechanisms would be used to improve agriculture more generally. However, it was not the peasant farmers who would be receiving the overall benefit from this investment in the post-colonial context, instead it was beginning to be fed back, through one means or another, into developing “progressive” large farms, amongst them Banda’s own.⁸¹

Ultimately, after a couple of disastrous years of over-production, poor quality yields (especially of tobacco), and huge losses to the Farmers Marketing Board, the populist philosophy that had set out to “improve the performance of the average farmer” was put to bed. Banda justified his unwillingness to nationalise anything, his cut backs to the civil service and his focus on private capital by suggesting that Africans had enough land to be capable of looking after themselves without social support.⁸² His response to the widespread peasant grievances that were felt throughout the country by the early 1960s had been to retreat from interfering with their lives, but whilst this looked at first looked rather beneficent these reforms “also provided Banda with the opportunity to introduce economic structures that he would use to his own advantage after Independence”.⁸³

In August 1969 the M.C.P. announced a new agricultural approach; its implications were summarised by the Minister of Agriculture, Gwanda Chakuamba:

*“Up to now too much time has been spent trying to raise the productivity of the mass of the farmers. There is no telling whether this work has had any measurable effect. What I do know is that the larger farmers, and in particular the farms of my brother Ministers, have not been receiving the attention they require [...] I want the whole attention of the extension services of this Ministry directed towards the individual progressive farmer. No more time-wasting meetings and demonstrations! The mass approach must be left to the radio and mobile units”.*⁸⁴

Having realised that continued concentration on smallholder production was neither going to enrich his country, nor enrich himself and his cronies Dr Banda embarked on a policy where “progressive farmers” or the *Achikumbe*⁸⁵ would be given priority in terms of resources, credit facilities and extension services; it was a further shift towards “individual farmers who showed themselves eager to make the leap from subsistence cultivation into treating their farming operations as a commercial business”;⁸⁶ a process which had been set in motion during the colonial period. The majority of rural families, for whom regular participation in the cash economy was not the main objective of their farming operations, were to be educated through radio and film screenings, at large village level meetings and agricultural shows; the most important shift for the mass population was that this training would be delivered by the Malawi Young Pioneers.⁸⁷

Despite his shift in priorities Banda nevertheless stick to the basic principle that in Malawi “developing the country means hard work in the fields, using axes and hoes, because we have no mines”.⁸⁸ Addressing a group of Malawi Young Pioneers at Youth Week in 1969 he re-emphasised to them that “*the soil is our mine*”.⁸⁹ The M.Y.P. had already been used extensively to implement Party principles; it was this youth organisation that came to play a significant role in village agriculture. By the late 1960s the idea that the M.Y.P. was an organisation created purely for the good of the farmer no longer stands up to the evidence which showed them up to be more of a personal police force for the President. The following section will illustrate some of the ways in which the M.Y.P. came to occupy an influential role; and why this was important for Banda’s control of the state.

Communal labour and local party control

In Hewe the main differences that people identified between the colonial period and the early MCP era, in terms of agriculture, were focused on either the use of fertiliser – with a stress on the fact that it was free during the time of Dr. Banda – or the noticeable increased use of force in managing production. Robert Chawinga reflected upon the differences in the following, almost contradictory way: “Whites were training people to farm without any punishment. Kamuzu was punishing those who didn’t follow his rules. Do this, do this. [But] during Kamuzu’s time there was good agriculture, plenty more food than under the colonial government”;⁹⁰ his testimony suggests that he saw a direct relationship between this force and the increased productivity it led to. Jakob Chawinga, on the other hand, made the connection between the food security of the area with the better provision of agricultural inputs and crop marketing; “during Kamuzu’s time there was a lot of food here. We were given fertiliser; prices were fair and much lower compared to colonial”.⁹¹ It is likely that this divergence, particularly with regard to whether or not the force used to get people to farm was greater in the colonial or the Independence period and whether inputs and marketing helped or hindered farmers, depended a great deal upon the crops that were being grown from place to place, even within a relatively small area;⁹² it also probably reflects the variable impact that the M.Y.P. were having on labouring practices.

The consensus from the villagers’ comments appears to be that they felt farming *practice* was left largely unmanaged during the M.C.P. era, but when it came to specific communal work and self-help projects it was widely recognised that force was visibly and regularly employed, most often by the Malawi Young Pioneers. The youth wing of the Party often used violent behaviour to urge farmers to participate, and to punish non-adherence of work activities. This use of force was increasingly possible in the confusing atmosphere over where “the right” to punish labour contraventions such as the lack of participation in community activities, such as *chidikiti*, lay.⁹³ The practice of performing *chidikiti*, a form of

communal labour, had been long used by the missionaries at Livingstonia as a way of raising money, but after Independence this way of organising labour began increasingly to be used by the M.C.P. In one of the few ethnographic observations of agricultural change during early Malawian independence Gregson's data collection from the Henga village of Chimwemwe – a Tumbuka settlement just 70 miles from Hewe – can be usefully employed in the analysis of M.C.P. policy from this time.⁹⁴

Gregson records that seven *chidikiti* groups were in operation in Chimwemwe during the 1967-68 hoeing season, and only one of these groups was organised by what had previously been the only instigator of such activity, a local parish of the C.C.A.P synod. A further group was organised by the local Youth League – under the umbrella of the local branch of the M.C.P., and five were organised directly through the M.C.P. local branch itself).⁹⁵

At this time the way they operated was that the M.C.P. at district level would “levy each branch a certain amount of money, a demand which had originated on the national level”.⁹⁶ The village headmen had, at first, taken on the responsibility of turning “the money over to the local branch, with or without compensation from their villagers”; this he had raised at first by himself, arranging *chidikiti* through the usual methods of patronage, but the M.C.P. organisation was on hand to assist, with Youth Leaguers available to “convince” noncompliant villagers.⁹⁷

Chidikiti, however, meant labouring for nothing material. Workers received neither beer (as they would have done with *Kulimizgo* group labour) nor reciprocal labour for their efforts, and the rate in which people worked on such projects reflected this lack of reward. “When at the completion of a *chidikiti*, the party official receives the cash from the garden owner and flourishes it for all to see, there is no apparent indication that the workers feel in this way compensated”;⁹⁸ a villager in Chimwemwe suggested to Gregson that a large number of people ignored *chidikiti* and refused to contribute money to the party, “another man complained that villagers shouldn't have to work to raise money for the purpose of feeding Party visitors, since they are on expense accounts anyway. This man was nearly imprisoned”.⁹⁹

As Gregson observed it in Chimwemwe village, the effectiveness of traditional methods of calling for this type of labour soon changed, with the authority of chiefs waning in some places and the rewards apparently non-existent: “With the failure of Village Headmen to mobilize villagers for work, the M.C.P. Branch Chairman elected in 1967 made two innovations. First, he decided to bypass Village Headmen completely, dividing eight villages into two *chidikiti* areas cutting across village boundaries, and secondly he instructed Youth Leaguers to tour the villages before and during *chidikiti* in order to discover shirkers”,¹⁰⁰ with those in the advanced stages of pregnancy, sick and aged persons given exemption.

This ethnographic description is backed up by other archival sources from Rumphi recorded around the same time, which suggest a broader district-wide concern about the Party's behaviour when dealing with labour and taxation. The *chidikiti* projects were said, by some, to be ‘voluntary’ but there was a lack of clarity around how they were really supposed to operate, particularly when it came to the role of force in ensuring it got done. Whilst some said that it was possible to get out of doing it by paying a fine, there are several recorded cases from Rumphi of those who deliberately “fail[ed] to go and do voluntary work” and were told to pay 1/;¹⁰¹ but much harsher punishments were also regularly given and the villagers of Chimwemwe also complained of overzealous Youth Leaguers who beat people regularly.

Confusion and inconsistency

Banda made out that he had wanted to “establish a more compliant, better disciplined youth movement” early on in 1961, but it was not until 1964 after he suspended the wayward and

headstrong leader of the youth movement, John Chikwawa, that his control over the M.Y.P. became fully cemented and his aspiration to use the organisation as his own private police force, on the lines of Nkrumah's Young Pioneers in Ghana took shape.¹⁰² It was from this point that they began to operate under the patronage of the President, receiving material support for policing internal dissent, as well as many of the new external threats the country was facing. Nevertheless, even whilst their use of force was relatively effective in attaining a powerful position within rural communities, their often grave errors of judgment in the village setting ensured that chiefs of long-standing repute such as Timothy Chawinga would not easily be displaced.

The police and army were also beginning to resent the youth leaguers for their tendency to usurp their function as keepers of order¹⁰³ and examples from the archive demonstrate that it was the M.Y.P. that increasingly meted out the "punishments", the right to which the chiefs claimed belonged to them. These activities rather call into question whether the Party was really trying to instil a "self-help spirit" into communities, or was simply trying to control them more closely.

Chipembere's early conclusions that people were now willing to build roads, schools and clinics without any financial assistance or initiative from the Government, and that this showed the confidence that people had in the Party,¹⁰⁴ seemed more than a little exaggerated in this confusing landscape of enforcement where the Malawi Young Pioneers movement thrived as "a law unto themselves, creating tension between their members, civilians, and the police force which while charged with preserving law and order had little control over them".¹⁰⁵

In one example of such behaviour, drawn from Hewe in September 1965, Godfrey Mfuno a resident of Kaduku village wrote to the Government Agent exposing certain violent acts undertaken by the Party branch in his area:

"The thing that troubles me very much is this, is it a rule or is it allowed that if a person is late in paying the money that he was told to pay in the branch we should kick him? I don't know whether I have done a mistake to write you this question. I am the one who is kicked for such a reason. I am kicked by the one of the cabinet members of the Kaduku branch. My M (sic) is to know whether we are allowed to kick one another".¹⁰⁶

In light of the rise of such activities in the countryside, chiefs continued to complain that they did not know what was expected of them anymore. They had been given no guidance as to how they were supposed to exercise their duties, particularly when it came to the practicalities of having and maintaining the authority to administer "development".

Even after the Chiefs Act was drawn up some years afterwards in 1967 in order to deal with some of the confusion, many were left disappointed by the lack of explanation given by District Commissioners who had not taken any steps to relay to them what powers the Act gave to them, and they continued to "carry out their official duties with some appreciable uncertainty".¹⁰⁷ After this time they took to warning the government that unless the ability to administer penalties to their people was restored to them, the population at large would continue to be lazy in their application of government initiatives:

"The chiefs asked if government could consider the question of allowing Chiefs as in the past to punish members of their community who slacked in participating in self-help schemes. This punishment should take the form of asking such people to perform double work of any work specified to be done in the area or village. In this way the chiefs hope to ensure that everybody participated in self help schemes from which they too benefited in the end".¹⁰⁸

The random acts of violence which the M.Y.P. were continually associated with were officially condemned but whilst their behaviour was discouraged it was inconsistently dealt with. As late as 1968, following a lengthy observational tour of the district, letters from the D.C. Rumphu to the District Secretary of the M.C.P. in Rumphu warned against violence, that no one should be “beaten up [...] if they did not co-operate in Chidikiti. Whilst chidikiti is a very very useful thing there is no law which authorises certain members of the public to force or beat people for chidikiti. This should be achieved by persuasion and cooperation and nobody is entitled to under the Law to charge a levy for people who are not able to go for chidikiti”.¹⁰⁹ The promised “training” of these M.Y.P. members who patrolled borders, policed agriculture and upheld “Party values”, had little if any quantifiable effect upon this thuggish behaviour; an upsurge in violent incidents, rather than a decline, was more notable over time.

The case of Chief Mwalweni,¹¹⁰ another chief in Rumphu District, illustrates that control over this sort of voluntary labour was still highly contested almost five years after Independence. When Mwalweni’s wife, Nyashawa, excused herself from *chidikiti* with no valid reason and was punished by the Youth League for it, the chief questioned their right to do this: “I do not want a strange chairman to do this with my family and I can close the Youth League office and the branch too can stop Youth League”.¹¹¹ Following this dispute Mwalweni called his village headmen to him to tell them that there should be a division between them (and their people) and the party “such that the party should be left alone completely and he and his v. headmen should be together on the other side independently without any connections being maintained between”.¹¹²

Mwalweni was convinced of his own authority and right, being the owner of the land and the traditional leader of the people who lived there, he told the government in no uncertain terms that this branch of the party was under him: “I can close this M.C.P. office [...] From now any matters concerning chidikiti should be referred to me and my cases regarding those who will fail to go to chidikiti will be taken to court by me only, and not by any youth leaguer”.¹¹³ The line from the government too was clear; that such behaviour by the Youth Leaguers was not acceptable: “I have heard several complaints from people in sub-chief Mwalweni’s area of old people being beaten up by Youth Leaguers if they did not co-operate in chidikiti. Whilst chidikiti is a very very useful thing there is no law which authorises certain members of the public to force or beat people for chidikiti. This should be achieved by persuasion and cooperation and nobody is entitled to under the Law to charge a levy for people who are not able to go for Chidikiti”.¹¹⁴

This form of communal labour provided an opportunity for the party to become an increasingly felt force in the countryside, however. Even in the areas where traditional authority was able to stand up for itself the pressure which the M.Y.P. brought to bear on local communities to purchase membership cards and tow the party line was increasing. *Chidikiti* was more than simply a tool for Party fundraising; its very nature was creating new expressions of hierarchy and new fault lines within the agricultural communities in which it operated that would play to the advantage of the party in the battle versus the old order.

Old chiefs vs. the new party men

Chidikiti was a form of labour which could be called upon by those farmers within the community who were wealthy enough, and well aligned with the Party to gain access to it. The example of a Chimwemwe storekeeper “contributing cash to the Party in lieu of his wives’ participation in vidikiti”, in Gregson’s account of these labour practices shows clearly that “chidikiti labor is viewed as a contribution of time and effort which has cash value”.¹¹⁵ The

farmer in question preferred that his wives worked for him, on his own farm, and he knew the value of their labour. In Rumphu there was a scarcity of agricultural labourers and as such all forms of labour to assist with garden preparation, weeding and other one-off jobs was in high demand. Not only could you pay your way out of this commitment you could, if one had enough capital and “an inside track”, “contract with the Party for this labor at a rate about half that of a casual labourer, laborers who work alone or in pairs at rates based on acres”.¹¹⁶

The vidikiti hosts whom Gregson observed in 1967-68 were all of some standing in Chimwemwe: 3 headmen, 2 maize mill owners, a commercial farmer and storekeeper, a Youth League official (and his mother), an official of the local MCP branch, and a prominent millet farmer.¹¹⁷ These trends reflect the growing Party concern of supporting loyal farmers who were commercially minded, investing their money into agriculture and selling much of their crop at the ADMARC markets.

This trend where growing numbers of independent entrepreneurial voices were emerging took place in Hewe too. In some of the correspondence written by Timothy Chawinga to his headmen after 1967 an attempt to uphold his authority in the face of these new elements is clear. Firstly he continues to promote these activities himself for the general betterment of his area; in one letter he praises his people for putting their hearts in to vidikiti and making lots of money for building the secondary school, getting a maize mill, contributing to the regional office in Mzuzu.¹¹⁸ But he made sure that the DC, MP's and MCP District Chairman¹¹⁹ were all made aware of his anger over the party's increasing interference in his area. On one occasion in November 1967 he wrote to his chiefs with concerns about the party branches and their poor handling of things in Hewe. “I have seen in most villages that some of the people whom they say are leaders of MCP misled people not to put heart on self-help projects [...] I will speak to them if they continue misleading people”.¹²⁰

Munthali, the chairman of the Hewe area MCP branch, evidently paid no mind in taking decisions about local issues without consulting either Chief Katumbi or the higher branch of the MCP at District or National level. At the Area Conference held on 27th April 1968 he, with his members, took the decision that “there should be no one in Hewe whether with a store, grinding mill, to sell his goods with maize e.g. clothes, soap and sault (sic), or else paying maize as money at the grinding mill. This starts from 1st April 1968. The one who is found doing so his or her store or grinding mill will be closed down. Most of the people waists a lot of maize at the stores and grinding mills. When the FMB markets come they sell nothing and they do not find money for their taxes”.¹²¹

The local branch was trying to compete directly with Katumbi, trying to change laws in arenas where the chief had always presided; about the price of beer, about the presence and activities of the market (conference lodged a complaint to build a market for 1968 to sell the beans, maize and tomatoes widely available), and in establishing and maintaining local amenities. Making a swipe at Chawinga, who had organised the building of the maternity clinic in the first instance, the Hewe branch conference discussed at some length the terrible state of this amenity; “There are no beds for babies, no beds for mothers, the floor is bad, the roof is bad but they pay after their births. This should be put in order”.¹²²

These tensions did not reflect a straightforward battle between “the Party” and “the chiefs” though; divisions were growing *within* the party structures too and in particular between the branch, district and national levels of command. Whatever the reason for the MCP branch to try and introduce new local “laws” in Hewe, whether it was an attempt to get money circulating for their own enrichment through taxes and fines or for some other reason, it generate a serious reaction from the District level who admonished the branch members for

constructing their own legislation: “It is not up to you to make such laws. It is up to the Council or our main government, if we have given them our complaints about the same matters as you have said. Please never do such things on your own wills. We are more concerned on law making. Let the laws be made by the government, and I am speaking as a District Chairman of MCP Rumpi”.¹²³ Furthermore, economically significant individuals began to play an increasing role in decision making at the local level, often usurping Party officials and chiefs.

Achikumbe farmers: linking agriculture and patrimonial politics

In Hewe Jim Ngwira was recognised as one such farmer and was invited along in May 1967 to attend a meeting about the Government’s direction for agriculture by the Minister of Development and Planning; Ngwira was, at this time, also the MCP local court magistrate at Katowo.¹²⁴ Whilst farmers like Ngwira were prioritised the average farmer continued to be penalised in the process; “production quotas were introduced to restrict production and exclude the inefficient producer”¹²⁵ and the world tobacco boom and increasing emphasis on estate development was managed by placing a heavy tax on smallholder agriculture through the state marketing board.¹²⁶ There began a growing disparity between the trend of prices paid by the grower of, for example, dark fired tobacco (the principal peasant-grown tobacco variety) and that received by the marketing board at auction. “It is clear that the price differential began to widen in the later 1960s when ADMARC failed to pass on to the peasant grower any significant proportion of world price increases”,¹²⁷ write Kidd and Christiansen.

By changing its pricing policy “from paying out as near world prices as possible to one of deliberately creating an invisible surplus, the FMB moved from a deficit of nearly K4m in 1967-8 to large profits in 1969-70 and even larger profits after 1971”.¹²⁸ Most of the profits were sunk into the development of African owned estate production which does not sound so problematic, but in real terms this meant that the marketing organisation was in fact financing individual farms owned by Banda and other senior members of MCP.¹²⁹

Along with the investment in these estates there came a lean towards the privatisation of land. The Land Law of Malawi – which had hitherto been based on 1902 English land law – was amended in 1966 and three new Land Bills were enacted; the Customary Land Bill; the Registered Land Bill; and the Local Land Boards Bill.¹³⁰ Indeed certain chiefs “won” some recognition and status in the light of these changes. Some land was considered more agriculturally valuable, especially in terms of the potential it had to attract more settlers and produce more crops.

The salary of chiefs, which we have already touched upon in a more general sense, also increasingly reflected this potential. The case of sub-chief Mwankunikila illustrates this trend; the MP, NA and MCP District chairman all agreed that his salary should be increased as “it must also be remembered that his area is the main coffee producing area and as such, it is likely that in future many people will want to settle in his area in order to open coffee farms”.¹³¹

The main aim of all of these reforms was to benefit large landowners with privately owned farms such as Banda himself and the political elites gathered around him. It was one thread of a party hegemony that was maintained through “a system of patronage and asset entitlement that guaranteed the support of a loyal bourgeoisie and a kulak class of entrepreneurial farmers”.¹³² In this context where emerging local political elites found new opportunities for wealth and influence more directly through the Party organisation as well as indirectly through large-scale farming activity, chiefs had to manoeuvre in new landscapes of power. Bond’s study of Muyombe, barely 50 kilometres to the west of Hewe on the Zambian side of the border provides some more detailed sense of how such change afoot in these

communities. Bond noted that by 1964 local UNIP leaders had access to new wealth “accumulated from the sale of UNIP membership cards”¹³³ and new influence through their political organisation which forcibly included most of the people living in the area. Bond described their position at this time as being very powerful. This power transformed into authority as these UNIP local leaders manoeuvred themselves into positions within the chiefly court, thereby influencing its policies as well as making their own decisions “within the context of the UNIP subregion branch”.¹³⁴

Whilst Chawinga himself gave little scope for similar elements to break in within his own chiefly organisation he was unable to stop their more general influence on the population, as the previous chapter has shown. The main challenge to his leadership came through personal relationships in the context of local politics and not through Banda’s own decision to go after him as a threat. Banda was still, after all, raising his salary even as Chawinga was making serious complaints about the Malawi Young Pioneers. It was not so much that Banda himself wanted to get rid of Chawinga, but the growing distrust between the M.Y.P. and the chief, plus the rising opportunities for alternative authorities both economically and politically in Hewe were enough to ensure that his position was increasingly insecure from 1968 onwards.

It was the local Party membership, as well as key members of the community such as Ngwira and Mwangonde, with whom he had begun to fall out with, who were the ones who set his decline in motion. It is instructive to consider the downfall of Chawinga through the familiar lens of locality, and how Hewe’s changing significance after independence played into his imprisonment.

Part three. From Borderland to Border Post

Strange faces, refugees and thieves: The advantage of being a chief in a borderland

The fact that Hewe occupied a place so close to the international border, and the historical interconnection it had with both the chieftaincy and the people in the Isoka and Lundazi, and latterly carved out Chama, Districts, has been explored repeatedly throughout the book. In relation to Timothy Chawinga’s chieftainship in particular it has been shown how he used this position to try and strengthen his standing in the area, to increase his population, land and prestige through joining together the Katumbi chieftainship on the other side of the border, a chieftainship that contained a community with ambiguous allegiance to both the Katumbi chiefs and to other chiefs in the Northern Rhodesian territory. To some extent the border enabled certain practices, hunting and trading in particular, to carry on with little policing. Moreover it provided a certain “escape route” that was used either in times of famine, or indeed political unrest, as happened during the State of Emergency.¹³⁵

The borderland position of Hewe became precarious in the eyes of the new African government. Both for the fact that it was now an entry point for so-called “thieves” and “rebels”, and because it was a more difficult place to police internal dissent. From the state’s perspective it also posed difficulties of policing tax evasion and monitoring an extremely mobile cross-border population. Timothy Chawinga was perhaps able to maintain his position in the first few years of independence as the Government needed a strong presence to police movement and keep out “the rebels”. With no court, no scope to make official orders as he had done under the colonial regime, and a limited body of staff to help him carry out his duties, Katumbi was reliant on M.C.P. structures to ensure the smooth running of his area,¹³⁶ however there are certain

cases which demonstrate how he continued to use this locality, and the authority he had here, to his advantage.

One unexpected benefit of policing a border area, and one that he knew very well, occurred when in the run up to Zambian Independence the witchcraft eradication movement of Alice Lenshina and her Lumpa Church began to have an impact on communities not far from the Nyasaland border. Lenshina had attracted many followers to her church especially in the uncertain times before Zambian Independence, but the popularity of the movement became a direct threat to the African nationalist party in Zambia, United National Independence Party (U.N.I.P.), who competed with it for members of disenfranchised rural communities.¹³⁷ The conflict between U.N.I.P. and the Lumpa Church reached a climax in between July and October 1964, just before Northern Rhodesia's independence. The violence spread across the northern and eastern provinces of the country, where support for the Church was at its strongest. Many people who were being terrorized by Lumpa members fled their villages and sought refuge elsewhere. The movement itself had no impact within Hewe, but the fallout from its violent campaigns within the districts immediately neighbouring Katumbi's chiefdom did send people running his way.

This activity presented several unexpected benefits for Chawinga, who used it not only to swell his coffers but as a self-promotion exercise, during which time he represented himself as an efficient, helpful representative of Government. Chawinga was not only close in proximity to certain of the hotspots during this campaign, as we know he had familial connections there;¹³⁸ the archive records that Chawinga went to Muyombe and Sitwe at the height of the terrors in order to "reassure" the people in those places of the support of their Malawian neighbours at this time.¹³⁹

After the "mopping up" operations had ceased across the border, at the end of 1964, Chawinga submitted his claim for expenses incurred from a thirty day period of supporting the five women and five children who had fled to Hewe during the troubles; "I claim £45 for feeding the refugees, (4/- per day for the adults) 2/- per day for the children",¹⁴⁰ he demanded. These somewhat extreme claims did not pass through unexamined. The Government Agent in Rumphu questioned his request, writing to the Secretary to the Prime Minister that both he and the Officer in Charge of Police in Rumphu found the claim "exorbitant".¹⁴¹ The Police Military Force (P.M.F.) Platoon which was based at Katowo reported no significant numbers of refugees and not one of them believed that the refugees who had come were there for the thirty days that Chawinga spoke of. The immediate response of the Government Agent to Chawinga's request had been to tell "the Themba that Government would help with a few bags of maize and I imagined two or three bags would suffice the refugees that I saw".¹⁴² Nevertheless, Chawinga is highly praised in the same correspondence for the efforts that he did make in the area; so much so that he is painted to be somewhat of a hero for the people involved:

"The Themba was most useful both to the PMF and the Malawi Rifles and Police and his going forward to Muyombe in the early stages with the Royal Rhodesian Platoon (who were the escort platoon of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment P.O.L) no doubt saved or at least reassured the Muyombe people, who had been surrounded by Lenshina followers. It is also true to say that there were no killings in the mopping up of Lenshina camps near our boundary and good relation exist".¹⁴³

Just as would be seen a few years later with the private discussions which take place about increasing Chief Katumbi's salary, it is in the unofficial file notes attached to these pieces

of correspondence where more revealing aspects of the Government's actions toward Timothy Chawinga can be witnessed. "The feeding of refugees was supposed to have been undertaken by the [Farmers Marketing Board], but, Chief Katumbi being in rather a remote area and pretty close to the trouble I do not think we need quibble about this", the Secretary to the Prime Minister scribbles in response to the rather cynical view of Katumbi's expense claims. "The charges are perhaps somewhat excessive, but I take the view that in present circumstances the chief should be reimbursed in accordance with the amount he claims. The chief obviously cooperated fully at this time and was of considerable assistance".¹⁴⁴

It is possible to imagine that the chief had the welfare of these people foremost in his mind but besides offering protection and assistance to them his responses to the troubles clearly had the additional benefit of augmenting his regional prowess and enhancing his reputation. People from Hewe remember him welcoming these refugees into the community, and far from them being the financial "burden" he depicted them to the Government as, he was said to encouraged them to stay and marry within the area,¹⁴⁵ despite the fact that both the Government Agent and the Officer in Charge of the Police instructed the PMF Platoon and the Themba to encourage them to go back to Northern Rhodesia as soon as was possible.¹⁴⁶

A territorial challenge: from "remote" to "threatening", 1964-1974

The diplomatic context of Malawi changed considerably with Zambian Independence; from this time forth, and especially after the Cabinet Crisis, border areas were watched and boundaries more rigorously enforced. Chawinga co-operated in these campaigns to increase security, reporting 'strangers' coming from Tanganyika and Zambia to MCP representatives within Hewe as he had been asked to do. In one example, a letter he wrote to Gondwe the DC of Rumpi in March 1965, he reassured him that he was watching carefully for these unwanted elements; "we are well united here", he wrote "you will remember that 3 men from Tanganyika ware (sic) caught by the villahe (sic) headman Chembe in December, and handed over to the Youth League and then to the Police at Rumpi and we shall go on like that"¹⁴⁷.

It was not only Banda's fears about the rebels covertly returning to disrupt his rule which forced him to reconsider the role of such borderlands. Antagonism had developed between Zambia and Malawi over the decision of the Malawians to maintain diplomatic relationships with the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa. One of the consequences of this decision was that clearer guidelines had to be established on how to interpret the immigration regulations which had been put in place at the end of Federation in 1963.

The Zambians had closed their southern border with the white regime of Southern Rhodesia following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. The closure of the border with Rhodesia sent many Zambian migrant workers back to their home country and as a result a tighter border control was desired with Malawi, as well as a change in the regulations for their entrance to work in Zambia. This was required in order "to ensure fuller employment for Zambians"¹⁴⁸ who were being repatriated from Rhodesia. Various interpretations of the immigration regulations had been employed to refuse entry to one or other of the Malawian or Zambian nationals who wished to migrate, or simply visit, the other country since the end of Federation in 1963.

By 1966 it had become imperative that the border be defined and clear policy guidelines developed on the approach of Government Agents to all forms of local immigration into Malawi; a significant shift from the federal system, in which no strict demarcation of borders had been necessary. Of course this was not an easy task in a place such as Hewe, especially with regard to those people who lived and farmed close to the border, and whom often had family in the other

territory and whose livelihoods depended on this ease of movement across the 'divide'. At first it was agreed that to solve these problems a Resident's Border Pass – first used by Rhodesians during Federation – might be usefully distributed to those living within a distance of perhaps ten miles of the Malawi/Zambia Border with the idea of giving these populations a certain freedom to still come and go.¹⁴⁹ However these had first been used for the purposes of regulating employment during the Federal period and there was a reticence to retain any form of legislation from this time, especially from the Zambian point of view.¹⁵⁰

The harsh policing by the Malawi Young Pioneers against local people in the border areas not only incensed the Zambian government, it caused serious tension amongst the local populations. Reports came in from Zambians who had been beaten badly whilst involved in "unfortunate incidents at border controls" managed by an "uncontrolled group of bully-boys enforcing the party line".¹⁵¹ Zambian officials regularly complained about the security measures experienced when "forced to pass through Malawi. On occasions the pretext of a search had been extended to MYP to include beatings and damage to property".¹⁵²

Rather than training the local branch members whose role it was to patrol the borders and tempering the violence they were so often associated with, the young party faithful became increasingly militarised and the MYP progressively became "a law unto themselves, creating tension between their members, civilians, and the police force which while charged with preserving law and order had little control over them".¹⁵³ They operated within the patronage of the President and received rewards for policing internal dissent, as well as external threats.

Relations with neighbouring villages across the border from Hewe – neighbours who were historically strong trading and familial partners - became strained as the 'work' of the MYP took on an ever more defensive agenda. Villages such as Kanyerere in Zambia were vulnerable to MYP aggression as they were considerably closer to the Malawian border, which was a mere two miles away, than to the nearest Zambian Boma at Chama, which was 90 miles by road. The district annual report for 1970 highlighted this as a major concern: Kanyerere "is outside Zambian police coverage and as such has experienced sporadic incidents of lawlessness and criminals abound";¹⁵⁴ the "roving and not too peaceful Malawi Young Pioneers"¹⁵⁵ were quickly blamed as instigators of this insecurity.

Whilst people still moved back and forth to sell their goods at markets on both sides of the border, more formal interactions such as using the postal office and the health clinic became more risky prompting the villagers of Kanyerere to ask for their own services to reduce dependence on Malawi for them.¹⁵⁶ From the Malawian point of view times were also troubling. Buses carrying passengers and trucks carrying Malawian goods were reportedly attacked as they made their way through Zambian territory; a tricky new road was cleared through the Nyika Highlands by the Royal Engineers in 1973 which was difficult to negotiate but at least enabled Malawians to avoid the Zambian "thieves" or *vigwegwera* as Kamuzu Banda famously began to refer to his easterly neighbours. When a new Lundazi-Isoka Road was built, it was reported that villagers were relieved at the prospect of this new route which would "save residents the embarrassment of having to pass through Malawi in order to get to other parts of Chama via Northern Province".¹⁵⁷

Assurances had been made that M.Y.P. behaviour would improve as they were better trained,¹⁵⁸ and further emphasis was placed on the organisation as the spearhead for an "agricultural revolution", but the truth is that their "security duties" increasingly became the main task, particularly in border areas like Hewe. From 1968, when a new MYP base was established in the heart of Hewe, new threats to Chawinga's authority were established.

The establishment of the Malawi Young Pioneers in Hewe

One of the first Malawi Young Pioneers bases was built in Chitipa, in the far north of the country. This area had limited Government presence but with its open and porous border with Tanzania and Zambia to the north and west it needed more support once Federation ceased. It contained extremely mountainous and difficult to traverse landscape which easily accommodated anyone wishing to hide from the authorities. It had been one of the most difficult areas to police during State of Emergency less than 10 years before and was well known for harbouring “rebellious” elements.¹⁵⁹ Chitipa was the obvious choice in which a strong Party presence would need to be established, and this came with a MYP base as early as 1963.

Not long after the base had been established in Chitipa a warning came to Hewe from the League of Malawi Youth chairman there, J.C Nyirongo; writing to the Rumphi District Secretary of the MCP he copied Themba Katumbi in on his alarming letter of 25th March 1965:

*“You should be very careful to look out strange faces in the district mostly those entering Malawi. The rebels are intending of also attaching [sic] Rumpi this is Kanyama group and they want to enter by the west of Rumpi mostly Hewe area of our Themba Katumbi. Kanyama and Ching’Oli Chirwa would like to enter through that west Rumpi which is possible the road going to Mowa. People must be told of this so that they are aware of the rebels plan. Here at Chitipa they have tried and they are still trying to come but we are kept well tight and awareness of their plan to attack us here. The people and chiefs in this district they are really very strong and they have done a very wonderful job towards these rebels without the chiefs and the people in the villages these rebels would have managed to enter Chitipa but Youth League very tough and the people are really tough (sic) they don’t even give any way to these people and I wish you do the same as per your telegram to Ngwazi which you have sent to him asking him if people could go and fight Chipembere in Fort Johnson [...] We are well armed and equipped but the villagers are very encouraging they are also armed patrolling as we do during the night. These rebels actually comes during the night and afternoon time. Warn people in Rumpi particularly in the area of Themba Katumbi (Hewe)”.*¹⁶⁰

These warnings prompted a very quick response from Hewe where Katumbi made sure that the Party knew he was aware of the dangers and he would do his utmost to keep things under control. He organised a meeting in which all the people would be told to “watch carefully”, especially those in the more vulnerable places such as Mowa and in the Nyika highland areas. These warnings prompted him to request a visit to the MYP base in Chitipa in order for him and his people to learn how best to keep the rebels out.¹⁶¹

By May 1965 Katumbi, along with a team of eight Malawi Congress Party Chairmen and the League of Malawi youths, went on “approved official journey”, to Chief Nyondo’s Headquarters in Chitipa; Katumbi had personally requested that this be made possible for him “to get real picture of the guard which is now being carried by the villagers of which I must teach my people here”.¹⁶²

In his report from the “study tour” he spoke highly of the healthy team of MYP based there and was impressed by the farming techniques used. Nyondo’s area lies adjacent to Tanzanian territory, with the Songwe River acting as the natural border. After they had visited the gardens and seen the kitchens the group was taken to see the boundary to visit some of the villages along the Songwe where Chawinga describes they saw “the people solidarty (sic) behind the Ngwazi and how they watch the new faces coming in the area and the team was very much impressed of this and how courage they are all the time”.¹⁶³ Katumbi’s report is extremely enthusiastic and upbeat, and it finishes by describing how the group returned to Katowo “singing and rejoicing all along”.¹⁶⁴ Of course such correspondence is routinely riddled with

plenty of lip-service and more than a peppering of Party propaganda. Chief Katumbi, it appeared from such reports, was a paid up supporter of the Government, a chief whose priorities were oriented to the Nation, and to the service of Dr Banda.

The feeling that these places were under threat is tangible. Nyirongo, who had accompanied the group made sure to peddle his own brand of Party devotion by encouraging them all to be loyal to the Prime Minister, to help him “build our country”, to ensure that taxes of all kinds were paid as quickly as possible and to work together with chiefs and the Party to develop the district, and as such, the country. In the next couple of years, through an assortment of other correspondence and activities, it would become clear, however, that Timothy Chawinga was not entirely willing to simply be a cog in the Party machine.

Policing Production: The Malawi Young Pioneers and MCP Youth League in Hewe

In a 1973 Chancellor College Seminar paper entitled “A Survey of Hewe Young Pioneer Training Base” Austin Mkandawire sketches the background and aims of the movement, and its particularities in Hewe. This training base, he writes, “Has not restricted itself to nation building but has at one time worked hard to protect the country, especially the Hewe area in Rumphu District against outside forces”.¹⁶⁵ Claiming that the aims of the Youth League had changed from its late colonial roots in smashing Federation, Mkandawire suggests that Dr Banda shifted their activities away from political organisation; “he turned the Youth League from a tool for breaking up of the federation to a ‘weapon’ to fight ignorance, disease and poverty, a tool for development”.¹⁶⁶ Dr Banda set about informing his people that the MYP, a movement born out of the Youth League, would be formed to teach people, especially the future leaders – boys and girls – good methods of farming; by 1973 there were 21 bases around the country.

The base at Hewe opened on the 20th January 1968 was envisaged as “playing a major role in nation building by making people interested in agriculture”.¹⁶⁷ No mechanised farming was used simply the ‘traditional tools of the peasant farmer’ with the intention being that any agricultural practice which might be adopted by the small scale farmer with an absolute minimal of capital investment should be demonstrated. Field days were organised in order to instruct people on farming methods and “participation in field days cements relations with surrounding people”.

From 1968-1973 20 men from the surrounding area, stirred by the activities of the base, have been selected to join the MYP. The impact of the base in Hewe was considered to be more than agricultural though.¹⁶⁸ Being situated near or on the boundary between Malawi and Zambia “because of its strategic or frontier position here it could have a different history from other bases which are inland in respect of policing duties [...] in 1964 and again 1967 there were moments of internal crises which involved border areas among other things. In such situations a base strategically placed would have policing duties to perform. Though the Hewe Base was started after these events its future role cannot be minimized with regard to help in maintaining law and order which is an important aspect of nation building”.¹⁶⁹

Chief Katumbi had been keen that the Government establish the Base in his territory, possibly not only for the attention this would bring the area but also for the added benefits such as the electrification of the part of the Valley in which the base was opened: “For the first time some people in Hewe saw electricity in 1968 [...] Electricity gave most people in Hewe pride. Hewe was looked at as a very important place in Rumphu and it is said that at one time, the ex-chief Katumbi told his people at Katowo Headquarters that he wanted electricity from Katowo to the base, a distance of one mile. If he had the money he should have put electricity all along the way”.¹⁷⁰

Equally Chief Katumbi had been a traditional leader who had been granted a fair amount of local freedom and the government augmented his local prestige through an endorsement of salary increases and other privileges that few other chiefs were permitted. A battle over the naming of the MYP base in Hewe, however, reveals that there were more tensions, or at least growing ones, between the Government and this very single-minded chief than previous correspondence had perhaps let on.

In the run up to the official opening of the Base Chawinga left Hewe in order to attend to various other business; whilst he was gone some correspondence had been passed confirming some of the details about the base, details which the chief could not agree on: “When I was in Blantyre this Base was named Hewe Base this was without consultation with the people and my village headmen. You asked me for a Land and I consulted my people and the Village Headmen and happily (sic) we gave the Land at that place, and when naming it you could still ask us what should be the name of the Base, as it stands at that place. I now tell you that at that place, the base must (sic) be called KATUMBI BASE (his emphasis)”.¹⁷¹

He followed up this rant to the DC Rumphi with a further letter to the Rumphi District Chairman of the MCP just 5 days later, and he had no intention of keeping it a private quarrel, copying all MCP areal chairmen in Rumphi, the MPs for Rumphi West and East, and all chiefs and sub-chiefs of the district. It is worth quoting at length:

*“You asked us for a Land and we voluntary gave up the Land you do not know what the place must be called, in turn you could ask us again what this place should be called. We could tell you the names of that place, I as a chief I am concerned of the Land and the names of all the places in this area, it was no good for you your self to nem (sic) that part of the Land as Hewe, as you approached us for the Land you could also approached us for the name I think, I am right on that. Your letter is an abusive one to me, I do not agree with that name either, do not make me fear you, you are writing to some people who are not concerned of that particular Land and the name of the Land, there are 6 names if you asked us, but because you as chairman then you named it your self, I am sure you do not know the name of all the portions of the Land in Katumbi’s area, therefore, I do not agree with you at all. I am not indulging my self into Politics I am speaking about the Land and the names of that particular Land, to some people your writing are not concerned of that Land or the name of that Land. I cannot agree because you are the District Chairman chiefly on this matter, not at all, the Base can not be called Hewe”.*¹⁷²

What goes on in-between is only to be guessed at as no interim letters are to be found, but what is observable is that only a week or so later, on 25 January 1968; Timothy has written a letter to the Rumphi Police Office referring to a house available for an officer to be posted to the “Hewe Training Base”.¹⁷³ And by 12 February any dispute with the base he seems to have had is not apparent asking as he does for all his chiefs to send children in their areas who are in standard 8 to “Bezi” (base) where they would “Master muwemi wakumanya kulima” (“master very well how to farm”).¹⁷⁴

Just when it seems that no more is to be said about it a letter comes from the Office of the Regional Minister to the DC Rumphi, some three months later warning that Katumbi must “put in a direct apology in connection with Hewe Young Pioneers Base. The first letter he wrote to this Office is not accepted. I would suggest that you help the Chief in drafting this second letter which should reach this office not later than 30 June, 1968, and if by this date the letter is not received the base will be removed”.¹⁷⁵ We can only assume that Katumbi’s “apology” was accepted as the base continued to be known as ‘Hewe’ and it remained in the area for many

years to come; perhaps, however, the beginning of a breakdown in relationship between Katumbi and the Party had its origins in this fractious time.

Part four. The end of the road

Timothy's Arrest

During the MCP Convention of 1973 a question was asked to all attendees: whether Manowa Chirwa, one of the former members of Banda's government who had been swept out during the cabinet crisis, should be allowed back into his country for the few remaining years of his life. Several chiefs, including Timothy were in favour of the motion. After the convention the chairman of the MCP, Egbert Chilambo demanded that all those chiefs who would have invited this "thief" back into the country to apologise, and Timothy refused. "What should I apologise for, I've done nothing wrong!"¹⁷⁶ He did not get arrested immediately but he was restricted by the Party from moving freely around in Hewe and specifically barred from participating in any of the development activities in his area. Chawinga had never liked being told what to do in his area, so predictably he went about his business as usual even after these warnings. On one occasion as he went to visit a project in Chisimuka, surveying the area to find an outlet for piped water, it is said that Party members reported him to the Government; it was at this point that they took his title from him. Village Headman Chembe, Austin Mfunne, who was with Timothy whilst he was searching for water at the springs, remembers that people had been spying on them at the time and reported that "we were having a meeting", which was not permitted. Chembe and other chiefs friendly with Kamangilira were called and asked for statements.

The real reasons for Timothy's arrest are difficult to pin down, some say it was on account of his stubbornness ("nkwesha") in wanting his own way;¹⁷⁷ this was demonstrated at the time of the convention to which he turned up late¹⁷⁸. In typical style he had chosen to forego attendance at the opening ceremony, clashing as it did with his own local Mulindafwa celebrations; it was just another in a long string of decisions which unapologetically placed his agenda before that of the government. Others, however, imagine that his arrest was part of a more systematic attempt to get rid of people who were not on good terms with the local party organisation; the many others who were arrested around Chawinga at the time is perhaps evidence of this. Munthali, the District Commissioner at this time, identified seven people who had been "influenced" by Chawinga "to create conflict among the people in Hewe area": Golden Chawinga (Village Headman Thanila); Nathaniel Kachali (Village Headman Khutamaji); John Nundwe (Village Headman Mgugu), who was identified in the letter as "leader"; Joshua Chilambo (Village Headman Nteweta); Elton Munthali (Village Mwachibanda); Study Luhanga (one of Chawinga's councillors from Chikunguweya village); and Donalise Ng'ambi, "a woman friend of Mr. Timothy Chawinga".¹⁷⁹ Austin Mfunne remembers that these people, as well as the acting headman Kasalika, and other councillor Yotam Chawinga, were arrested at night whilst plotting a plan for their chiefs release.¹⁸⁰

Timothy himself was never told the reason why he had been arrested and at first he even refused to come out of jail as a protest against this injustice. Even for the historian it is hard to piece together the turn of events as only scant evidence has so far been found; further research and more interviews around these matters are certainly needed to verify and deepen the discussion about what really happened. There is, according to Mapanje, "irrefutable oral knowledge, commonly shared by those who knew what was going on under Banda" that the

arrests and harsh treatment associated with the one party state – particularly in the last 15 years of Banda’s rule – were not done on Banda’s initiative but were discussed and ordered mainly through his cronies, in particular John Tembo and his niece Cecilia Kadzamira, who would become Kamuzu’s mistress.¹⁸¹ Van Donge argues however that this “Tembo-Kadzamira Syndrome”, was just a way of displacing blame from Banda.¹⁸²

When comparing the case study of the M.Y.P. base, which relates the growing resentment amongst the local MCP branches toward Chawinga, and using the ample evidence from within Hewe itself which suggests strongly that the arrest of Chawinga in 1974 was stage-managed by Tembo and Gwanda Chakwamba and not Banda,¹⁸³ tensions that were forged at the local level, and manipulated rather by party elites who had other things to lose, must be taken seriously. One of Timothy’s sons was convinced of Tembo’s involvement in his father’s arrest. Using the Malawi Young Pioneers encampment in Hewe as a base, it is said that Tembo visited Hewe “secretly” to spy on his activities and get information from them in order to collect evidence for his arrest; he had been “fearing” the rise of Timothy Chawinga, Norman claims, on account of his close relationship with Banda, and he wanted his deposition.¹⁸⁴

The fact that after Timothy was arrested, 12 other people, including 9 village headmen, were later also taken to prison demonstrates perhaps that the problem did not rest with one chief who had become too self-important but that it was a more systematic sweeping out of “disloyal” elements.¹⁸⁵ Timothy had become rather high profile, he was increasingly outspoken following the shift towards a Chewa centred politics and civil service. After it had been decided that Chichewa would be brought in as the official language of the nation, it is reported that Chawinga spoke against this policy on the radio and from this time had fallen out of favour with Banda.¹⁸⁶

However, it is likely that things were a little more complicated in this patrimonial state which had weaved a complex web of highly sensitive relationships and shifting loyalties. From oral sources it is known that Timothy was not on such good terms with the local members of the MCP.¹⁸⁷ He spoke out against the dominance of the Party in creating new laws in Hewe saying openly that “the chairman of the MCP cannot rule us”.¹⁸⁸ Other stories tell of a new tension which emerged between Chawinga and the headmaster of the school, John Mwangonde, his formerly close friend and ally, after they quarrelled about something which can only be guessed at, though many allege was on account of Timothy’s love affair with the teachers wife, NyaZgambo.¹⁸⁹

A large number of sources spoke of Chawinga “going about” with other women during his time as Themba Katumbi, but that he managed to keep their husbands close to him at the same time, so there might be more than a little truth in tales of this rumoured affair.¹⁹⁰ The reasons behind it are also not perhaps as straightforward; perhaps it was a way of wresting back some power from the teacher, in light of Mwangonde’s local popularity. The adulterous relationship is nevertheless unverifiable; it remains – like so many of the actions of Timothy Chawinga – as a fragment in the collective imagination of the Hewe people.¹⁹¹ Yet, whatever did happen between Mwangonde and Chawinga it had the effect of augmenting a serious dispute which as a consequence meant the headmaster allied himself more with the MCP elements within Hewe, even if their association was conducted on a more private basis.

By the end of the 1960s Mwangonde had found a new ally in Jim Ngwira, who was the court magistrate and at this stage a leading member of the local Party branch. The rupture between the teacher and chief saw animosity toward Chawinga increase amongst school children, and letters were found in the school rooms written by students against the chief’s “unreasonable” behaviour. This reaction amongst the youth of Hewe tallies with what was

taking place throughout the country; McCracken highlights that “protests and demonstrations in schools were a regular feature of political activity from the late 1950s”, and a great many of the people turning up to Banda’s rallies after his release from prison were under the age of 20.¹⁹²

The young people in Hewe and the MYP often overlapped in their disillusionments with the old guard and students were said to have been susceptible to the propaganda of the Young Pioneers. The local MYP members invented a song, for example, which imagined the chief as a big terrible snake (*chinjoka*) who wanted to kill “our children, Mwangonde and Ngwira”; this spread throughout the area.¹⁹³ The narratives of Chawinga’s powerful medicine re-emerge in this story, and the teacher and magistrate were told repeatedly not to go and eat food or drink anyhow, as they were now in serious danger.¹⁹⁴ It was a song that spread like wildfire around the area.

In the light of this scanty, but hard to ignore evidence, it cannot be concluded that Chawinga’s arrest and imprisonment was a decision driven entirely by Banda, but rather that it also involved some serious crisis of authority internally. In this atmosphere the behaviour which Chawinga had displayed both publicly and privately could easily be framed differently and used against him. The loss of authority made bravery look like arrogance, cleverness look like corruption, and entitlement look like adultery. As one villager reflected, Chawinga took advantage of his chiefly status during the colonial period, and that this was a time in which he had been “storing good things up for himself (*iyo ndiyo akatukukanga wanthu cha*)”; he was able to build up the wealth to buy cars and build a nice house. This may have been good for him in the short-term, but his “corrupt ways” of getting money were his undoing this villager reflected. “At first people were afraid to report him but some started to talk about him with the government and then he was arrested. If he had avoided corruption he would have died a very popular chief. He started very well and ended up swindling people”.¹⁹⁵

Conclusion: Native Authority to Nationhood

Malawi adopted a republican constitution in 1966 and the country officially became a one-party state with Hastings Banda as its first president.¹⁹⁶ From this point the Malawi Congress Party government began stretching its arm to reach people even in the most remote of settings. The territorial monopoly that Chawinga’s chieftainship used to guard “his” native authority land, something which the policy of indirect rule had enabled, was now under threat. Under the colonial administration the territorial integrity of chieftainships, particularly in the more remote Northern Province, was not only upheld but positively promoted. After independence the local historical stories which had been so encouraged when distinct “native” identities were the key building blocks to colonial administrative control were largely disregarded and stories of nation building took their place; the focus of political narratives shifted from native authority to nationhood.

With this new drive for nationhood came the need to redefine international borders, particularly as tense relationships with other newly independent African states developed throughout the 1960s. The border with Zambia to the west of the Hewe Valley which witnessed the regular movement of people and goods back and forth was much more tightly monitored after independence; re-imagined as a political threat rather than an economic opportunity. The closing and policing of such previously permeable borderlands became a priority for the Party and as a consequence any advantages that had been gained – economically through trade or socially through sharing the resources of different colonial administrations – were put into

jeopardy. One of the most significant sources of Chawinga's personal income was through the hunting and exploitation of the plentiful game present in this cross-border region; the closer policing of borders meant he could no longer achieve the same levels of economic independence that he had done during the colonial period.

Alternative authorities also began to emerge in the local setting which had the effect of unsettling the chiefs position further: politically minded villagers who saw that they were able to go far through the Party structure; wealthy businessmen and farmers; educated "marginal men"; and, of course, the Malawi Young Pioneers, who could be Banda's eyes and ears in the remote peripheries of his state. Chawinga had always been a difficult individual to manage; not too dissimilar to Banda, he did not like criticism and became ever more intolerant of being challenged as the 1960s wore on. The growing presence of the MCP in Hewe, especially of the Malawi Young Pioneers who increasingly provided the means by which the state achieved coercion and control, offered new opportunities to undermine Chawinga's authority. In this context local people who had been discontent with the chief felt able to be more critical.

Banda's vision for postcolonial Malawi, meanwhile, began to look increasingly like that of a vast chiefdom with the Chewa identity forming the cultural and ethnic basis on which this new "chiefdom" nation was built. In this context the manipulation of tradition and territoriality which were the hallmarks of "successful" indirect rule chiefs such as Chawinga were unachievable, especially in later years as the state became fixated on weakening the position of Tumbuka elites in public office by pushing an exclusively Chewa agenda.¹⁹⁷ Using cultural power to "engineer consent", as Forster has described it,¹⁹⁸ was not the only similarity in leadership style between Banda and Chawinga. Both toured their territories regularly, courting the masses by holding rallies and meetings; "there can hardly have been a Malawian who had not seen or heard Banda personally many times",¹⁹⁹ and the same was true for Chawinga. Both prioritized the needs of women and as "*Nkhoswe*" number one – the Chewa term for uncle or brother – Banda modeled himself as the main guardian of these women's interests, something that Chawinga had also maintained was of great importance. The fact that the main supporters of both of these men after their deaths continue to be women is surely telling. But there was only room for one "big man" in this nation.

McCracken has reflected on how Banda began constructing his one party state and strengthening his own power by "personally nominating all MCP candidates, in some cases in the face of opposition from within constituency branches";²⁰⁰ as such they became "representatives of Kamuzu" first and foremost. Previous chapters have shown how such favoured individuals could easily fall from grace if they put a step wrong and it is in this context that the demise of Timothy Chawinga must also be seen. The example of Kanyama Chiume's rise and fall, as recounted by Kayuni and Tambulasi, aptly demonstrates how Banda developed these relationships of dependence with politicians and chiefs. Recognising the importance of the northern factor "in his quest for total control over the country" Banda closely monitored the local district committee selections for candidates in the run up to the 1961 general election.²⁰¹ On discovering that the MCP committee in Rumphi had declined the nomination of Chiume, Banda set about persuading them that this was not a good idea; this was no easy task, it took "two bitter face to face confrontations with Banda before they finally backed down and accepted the nomination".²⁰² This assistance in getting Chiume elected was not a "gift" that could be forgotten by the politician. When he did not reciprocate this loyalty during the cabinet crisis Banda was quick to remind, and warn, MPs that this traitor's position had only been made possible through the President's own powers of persuasion: "I will tell you. Kanyama Chiume is

not wanted in Rumphu (*Prolonged applause*). I took him there. I had to force him on the people of Rumphu (*Interjection: That is true*).²⁰³

Chiefs like Mwase and Katumbi had also received considerable support from Banda both during the struggle for independence and in the first ten years of his premiership. Salaries had been increased and positions had been given as traditional judges in provincial level courts after their judicial roles were taken away from them at the local level. So when Chawinga reacted badly to some of the Party's activities in Hewe, and when he and Mwase dared to question Banda's decision over the fate of the rebel Manoa Chirwa, it was inevitable that they were taken to task. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Chawinga's downfall was a decision taken by the President alone.

Power and Kalinga have called into question the force behind the raft of arrests which took place after the MCP Convention in 1973; the chiefs' position on the return of Manowa Chirwa to his homeland could not in seriousness have been seen as anything other "rooted in compassion", and was not intended as a challenge to Kamuzu's authority.²⁰⁴ They even forward the contention that it was "possible too that Banda agreed" with the idea that Chirwa "deserved to live out his last years on his home soil".²⁰⁵ Rather it was those vying for control in the upper levels of the Party organisation who took this opportunity to present Banda "with their own interpretation of the proceedings".²⁰⁶ Older, less educated but more experienced men like John Tembo and Gwanda Chakuamba, whose long term success could be put down to "their ability to run the party machine at local and regional level", came to the fore after the cabinet crisis.²⁰⁷ Chawinga's own description of events immediately following the 1973 MCP Convention is revealing:

"Just from nowhere I was found amongst 9 chiefs tortured, bitten (sic) by Chakuamba, assisted by the Youth and Malawi Young Pioneers (M.Y.P.) and dismissed from my position as chief".²⁰⁸

Chakuamba and Tembo's influence in orchestrating Timothy Chawinga's arrest is not easy to find evidence for, but given the discussions around their close relationship with the Malawi Young Pioneers in Hewe it should not be underestimated.

¹ MNA, 18.1.9F, box 17744, *Malawi Congress Party*. J. C. Nyirongo, League of Malawi Youth Chairman to District Secretary Malawi Congress Party, copied to Chief Katumbi, 25 March 1965

² According to Kayuni and Tambulasi "the apparent causes of the cabinet crisis can be categorised into five policy issues cabinet ministers were against: (1) the adoption of the Skinner report, which approved reduced remunerations of civil servants; (2) the delay in the Africanisation process; (3) the continuation of diplomatic links with the racist regimes of Portuguese Mozambique and apartheid South Africa; (4) the introduction of three pence (*tickey*) hospital charges; and (5) reluctance to accept aid from, and forge links with, Communist China", H.M. Kayuni and R.I.C Tambulasi, 'The Malawi 1964 cabinet crisis and its legacy of 'perpetual regression of trust' amongst contemporary Malawian politicians' in *Social Dynamics: A journal of African studies*, 36:2 (2010), 410-427. Several good accounts of this period are given in McCracken's *A Political History of Malawi* (2012), 429-440; Power, *Political Culture*, 177-201; Ross, *Colonialism*; C. Baker, *Revolt of the Ministers: the Malawi Cabinet Crisis 1964-1965* (London, New York, 2001)

³ J. Mayall, 'The Malawi-Tanzania boundary dispute', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11:4 (1973), 611-628: President Banda had strong suspicions that "Tanzania was aiding and abetting the attempts made by certain prominent Malawi exiles", most specifically Kanyama Chiume, "to subvert his regime".

⁴ P.G. Forster, 'Culture, Nationalism, and the Invention of Tradition in Malawi', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32:3 (1994), 477-497

⁵ MNA: Transmittal files, 9-16-5R (box 52343) *Local Government: Future of Chiefs and Native Authorities*, Address to Chiefs Southern Region by Kamuzu Banda, April 30 1966

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Forster, 'Culture', 490

⁸ Power, *Political Culture*, 198

⁹ Taken from a speech made by Banda on 5 November 1976 at the Blantyre City Charter Dinner at Mount Soche Hotel, quoted by Kayuni and Tambulasi, 'The Malawi 1964', 411

¹⁰ Power, *Political Culture*, 191

¹¹ MNA, Transmittal Files, 9-16-5R (box 52343), Provincial Commissioner, Central Province to Deputy Chief Secretary Zomba, 18 January 1963

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 455

¹⁵ Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, Nyasaland Protectorate, 12th July 1963, quoted in R. Rotberg, ed., *Hero of the Nation, Chipembere of Malawi: An Autobiography*, (Blantyre, 2002), 406

¹⁶ MNA, Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (Box 9564), District Tour 12 to 16 February 1962, Visit to Mwachiwanda

¹⁷ MNA, Transmittal Files, 20-11-4F (Box 52347): *Division of functions between district councils, native authorities and local courts*, Letter Mr Chirwa to Local Court Presidents, 29 August 1963

¹⁸ Power, *Political Culture*, 178

¹⁹ MNA, NN4/2/19, *Rumphi District Report 1956-63*, November 1962

²⁰ Power, *Political Culture*, 178

²¹ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 370

²² MNA, Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (Box 9564), July 1962: D.C's Visit to Mowa

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ MNA, Transmittal Files, 9-16-5R (Box 52343), *Local Government: Future of Chiefs and Native Authorities*, H. Y. W. S. Dickson, Secretary to the Prime Minister circular to Government Agents, 24 November 1964

²⁵ MNA, Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (Box 9564), July 1962: D.C's Visit to Mowa. One Hewe farmer, Benedicto Lonje, approached the agricultural officer in the February of 1960, to complain that in the Valley "enthusiasm for Agriculture [is] very limited. Katumbi himself is backward, and holds back others. [Hewe is] one of the few areas where the chief is more than his people, and must be treated accordingly".

²⁶ That he had taken the ideas for the policy on as his own has been explored earlier in chapter four; people remember pest control in particular as done very much on his initiative.

²⁷ See, Chapters four and five

²⁸ MNA, NN4/2/19, *Rumphi District Report 1956-63*

²⁹ <http://www.nyasatimes.com/2012/10/11/malawi-leader-jb-pledges-free-fertilizers-to-chiefs/>;

³⁰ The details of the Skinner Report, and its recommendations regarding the reform of the civil service which the out-going government had commissioned, is covered in much more detail by other historians. However, what is important for this discussion is the fact that it incensed Chipembere, Orton Chirwa and Chiume, the latter organising many African civil servants in a protest against its implementation. Power examines the implications of this in more detail; see *Political Culture*, 195, where she suggests that Chipembere was anti-Skinner and therefore very popular with youth of the Party.

³¹ MNA: Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (Box 9564), 12 – 16 February 1962, Tour to Mwachiwanda

³² MNA: Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (Box 9564), 13 June. V.H. Zolokere, fully aware of the political changes taking place within the country at the time, blamed "the youth of Malawi league of his village for not bringing enough food for an African officer and his carriers to eat". Confused by the seeming lack of respect, he believed their behaviour demonstrated something quite hypocritical about the Party. "He wondered if the leaders understood their cries for freedom if they did not honour and respect those Africans about them in the same way [...] as they could respect an European officer".

³³ Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, Nyasaland Protectorate, 12 July 1963, quoted in Rotberg, *Hero of the Nation*, 407.

³⁴ MNA: Transmittal files: 9-16-5R (Box 52343) *Local Government: Future of Chiefs and Native Authorities*, Provincial Commissioner Central Province to The Deputy Chief Secretary, 18 January 1963.

³⁵ There continued to be differences in opinion over the role, or indeed necessity, of Native Authorities and there was certainly much inconsistency in terms of which chiefs were considered effective and useful and those which were not. Questions around staff employed in several of these institutions, who would pay them and how, what eligibility there was for certain employees in the newly graded salary system, how was tax to be collected, would see to it that much paperwork was given over to ironing out these inconsistencies or, explaining the inconsistencies away if they were considered necessary.

³⁶ MNA: Transmittal files: 20-11-4F (Box 52347) *Division of functions between district councils, native authorities and local courts*, Chirwa to Local Court Presidents, 29 August 1963

³⁷ MNA: Transmittal files: 9-16-5R (Box 52343) *Local Government: Future of Chiefs and Native Authorities*, P.C. Central Province to Deputy Chief Secretary, 18 January 1963. District Councils were reconstituted and the Local Courts Ordinance was introduced which curtailed NA powers, some rules and orders remained but many replaced by council bye-laws. Many cases where “new” councils did not wish to retain employees of former local authority (problems in certain districts where elected councils have replaced council of chiefs).

³⁸ MNA: Transmittal files: 20-11-4F (Box 52347), Ching’ola Chirwa, Minister of Justice circular to all Local Court Presidents, 29 August 1963

³⁹ MNA: Transmittal Files. 20-11-5F (Box 52349) *Remuneration of Chiefs*, Memo to the Prime Minister from Secretary to the PM, 6 April 1963. In 1963, a twenty five per cent reduction in the rate of remuneration paid to all chiefs and sub-chiefs was officially undertaken. In Rumphi and Mzimba Districts, this meant that the salary of N.A. M’mbelwa, who administered a population of some 36,000 people, was reduced from £490 p.a. to £368. Chief Chikulamayembe (with a population of 13,950) moved from £408 to £306, and the salary of Themba Katumbi, Timothy Chawinga, whose population amounted at this stage to a relatively sparse 5,890, was reduced from £324 to £243

⁴⁰ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 447

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 455

⁴² MNA: Transmittal Files, 20-11-5F (52349), Opening Presidential Address, MCP Convention, Blantyre Oct 12-15 1966

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 455

⁴⁵ MNA: Transmittal files, 9-16-5R (box 52343), Address to Chiefs Southern Region by Kamuzu Banda, April 30 1966

⁴⁶ Interview MD with Kawonga. He describes Chawinga and Banda’s relationship as like “best friends, they loved each other”.

⁴⁷ MNA: Transmittal Files. 20-11-5F (52349), Taken from the opening address by the President at the MCP Convention Oct 1966

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ MNA: Transmittal Files. 9-16-5R (52343), DC to Secretary to the President, 11 May 1967, requesting an increase in remuneration

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Chief Katumbi to DC Rumpi, 9 May 1967. In all likelihood this letter was written with the help of John Mwangonde, the headmaster at the school and Chawinga’s ever-present aide in such matters. See Interview with John Mwangonde, the son of the teacher.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See, MNA: Transmittal Files. 18-1-9F (17744), *MCP District Development Programme Committee 1959-67*, DC Rumpi to District Secretary MCP Rumpi, 19 February 1968. Regarding the tour of the district by the two MPs, District Chairman MCP and DC

⁵³ MNA: Transmittal Files. 9-16-5R (52343), notes in folio before written memo to H.E about Katumbi’s salary increase, 17 June 1967

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Memo to H.E, 17 June 1967

⁵⁵ MNA: Transmittal Files. 9-15-8F (52304), DC Rumpi (L.M Gondwe) to Secretary to President and Cabinet, Zomba 4 December 1967, Re: Review of Chiefs’ Salaries by H.E the President

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Response from Governor to the note written to him by the DC Rumpi, 3rd January 1968

⁵⁷ When Walter Gondwe, the current Themba Chikulamayembe, became Acting N.A. following the semi-retirement of his aged and infirm father new questions arose about whether or not the salary of £336 could be comfortably shared between them. Two years after his assumption of the role and soon after Katumbi’s salary had been augmented new demands were made from Bolero (Bolero is the headquarters of the Chikulamayembe Chieftainship; it is situated halfway between Rumphi Boma and Katowo, on the Nkamanga Plain) but the request for an overall salary increase on these new grounds was also dismissed.

⁵⁸ MNA: Transmittal Files, 9-16-5R (box 52343) Extract from, The Chiefs Act 1967: “The President may, by order, withdraw recognition accorded to any person under this Act if he is satisfied that – ceased to be entitled under customary law; the person has lost support of majority of people in his area; or if it is necessary “in the interests of peace, order and good government”

⁵⁹ MNA: Transmittal Files, 9-12-11R (52320) *Seminars for Chiefs*, Report from Chiefs Seminar III, Opening Address, 5 October 1970

⁶⁰ MNA: Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (box 17744) *Extract from Rumpi Development Plan 1963-65*, 'Social Development', May 1963

⁶¹ There was a National Development Plan 1962-65; this regional plan is based on strategies developed within the national plan.

⁶² MNA: Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (box 17744), 'Social Development', May 1963. Banda's ambition was to provide, with the help of a Development Planning Committee: better diet and better nutrition for all people; a surplus of marketable crops for sale outside the areas in which they were produced so that all people working on the land will be able to have a steady increasing income; and furthermore that exportable surpluses would serve to strengthen the national economy as a whole.

⁶³ At the start of 1963 exportable agricultural produce brought in approximately £1 per year per family, and that mainly from the sale of parchment coffee, the plan if successfully completed was aiming on getting families to bring in £10 per year by the end of 1965.

⁶⁴ MNA: Transmittal Files, 15-7-8R (Box 27006) *Department of Agriculture Annual Report Northern Region, 1964-70*, Northern Region Annual Report 1964/65

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* The FMB was to take a role in reducing the popularity of certain crops – finger millet being one of them, with the popularity of beer creating a considerable local market for this – it was hoped that the removal of this particular marketing service by the FMB might reduce some of the acreage planted and consequent soil erosion associated with the crop; would work with cooperative societies acting as buying agents, some being particularly successful organising the work well so that produce moved quickly and efficiently.

⁶⁶ S. Thomas, 'Economic Developments in Malawi since independence', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2:1 (1975), 36

⁶⁷ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 391

⁶⁸ MNA: Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (17744), *District Development Committee Course for Rumpi and Chitipa Districts*, 27th-28th September 1966

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ MNA: Transmittal Files, 6-5-3F (Box 35447) *MCP Convention 1966*, Speech of R. J. Dewar, Permanent Secretary for Natural Resources to the Malawi Congress Party Annual Convention 1966

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ MNA: Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744), 27-28 September 1966

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ MNA: Transmittal Files, 6-5-3F (35447) *MCP Convention 1966*, Speech of R. J. Dewar

⁷⁶ MNA: Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (17744), 27-28 September 1966. The Fertiliser Campaign of 1966 set out to increase the amount sold to increase from 6000 to 10,000 tons; in order to achieve this sulphate of ammonia was to be available through all FMB markets and mobile markets at the subsidised prices with discounts for any 5 ton lots (from 12/6d per 100lb bag to 11/3d per bag).

⁷⁷ MNA: Transmittal Files, 6-5-3F (35447) *MCP Convention 1966*, Speech made by D. R. Katengeza, General Manager of the Farmers' Marketing Board to the Malawi Congress Party Convention 1966

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ MNA: Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (17744), Government Agent Rumpi to Secretary for Development and Planning, Re: Zomba Tour of Rumpi District Development Committee, 4 November 1966

⁸⁰ Thomas, 'Economic Developments', 49

⁸¹ McCracken, *A Political History*, 425

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 390

⁸⁴ MNA: Transmittal Files. 17-15-3R (Box 41262) *Crop yield estimates 1959-70*, Speech by Gwanda Chakuamba MP, Minister of Agriculture, August 1969

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, The DDC was required to consider the list of prospective Achikumbe submitted by Agricultural field staff and give their agreement before the lists were passed on for approval. This attempt to create a kulak class was similar in many ways to the master farmer policy of the late colonial period. In the event the policy only lasted until 1972, but the philosophy of the movement continued well into the 1970s as large scale projects and farmers were privileged over the average farmer.

⁸⁶ MNA: Transmittal Files. 15-7-8R (Box 27005) *Annual Report of Department of Agriculture. Part I Agricultural Extension and Training Department Annual Report 1970*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, There was a huge push for the establishment of rural training centres whose numbers went from none in 1965 to 50 just 5 years later, training 33,088 men and 16,822 women in 1970.

⁸⁸ A. Mkandawire, *The Hewe Malawi Young Pioneers Base*, Chancellor College History Seminar paper, 1973/74

⁸⁹ Mkandawire, *The Hewe Malawi Young Pioneers Base*

⁹⁰ Interview MD with Robert Peter Bongololo Chawinga

⁹¹ Interview MD with Jakob Chawinga

⁹² MNA, Transmittal Files, 3-12-4F (9564), July 1962. What is important to reiterate, as has been done throughout the previous chapters, is that whilst Hewe was maintained as a governable unit, under one main chiefly authority, it contained within it a wide variety of opinions and practices. For example, whilst the areas of Zolokere and Khutamaji were regularly praised for their initiation of and participation in communal self-help activities in the years just before Independence, the people in the neighbouring area of Monga – no less than a couple of kilometres apart – were far less willing to do such work “for nothing”, as an example about the lack of cooperation over the construction of a borehole illustrates. When they were told that they would need to cooperate and provide labour for the task in hand they demonstrated great reluctance, showing themselves to be rather more interested in the most suitable sighting of it. This lack of assistance, concluded the DC, required a timely intervention by Chief Katumbi.

⁹³ Communal working parties were a relatively new concept very much endorsed and promoted by MCP bureaucracy

⁹⁴ Whilst we have limited sources on Hewe, Gregson’s anthropological study on agricultural labour amongst the Tumbuka of the Henga Valley in 1967-1968, a place similar in social organisation, political structure and farming practice, can give some sense of how the MCP increasing embroiled themselves in the work patterns of the farmers

⁹⁵ R. Gregson, ‘Work, exchange and leadership: the mobilization of agricultural labor among the Tumbuka of the Henga Valley’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Columbia, 1969)

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 123

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 124-5

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 125

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 124

¹⁰¹ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744); MCP, Letter about Chidikiki From Lura Branch MCP about Sub-Chief Mwalweni and MCP policies, 15 February 1968

¹⁰² McCracken, *A History*, 271

¹⁰³ Power, *Political Culture*, 199

¹⁰⁴ Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, Nyasaland Protectorate, 12 July 1963, quoted in R. Rotberg, ed., *Hero of the Nation, Chipembere of Malawi: An Autobiography*, (Blantyre, 2002), 405

¹⁰⁵ Power, *Political Culture*, 199

¹⁰⁶ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (17744), MCP, Letter from Godfrey Mfunne (PO Box Kaduku FP School) to the Government Agent, 11 Sept 1965

¹⁰⁷ MNA, Transmittal Files, 9-12-11R (Box 52320), *Seminars for Chiefs*. The chiefs also raised the point about chiefs’ staff structure of salaries being too low “in comparison with their counterparts in the service of the Traditional Courts. They think that this impairs the morale of their staff at the expense of efficiency and the Chiefs feel that a review of the structure of their staff’s salaries needs to be considered by Government so that it can compare favourably with that of their colleagues in the Traditional Courts”

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744), MCP, DC Rumpi to District Secretary MCP Rumpi, 19 February 1968. Regarding the tour of the district by two M.Ps, the MCP District Chairman and the DC.

¹¹⁰ Mwalweni is a sub-NA in Rumphu district

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, folio 172, Letter about Chidikiki From Lura Branch MCP about Sub-Chief Mwalweni and MCP policies, 15 February 1968

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter from DC Rumpi to District Secretary MCP Rumpi, 19 February, 1968. Re: tour of the district by the two MPs, District Chairman MCP and DC

¹¹⁵ Gregson, ‘Work’, 126

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744), *District Development Programme Committee 1959-67*, Chief Katumbi to all chiefs in Hewe, cc to DC, Chairman MCP, MCP chairman in Hewe, Area Chairman of the Malawi Youth League 19 February 1967

¹¹⁹ Of course these are the ones we know about as they are in the archive. If he was open about these, then who knows the other things which were being said that were not written about, but that Tembo and the MYP leadership were recording themselves.

¹²⁰ MNA, 17-15-3R (41262): *Crop yield estimates 1959-70*, letter from Chief Katumbi to all chiefs regarding Self Help Schemes; cc DC Rumpi, DMCP Chairman, Matupi Mkandawire M.P of Rumpi, 28 Nov 1968

¹²¹ MNA, Transmittal Files. 18-1-9F (Box 17744) *MCP*, Area Chairman A.A.K Munthali to D. Chairman MCP Rumpi (cc. DC, Chief Katumbi, All MCP branches in Hewe, Sub Chief Zolokere. Regarding the Hewe Area Conference)

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, MCP District H.Q to Areal Chairman MCP Hewe, 30th May 1968

¹²⁴ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744) *District Development Programme Committee 1959-67*, DC Rumpi to Mr Jim Ngwira Katowo Local Court, 14 April 1967

¹²⁵ Thomas, 'Economic', 48

¹²⁶ J. Kydd and R. Christiansen, 'Structural change in Malawi since independence: Consequences of a development strategy based on large-scale agriculture', *World Development* 10:5 (1982), 368

¹²⁷ Kydd and Christiansen 'Structural change', 368

¹²⁸ Thomas, 'Economic', 49

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ The one which would have the most significant impact on everyday life in rural communities would have to be the Customary Land (Adjudication and Development) Bill. Its emphasis was the improvement of agricultural production, legislating as it did for "an area to be properly planned and laid out for better agriculture" whilst not taking away the right to enjoy land usage free from rents. (see MNA: Transmittal Files, 9-16-5R (box 52343) *Local Government: Future of Chiefs and Native Authorities*, Notes on the Customary Land Bill, S. R. Simpson, 7 November 1966)

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Government Agent Rumpi to Secretary to PM, Re: Salary of sub-chief Mwankunikila

¹³² See, D. Kerr and J. Mapanje, 'Academic Freedom and the University of Malawi', in *African Studies Review*, 45:2 (2002); this hegemony also involved getting rid of younger more radical ministers, Banda assuming direct control of army and police, and the development of clandestine surveillance. This was done through the MYP, army intelligence and special branch, none of whom knew what the other was doing; each tried to out-maneuver the others to gain Banda's favour.

¹³³ Bond, 'Politics', 87

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ This has been discussed in previous chapters. The geographical position of Hewe enabled people to "escape" across the border during the Ngoni raids, as they did during the State of Emergency. Equally it is depicted as problematic as 'thieves' were able to come and go much more easily.

¹³⁶ Though it is unclear what happened to the hunting rights he had achieved during colonial rule he was certainly more reliant on government hunters in the postcolonial period.

¹³⁷ Villages were split as Lumpa leaders ordered their members to establish separate villages by moving out of villages where they lived alongside UNIP's members.

¹³⁸ Interview MD with Norman Chawinga; Interview MD with Edson Chilemba, Village Headman Nchuka, 19 February 2009

¹³⁹ MNA, Transmittal files, 9-16-5R (52343) *Chiefs Rumphi*, Government Agent Rumpi to Secretary of PM Zomba, 22 September 1964

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Feeding of Refugees from N.Rhodesia by Chief Katumbi, 3 November 1964. In fact he actually claimed £48 but he had forgotten to include the expenses for the last person.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Government Agent Rumpi to Secretary of PM Zomba, 22nd September 1964

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Interview MD with Nyachavula and Mgugweta Nyirenda, Jomboli Village, 15 May 2009. Nyachavula spoke of how she had fled at that time from Zambia and stayed in Mowa; the Themba was asking men from Hewe to marry them.

¹⁴⁶ MNA, Transmittal files, 9-16-5R (Box 52343), letter from Government Agent, Rumpi to Secretary of PM, Zomba, 22 September 1964

¹⁴⁷ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744) *Malawi Congress Party*, Letter from Chief Katumbi to District Secretary MCP and Officer in Charge of Chitipa Young Pioneers, 29 March 1965

¹⁴⁸ MNA, Transmittal Files. 9-15-8F (82304), *Malawi/Zambia Boundary*, Confidential comments, Meeting held at Fort Jameson, 9 May 1966

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* After a meeting about the border held at Fort Jameson in May 1966 the Zambian contingent urged that anything tolerated under Federation should be drastically amended. Indeed in Federal times no border demarcation had been necessary, so the logic behind using federal documents to police movement was quite incongruous and now that this period was over, remarked one Zambian official, there was now all the more “reason to press for the opposite”. The border passes and identity certificates issued by Malawi District Labour offices would begin to be viewed with suspicion, with the Zambian Under Secretary for Home Affairs, Chipwaya, concluding that these documents were now no longer able to fulfil the conditions required by the Zambian Immigration Ordinance coming as they did from regional offices rather than the central immigration department. Moreover, “he also objected to the fact that this certificate [was] issued by local Labour offices and feared the implication that it might be presented in an attempt to obtain employment”.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Power, *Political Culture*, 199

¹⁵⁴ Zambia National Archives (hereafter ZNA), EP 2/2/8, *Tours Chama District 1967-70*: August 1970

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ MNA, Transmittal Files. 9-15-8F (82304), Record of meeting held at Fort Jameson, Monday 9 May 1966

¹⁵⁹ See McCracken’s discussion about Flax Musopole in particular in J. McCracken, ‘The Ambiguities of Nationalism: Flax Musopole and the Northern Factor in Malawian Politics, c. 1956-1966’, *African Affairs*, 28:1 (2002), 67-87

¹⁶⁰ MNA, transmittal files, 18-1-9F (17744), (J.C Nyirongo) League of Malawi Youth, MYP, Chitipa to District Secretary MCP cc, Katumbi, 25 March 1965

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Chief Katumbi to District Secretary MCP, and Officer In Charge Chitipa Young Pioneers, 29 March 1965

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, Katumbi to Government Agent Rumpi, 30 March 1965

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, Katumbi to Government Agent Rumpi, 18 May 1965

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹⁶⁵ A. Mkandawire, *A Survey of Hewe Young Pioneer Training Base*, Chancellor College, History Seminar Paper 1973/74

¹⁶⁶ Mkandawire, *A Survey*; see also MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744), Seminar of Rumpi Graduates held at Rumpi Boma on 5 November 1966 addressed by R.P.K Banda and W.O Kumwenda: Attendees were told the part they had to play in Malawi “by practicing modern Farming methods they have learned at the different bases of Malawi Young Pioneers, in their own gardens. Their work had to inspise (sic) the community in which the (sic) lived”. A few examples of Pioneers who had gone on to achieve this in the District were then listed: Austin Nyasulu: Chairman of League of Malawi Youth, garden of 5 acres, he planted maize, cotton and groundnuts; Wellington Msowoya: opened a coffee plantation where he planted 537 coffee trees; Stephen Chilambo had been encouraged to open cotton garden.

¹⁶⁷ Mkandawire, *A Survey*

¹⁶⁸ This is especially easy to note on account of the contradiction such claims to being agriculturally important were in the light of the national policy on individual farmers, see above.

¹⁶⁹ Mkandawire, *A Survey*

¹⁷⁰ Mkandawire, *A Survey*

¹⁷¹ MNA, Transmittal Files, 18-1-9F (Box 17744), *Malawi Congress Party*, Katumbi to District Chairman Rumpi, 8 Jan 1968. Re: Training Base at Katumbi.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, Katumbi to District Chairman Rumpi, 13 Jan 1968. Subject Training Base MYP.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, Themba Katumbi to The Officer in Charge, Rumpi Police Station, 25 January 1968

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Themba Katumbi to all headmen, 12 February 1968

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, W. C. Phiri, Executive Officer, Office of Regional Minister to District Commissioner Rumpi, 31 May 1968

¹⁷⁶ Interview MD with Austin Mfunne

¹⁷⁷ Interview MD with Daniel Zunda, Group Village Headman Chitunguru, Chitunguru Village, 14 January 2009: “Kamangilira would not accept the MCP party line; he was arrested because he was a man of his words”.

¹⁷⁸ Interview MD with Austin Mfunne; Interview MD with Julius Zgambe, 4 February 2009

¹⁷⁹ MNA, Transmittal Files, 21-20-1R (Box 40339) *Office of the President, Succession to Chieftainship 1972-74*, T. N. Munthali, District Commissioner Rumpi to The Secretary to the President and Cabinet, 14 February 1974. This file discusses to some extent those who stirred up discontent in Hewe, which matches to some extent with the testimony of Austin Mfunne (Interview MD with Austin Mfunne); see also MNA, Transmittal Files, 20-21-5F (52414) *Monthly return of prisoners 1969-75*, details about those who were arrested.

¹⁸⁰ Interview MD with Austin Mfunne

¹⁸¹ J. Mapanje, "Afterword, The Orality of Dictatorship: In Defence of My Country", in H. Englund (ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, (Blantyre, 2002), 181

¹⁸² J. van Donge, "Kamuzu's Legacy: The Democratization of Malawi: Or Searching for the Rules of the Game in African Politics." *African Affairs* 94:375 (1995), 227-257, quoted in Power, *Political Culture*, 194

¹⁸³ Interview MD with Efron Zgambo. He claims that it was Tembo and Gwanda Chakwamba who initiated Chawinga's arrest with the help of the MYP; Interview MD with Dixon Kachalie, Village Headman Khutamaji, Khutamaji Village, 5th February 2009: it was his impression that the arrest was manipulated by Tembo and not Kamuzu

¹⁸⁴ Interview MD with Norman Chawinga

¹⁸⁵ Interview MD with Efron Zgambo: "After his arrest meetings were arranged at night between some other certain chiefs in Hewe (there were 9 of them including Khutamaji Kachalie) and they were arrested by the police and the MYP. When he was arrested a message was sent by the government to say, you must choose another chief, and they did, it was Dukamayere (II).

¹⁸⁶ Interview MD with Joseph Munthali, Chisimuka, 11 January 2009

¹⁸⁷ Interview MD with Julius Zgambe, 4 February 2009

¹⁸⁸ Interview MD with Robert Peter Bongololo Chawinga

¹⁸⁹ Interview MD with Dambazuka Nundwe: "In those days chiefs used to like women a lot and Kamangilira really loved Donalise Ng'ambi. She moved with him wherever he went". Interview MD with Roosevelt Mwangonde; Chawinga's philandering ways were also talked about by Mwangonde.

¹⁹⁰ Amongst them Jomboli Nyirenda (interview with MD, 10 May 2009) and the granddaughter of Themba Dukamayere I, NyaHarawa who spoke of him having "slept with many people; he even wanted to sleep with me when my grandfather was not here" (Interview with MD, 13 February 2009).

¹⁹¹ Various anonymous informants

¹⁹² McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 370

¹⁹³ Interview MD with John Mwangonde

¹⁹⁴ These stories are familiar in discussions around chieftaincy in Hewe. But whilst tensions arose and people were warned about being poisoned they continued to maintain the relationships with the ones with whom they were fighting. Mwangonde is said to have continued seeing and talking with Timothy Chawinga after this time but "they were both not the same anymore" (see Interviews, MD with John Mwangonde).

¹⁹⁵ Interview MD with Dambazuka Nundwe

¹⁹⁶ From this point on it was made law that nobody could use the words 'Malawi', 'National', 'Ngwazi', 'Kamuzu', and 'Banda' without first consulting the President..

¹⁹⁷ He had already been taken to task about his radio broadcast where he apparently defended the use of Chitumbuka as an important national language in response to the policy that Chichewa be the only vernacular medium of instruction in schools and in broadcasting; this he apparently talked about for 2 hours.

¹⁹⁸ Forster, 'Culture, Nationalism', 478

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 491

²⁰⁰ McCracken, *A Political History*, 379

²⁰¹ Kayuni and Tambulasi, 'The Malawi 1964', 413

²⁰² A. C. Ross, "Some reflections on the Malawi 'Cabinet Crisis', 1964-65' in *Religion in Malawi*, 7 (1997), 7 quoted in Kayuni and Tambulasi, 'The Malawi 1964', 413

²⁰³ Quoted in Kayuni and Tambulasi, 'The Malawi 1964', 414

²⁰⁴ Power and Kalinga, "Chiefs and Politics", 18

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 19

²⁰⁷ McCracken, *A Political History*, 382

²⁰⁸ "The ex-Themba Katumbi's history of life from Colonial to Malawi Government": Letter of complaint prepared by Timothy Chawinga asking for compensation, found in the possession of his son Norman Chawinga.

Epilogue

Timothy Chawinga was released on 20 July 1982 and returned to Hewe after having spent nine years in detention; he was never given the full explanation for why he had been incarcerated but in the end he counted as only one among many thousands of Tumbuka clerks, teachers and businessmen who fell foul of the Malawi Congress Party line during the 1970s. Others from Hewe included Charles Munthali, Dickson Mzumara and Joseph Munthali, all of whom had been working as young civil servants during this time. Mzumara remembers seeing Timothy Chawinga in prison:

"I used to see him spend time with other detained chiefs. He also used to spend long hours, day after day, with one old man from Kasungu who was reported to us to have been a senior advisor to Chief Mwase of Kasungu. I cannot remember his name now, but even now I see them walking and talking in the yard in front of our detention cells".¹

Whilst he was away from his family his wife NyaBota, who had reputedly suffered badly from recurring headaches passed away,² and most of his possessions were removed or destroyed; this included, according to his letter of complaint, his Landover and Fiat cars, house furniture, grinding mill and all his livestock. Chawinga was virtually blind by this point after suffering serious ill health in prison yet, with the pugilistic spirit which had been such a trademark during his time as Themba Katumbi he took up a new task: to fight for compensation from the Malawi Congress Party government for the fruit trees, the chickens, the goats and the maize mill that he had lost during this time.³

Whilst he was welcomed back with great celebrations his return to Hewe was not without its problems for the chiefs who had followed in his footsteps. This was largely to do with the significant legacy which his leadership had left, and also on account of the fact that previous to this no former chief had still been alive whilst another was serving on the throne. The power that Chawinga had to command respect from the people of Hewe did not diminish and neither did the stories about his spiritual strength; whilst he did not openly contest the chieftaincy his influence within the royal family was considered significant up until his death in 1997.

The narratives about Chawinga's death are full of rumour and suspicion that are difficult to substantiate, yet they remain useful to consider and put in to context, both in order to make sense of his considerable influence in colonial Hewe, and as a way of broadening out the discussion about chiefly authority, land and power in post-colonial Malawi. Given the sensitive nature of this subject and the relevance it has in relation to contemporary disputes in Hewe the accusation so often made, that Chawinga was poisoned by an infamous witch in the area, and a relative of his at that, must be handled with some care.

It is no secret, however, that when Peter Kamaiza Chawinga, the first Themba selected from the Chikungweya royal clan since the early colonial period, took the throne in 1995 he was uncomfortable with Timothy's influence in the area; more specifically he was afraid of his long reputed magical strength. So much was this so that he refused to use the same office that Timothy had occupied or utilise various other chiefly items – including the ceremonial Mulindafwa stone that he had "recovered" from the mountain Kapiri Themba to use in the first of many annual chiefs ceremonies in 1954. The stories in Hewe suggest that Kamaiza arranged for Kamangilira to be killed. Since the erstwhile chief's strength as "a witchcraft" himself was so

significant it is said that the only person who could successfully kill Chawinga would be Mbugweta Nyirenda an infamous witch in Hewe and the son of his the chiefs cousin Mzelemeka Nyirenda, the man who had helped to ritually “prepare” Timothy Chawinga over fifty years before as he had stepped into his role as Themba Katumbi.

The tensions and battles between the five royal clans of the Katumbi chieftainship have deepened, especially since Kamaiza was deposed in 2004. A severe split in allegiance occurred whilst he was chief due to his allegedly inappropriate and illegal behaviour, and whilst some headmen remained loyal to him others flatly refused to work under his leadership prompting his appointment of new ones. In 2009 Thompson Nundwe, then Senior Group Village Headman Chipofya a key negotiator in the anti-Kamaiza Chiefs’ Council, died suddenly. Raising the alarm about the behaviour of these new pro-Kamaiza headmen, his wife NyaKalua the local primary school teacher pointed the finger for her husband’s “murder” squarely at them; all of those selected by Kamaiza were “witchcrafts, magicians and ruffians”, she said, “they had drawn up a list of maybe thirty people who they wanted dead, and Chipofya’s name was second only to the proposed chief-in-waiting Kelvin Chawinga”.⁴

One of the legacies of this tragic set of circumstances is that there are now over 300 village headmen acting under Themba Katumbi in contrast to just twelve that existed at the start of Timothy Chawinga’s reign in 1942. There are constant disputes over who has the legitimate right to manage land disputes, deliver development projects and claim the resources which government has set aside for traditional authorities with the outcome being that few NGOs now want to work there.

At the root of this conflict there are certainly a number of historical factors; not least the confusing rotation of chieftainship between what remains an unclear structure of royal clan inheritance (see appendices 2 and 3), something which can be put down to the royal family’s dispersal just before colonial rule followed by its rigid institutionalisation during it. Perhaps more important, however, is the process whereby chiefly authority has become increasingly territorialized. Timothy Chawinga was one of the first chiefs to benefit from this and over time, as access to land and natural resources have become more finite in the Northern Province, the stakes in chiefs contesting their legitimate claims to these territories have increased.

In the Tumbuka areas of Northern Malawi the historical contestation for superiority between Chikulamayembe and Katumbi has now swung back in favour of the former. Whilst the Katumbi chiefs have been battling their own internal crises of legitimacy within the royal family itself, the current Chikulamayembe – on the throne now for over 40 years – has risen to become paramount chief of the other Tumbuka chieftaincies; insistent since 2007 on being known by the local praise name, *Themba ma la Themba* (chief of chiefs), a status held up by the Malawian government. The contemporary positioning of Chief Chikulamayembe and his use of custom within regional and national politics brings the discussion about the still pertinent use of these historical traditions – a key instrument of Timothy Chawinga’s leadership – up to date. As the introduction outlined, the contests for cultural hegemony have brought increasingly rich rewards and, though couched in the language of local politics and regional supremacy, the financial and political benefits are now much more significant, and the drawbacks of losing position much more serious.

Since the Malawian constitution has recently recognised chiefs as an important ingredient for achieving a successful democratic culture they have become powerful local partners to the state.⁵ With “tradition” on their side they are able to claim the ownership of villages and thus are in a strong “legitimate” position to manage access to this land;⁶ all development and other government related projects must now be discussed with them. In a

2006 interview Chief Chikulamayembe summarised this position to Chinsinga by saying, “all people whether councilors, MPs or even the President are subjects of traditional leaders in which case we have to be primary institutions of leadership at local level otherwise nothing can happen on our land”⁷.

In this statement there are echoes of Timothy Chawinga’s proclamation barked at intruders onto his territory: “you cannot kill me, this is my land!”; and after the end of Kamuzu Banda’s one-party state, the decentralisation policies of multiparty Malawi likewise seem to echo the discourse of indirect rule with their return to the discourse of tradition. This re-emergence of the usefulness of traditional leaders is held up in twenty first century Malawi as “the panacea for the achievement of decentralized, pluralistic democratic cultures and the strengthening of civil society”.⁸ Just as indirect rule was devised as a way of broadcasting colonial power through respected local leaders, so the decentralisation of governance in the postcolonial setting uses these same figures to further their agenda.

Democratic processes continue to hold little truck in these contexts where livelihoods remain precarious and elections are therefore open to bribery and abuse. Chinsinga’s study of the dynamics of political space in these settings since 1994 clearly demonstrates that politicians across the whole spectrum have “strategically turned to customary authorities in order to entrench and consolidate their legitimacy”; especially in areas like the north where electoral success for politicians is hard fought and hard won.⁹ Chiefs are courted with the promise of new houses and offices; they have been put on the government pay roll once more; deposed chiefs have been reinstated; and new positions of seniority at the local level have been introduced. It is in this context that Themba Peter Kamaiza Chawinga thrived. Bakili Muluzi, the first democratically elected president of Malawi, enabled this political culture to thrive with his emphasis on crony-capitalism, but the seeds of this system of governance were planted long before.

The strong position that chiefs can now find themselves in has much to do with the territorialising processes which had begun under colonialism, spatial changes which have been the main focus of this thesis; most especially the fact that they have become gatekeepers to “the land”. This is significant for the local people, as this requires them to maintain good relationships with chiefs, as it is for politicians who use them as brokers in the electoral process. Through them they can deliver agricultural inputs – such as fertiliser – which can persuade farmers to vote in their favour.

In the lively neo-liberal debates around “indigenous rights”, customary law has been reappraised as “a local regulatory system” where “customary norms form the lived reality whereas state law and state courts are remote, strange, expensive and difficult to access”.¹⁰ This decentralisation has benefitted both chiefs and the postcolonial governments who want to distance themselves from the grievances of rural communities whose votes they now need. Several scholars writing on chieftaincy in West Africa today have highlighted this problematic coalition of interests and warn that leaving the redefinition of customary land tenure systems to these actors alone is hugely problematic. “The strengthening of chiefly control over land”, has created the perfect conditions for exploiting of the peasantry, according to Amanor. Whilst extending chiefs ability to “disempower individual cultivators of land, while promoting the customary as an egalitarian system which stands for the interests of the community”, it simultaneously “absolves the state from blame for expropriating the rural poor”.¹¹ Sara Berry concurs; serious conflicts over land and authority can take place, she posits, “without bringing down the government”, whilst “chiefs wield power, but don’t stand for election [...] placing them beyond meaningful public accountability”.¹²

The jury remains out, as it does for the case of colonial native authorities, on the extent to which the state is responsible for enabling the accumulation of chiefly authority. Amanor seems convinced that without support and recognition from the state “chiefs would have little power to enforce their versions of customary tenure”,¹³ but this surely does not tell the whole story. Vaughan’s study of Yoruba chieftaincy in Nigeria offers a slightly more nuanced understanding of the enduring importance, and influence, of chieftaincy. By emphasising the relevance not of peoples “loyalty to tradition” but rather individual chiefs ability to integrate “into regional alliances of power and privilege”, it is possible to move away from, whilst not excluding, the significance of the state’s ambitions.¹⁴ This is a good place to conclude since it is a statement which reflects one of the main objectives of this thesis: to see beyond both the state and the rather static characterisations of colonial chiefs in order to better grasp the mechanisms behind the production of chiefly authority.

What Timothy Chawinga grasped during the period of indirect rule was that this “relationship” with the land, mediated as it is by an economy of legitimacy, is not straightforward; it is contested and framed by changes in policy and changes in socio-economic conditions. One had to fight to establish oneself as a legitimate chief over a given territory during colonial rule, and one has to fight to establish oneself now.

*“The struggle over political space [...] entails an interplay between social and power relations shaped by locally situated knowledge and practices in which the contestants often take recourse to planes of discourse, influence, legitimacy and authority in which they have visibly and symbolically significant comparative advantage. This therefore implies that there are multiple political space(s) in which the very same actors might interact but in which they may invoke widely different registers of discourse, influence, legitimacy and authority befitting the context or encounter at a particular point in time”.*¹⁵

Controlling “the entry” to these spaces is critical to who accesses resources and decisions, argues Chinsinga; the same was as true in colonial Malawi as it is now.

Timothy Chawinga took the initiative to demarcate two areas of Hewe as nature reserves during the 1950s; the Vwaza Marsh in the southern part of his territory and an area which would become part of the Nyika national park in the north. He did this at a time when chiefs’ powers over land were diminishing in the local setting, but the opportunities for well positioned individuals were perhaps increasing. Whilst in Hewe there was enough land for everyone to comfortably farm the processes of titling and “conservation” nevertheless provided the chief with an opportunity too good to miss. By taking a leading role in securing these areas as controlled zones and negotiating himself a new role as honorary game warden over them, he was able to establish new spaces of potential exploitation.

This understanding of his knife-edge position is in keeping with Carswell’s observations of colonial chiefs in Kigezi who seeing their power over land squeezed began to try and “redefine their authority by re-creating this authority through their position as clan elders” or as the managers of “new” land with ambiguous access rights as swamps were reclaimed for use by the community.¹⁶ As land ownership became more individualized and “progressive farmers” were encouraged she highlights that prominent people, “often chiefs or others with strong connections to the colonial state” were in fact able “to strengthen their control over the land”.¹⁷ Chawinga’s efforts in helping to create these national parks have not been forgotten. As population increases and access to land becomes problematic new lines of debate have been opened up around the legitimacy of ownership over these precious fertile areas demonstrating that nothing is set in stone. The former chief has become the subject of much criticism over

these issues in the last few years and his “selfishness” in establishing these places the focal point of much debate.

Maintaining a distinct territory in Hewe was the key to Chawinga’s success. It became a historically bound, socially coherent unit only because, using colonial frameworks as well as local resources, he made it to be so. Make no mistake being an effective and successful native authority chief at this time required a number of registers of power; one had to rest on more than “invented tradition” and a colonial salary, but equally a historically rooted strong local legitimacy was not enough to guarantee longevity. An indication of Chawinga’s recognition of these multiple spaces of authority and the various perspectives that might be required to enter them is perhaps reflected in the names which he gave to his children. Mtemi Churchill was born in 1942, at the start of Chawinga’s reign and in the middle of the Second World War, his first name means ‘chief’ in Nkonde, the language of Chief Kyungu a powerful historical ally to the Katumbis. Mulindafwa, a son, was born in the early 1950s and his name refers to the grandfather of all Katumbi chiefs, it was at this time that Chawinga was planning the inauguration of what would become an annual celebration of the chiefs’ arrival in Hewe; a key performance of his power. His last child, born at the end of the 1950s, was sanguinely named Malawi in anticipation for what was to happen next; she is now known as Mary.¹⁸

¹ Personal communication with Dickson Mzumara, 25 March 2011

² Interview, MD with Nyakhunga and Charles Munthali, Blantyre, 6 August 2009

³ “The ex-Themba Katumbi’s history”: Letter of complaint prepared by Timothy Chawinga

⁴ Informal discussion MD with NyaKalua, Chipofya Village, 7 May 2009

⁵ J. Obario, *Legal Pluralism and Peace Process: The Ambiguous Re-emergence of Customary Law in Mozambique*. (2002), 4, c.f. Chinsinga, ‘The interface’, 256

⁶ Chinsinga, ‘The interface’, 271

⁷ Interview with Chief Chikulamayembe in Rumphu DA, 2006, c.f. *Ibid.*, 264

⁸ Obario, *Legal Pluralism*, 4 in *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 267

¹⁰ J. Ubink, ‘Land, chiefs and custom in peri-urban Ghana: traditional governance in an environment of legal and institutional pluralism’, in W. Zips and M. Weilenmann (eds.) *The Governance of Legal Pluralism: Empirical Studies from Africa and Beyond*, (Wien and Berlin, 2011)

¹¹ K. Amanor, ‘The changing face of customary land tenure’ in J.M. Ubink and K.S. Amanor (eds.) *Contesting Land and Custom in Ghana: State, Chief and the Citizen*, (Leiden, 2008), 78

¹² S. Berry, ‘Ancestral Property: Land, Politics and ‘the deeds of the ancestors’ in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire’ in J.M. Ubink and K.S. Amanor (eds.) *Contesting Land and Custom in Ghana: State, Chief and the Citizen*, (Leiden, 2008), 50

¹³ Amanor, ‘The Changing face’, 78

¹⁴ O. Vaughan, *Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics, 1890s – 1990s* (Rochester, 2000), 216

¹⁵ Chinsinga, ‘The Interface’, 262

¹⁶ Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 133-135

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 116

¹⁸ Interview with Jomboli Nyirenda, 10 May 2009

Appendix I.

The History of Katumbi Mulowoka

Contributed by Chief Katumbi, Timothy Chawinga to L. H. Vail, November 1970

The history is built up by those who heard stories from their grandfathers. They say that Katumbi and his family emerged from Egypt in the seventeenth century. When they left Egypt they settled in Uganda at a forgotten place. At that place they learned much about the use of ivory and rhinoceros horns, and also he uses of lions and leopards skins. He, Katumbi and his party, collected many of them and seeing that they were saleable to the Arabs he moved from place to place to collect more.

When he saw that those things were not available in the local places there so he moved to Tanzania and he settled at Unyamwezi on the Northern Side of Lake Tanzania. At that place he stayed for several years because he was able to collect plenty of ivory and useful skins which he sold to the Arabs in Mombasa and Zanzibar.

The traffic between him and the Arabs was successful so he became wealthy in cloth, beads, salts and shells. With those things he could get more ivory and skins from adjacent districts and he took them to the Arabs for exchange with cloth, beads, salt and shells.

When his trade dwindled, he left Unyenyeembe to look for other places where he could find those ivory and skins in plenty. On his journey he passed through Mbeya and he turned eastwards until he reached Ukinga on the Eastern side of Lake Malawi. There he found a prominent man called Mapunda who received him kindly. This was about 1750. Chief Katumbi the leader of the party was then named Themba Mulindafwa, and his children whose names are remembered were Chimbavi the elder, and Kasalika the younger, and also Yapura the daughter who afterwards was called NyasMwathecha.

Chipofya and Chikulamayembe his nephews were also with him and also Mwattanga and Mwamlowe his close relatives were also with him. At that place his trade was reorganised and as usual it was carried on successfully with the Arabs.

He settled there for more than thirty years at Mapunda; while carrying on his trade, he also learned a new hobby and that was to make canoes and to sail on the lake. By knowing all these, Katumbi Mlowoka therefore decided to cross the lake and see the other side where he could probably find ivory, rhinoceros horns and useful skins. So he ordered his party to pack and they set sail, that was about 1770.

He and his party landed at Chirumba on the lakeshore, a thought came to him if he could settle there permanently. This thought died quickly when he met Kyungu at Vuwa who informed him that the source of wealth was on the hills and on the other side of the hills meaning the Henga and Nkamanga-Hewe areas. He told the story of the news to his party and they were ordered to prepare for the hilly expedition.

The carriers packed up. The heaviest things were tridents of iron which were used as hangers for their robes. The iron tridents had branching arms each terminating in a leaf blade, spear blade, a spoon, a hoe, a knife, an axe and the like. One of the tridents was found near Katowo headquarters in 1914 and another one was found at Rumpi. It is difficult to trace where they got a supply of these tridents.

THE ADVENTURE

This party acceded to his decision to set up. Leaving Chirumba, they passed through Fulirwa and Kackuru, on the Nyika Plateau, and then from there they came to Mwaphoka. Leaving Mwaphoka they passed through many places in the Henga Valley with short halts at places where they could find things to collect. At length they reached Rumpi, the place at which they made their trading centre. Katumbi at Rumpi became a monopolist and his activities were soon known by the Tumbuka.

While carrying his trade far and wide among the Tumbuka, he easily became an acquaintance of all the people in Tumbuka land. North of Rukuru region he married many wives, the daughters of Tumbuka. The children he bore are now the heads of many families in Tumbuka country.

After several years at Rumpi, the party consisting of Katumbi, the leader, Chikulamayembe and Chipofya, agreed together to explore the countries in the Southern side of Rukuru and he decided to leave Chipofya at the centre. So only the two, Katumbi and Chikulamayembe, left. They travelled widely with short stops at places where they found useful things for trade. These when they collected they posted back to the centre. They did so while proceeding with their expedition until at last they reached Dwangwa in Kasungu's area where they stopped. They travelled without any show of force to the people they passed through.

When Katumbi decided to stop to return to Rumpi, he shot an arrow on a baobab tree, leaving it sticking there. This was the sign of his stoppage or to mark the place where he stopped as a record of his journey. Having acquainted himself with the situations, he, on his journey, collected all his goods he left at every halt and when he reached the Themba hill, Chikulamayembe asked Katumbi to be permitted to return to the trading centre Rumpi; so he left with his carriers.

When Chikulamayembe reached the centre he helped Chipofya to look after the goods and to send carriers to the coast to sell them.

Katumbi with a small party consisting of his sons and some friends settled at Themba hill for a while. He afterwards left to survey the Ruangwa Valley where he met Tumbuka and Senga people, but most of them were aliens in the region. From there he collected plenty of rhinoceros horns, ivory, lion and leopard skins. For his good nature he was liked by all people there. Some of the goods he was given as gifts.

Later he reached Sitwe where he settled for several years and there he was able to visit Kajumba and Chikpata. After exploring the remaining parts of the Ruangwa region, he travelled eastwardly until he climbed the (unreadable) hills and descended to Mwenechifungwe. There he remembered his trading station Rumpi. But as he was by then exhausted, he could not return to see how the world was getting on so he exercised patience.

From Mwenechifungwe he came to Chigoma or Chipera in Nthalire, there he settled. While at Chigoma, he was able to communicate with his friend Kyungu. He sent to his gift of goods. As his sons were acquainted with hunting, he had a big stock of ivory, rhinoceros, and skins. That why Kyungu could get gifts regularly. At Chigoma or Chipera in Nthalire he died a private death because he was advanced in years.

At that time Chipofya and Chikulamayembe began to be worried about the whereabouts of their uncle. Soon after their discussion Chipofya set out and he came to Hewe where he settled for a while.

During his stay in Hewe, he tried hard to learn from the people if they had heard rumours about a man called Mulindafwa. The notable people he met in Hewe were Zolokere, Nchuka and Kanyerere who very soon after his arrival became his friends. All these denied that they had heard about Mulindafwa. Later or sooner he happened to collect news about him from the Arabs who passed through Hewe from Chipera or Chigoma in Nthalire area. These Arabs told Chipofya that Mulindafwa was dead. But his children Chimbavi, Kasalika and Yapatula were still living.

So Chipofya rose quickly with his party and met on his journey to Chigoma and he really found his cousins.

To his cousins Chipofya greatly expressed his condolence and he ordered them to pack up and leave Chigoma for Hewe. Before they left Chipofya took a whip and he went to the grave with it. He whipped on the grave which traditionally meant that he was calling the spirit to accompany the family. When they reached Hewe Chipofya buried the whip at Vuvu stream.

This was the beginning of the chiefs' graveyard at Vuvu stream and a centre of worshipping the spirits of the Balowoka.

When this was done, they started to build a village at Makongowa stream and later they moved to Katowo where they built 'phondo' which means Headquarters. It must be mentioned here that on their arrival, Chipofya reported to Zolokere. Zolokere came to greet them and he gave them gifts of ivory. Katumbi Chimbavi also gave them cloth, beads and shells. So they respected him greatly.

While at Makongowa, Chimbavi was given the title of Themba Katumbi in place of his father. He successfully won the friendship of the inhabitants, then he had a chance to introduce to the head men the

use of a black cloth on the headman's head. He advised that a headman in order to win the respect of his subordinated must tie a black cloth on his head, which is the sign of a crown and so he tied black cloths to the heads of all the headmen, namely Zolokere, Kanyerere, Nchuka and Mwavitintiza. This introduction has been carried on and on until now.

Very soon he came into contact with Mulomboji of Mwanda Hill and he ordained him a high priest of religion in Hewe to conduct special services on Mwanda to pray for rain during droughts. But intercessional services during times when disease and deaths over took the village or area were conducted by assistant priests, at the chiefs' graveyard at Vuvu streams. They carried either a white dove or a white fowl and a calabash of beer to offer them to the spirits. There are so many points in their religion, but they are not necessary as they do not convey prime facts in the modern history. There were ceremonies for girls at the time of puberty, but there is no mention about circumcision.

After many years of stay at Phondo, they moved to Mawuwu near Katowo. There they built a strong stockade for fear of invaders. There they stayed peacefully for many years but he continued to trade with people in Hewe and in all the adjacent tribes. Very soon he won the title of paramount in Rumpi.

INVADERS IN HEWE

Chepela, a Mubemba warrior of Zambia, came and invaded the Mawuwu stockade about 1845 at the time of Themba Katumbi Chivwalenkwende. They captured the stockade and the Themba with his people were forced to leave and they found refuge at Mwanda where his priest was living (Mlomboji). The goods in the stockade were taken, and Chepera made the stockade a camp. The Themba at Mwanda had no cloth, so he was forced to use Mkenda (bark cloth) and he called himself Chivwalenkwende.

The trouble with Chepela increased and no Chivwalenkwende sent message to Kyungu, Muyombe and Chikulamayembe to come to his aid. Then Chipela was driven out and his women were all captured. Most of those women were married by the Tumbuka in Nkhamanga and they are now the grandmothers of many families in Nkhamanga.

In order to deal with the fierce Chepela at Mawuwu, the forces from Kyungu and Chikulamayembe heated their arrows on a blacksmith's fire and they shot them on the roofs of all the houses in the stockade and as a result all the houses there were set on fire. Chepela was then forced to run away. So Katumbi Chivwalenkwende died, Katumbi Chikunguweya was given the title. The Ngoni invaders found Katumbi Chikunguweya.

THE NGONI INVADERS

The Ngoni came to Hewe in about 1855 at the time of Katumbi Chikunguweya. When the rumours of their coming came to their ears, the Themba and his people found refuge in Zolokere's stockade in Khata (a place in Vwaza Marsh covered with reeds). Some went to hide at (unreadable) near Yembe Hill - near Songwe. When the trouble grew Katumbi and Zolokere surrendered and they became the subjects of the Ngoni.

Most of the families were taken to Ngoni land to live there more or less as captives until they broke away from the Ngoni rule in 1881. Those who ran to Karonga remained there and they crowned their own Themba Katumbi Chibumira. Afterwards they crowned Themba Katumbi Chingwayo whom they sent to rule in Hewe in place of Chikunguweya who died.

When Katumbi Chingwayo died Katumbi Mutengacaró was crowned Themba. This Themba went to Sitwe to rule there because he wanted to oppose Kambombo who was threatening to invade the country.

Now in Hewe Mwanedayekha Chipili was crowned Themba Katumbi to rule in Hewe. In Sitwe Katumbi Limilizamba was crowned Themba, after the death of Mutengacharo.

In Hewe when Katumbi Chipili died Katumbi Yiteta was crowned Themba Katumbi. After his death Katumbi Dukamayere was crowned Themba in Hewe and in Sitwe they crowned Themba Chitanda. In Hewe after Themba Dukamayere they had Themba Chifwange and now they have Themba Kamangilira.

A Note on the Government boundary which has divided the Nkamanga and the Ruangwa Regions;

This boundary follows the Chiri Watershed on the southern side of the river. It continues to follow the water shed until it takes the Rukuru water shed.

In October 1943 I Katumbi wrote a letter to the Colonial Office pleading that the boundary should be disbanded because it has lessened my authority and has broken the ties of relationship with the Tumbuka of Ruangwa Region. The Colonial Office in reply pointed out that it was difficult to break that boundary because a large sum of money was spent on making it. I Katumbi pressed on and at last decided to stop.

The name of the chiefs in Hewe and their successors:

1. Katumbi Mulindafwa in the seventeenth century
2. Katumbi Chimbavi in 1780 nearly
3. Katumbi Chivwalankwende about 1845
4. Katumbi Chikungweya about 1860
5. Katumbi Chibumila in Kalonga about 1870
6. Katumbi Chingwayo about 1880
7. Katumbi Mtengacharo about 1890
8. Katumbi Chipili in 1902
9. Katumbi Limilizamba in 1906
10. Katumbi Yiteta in 1922
11. Katumbi Dukamayere in 1932
12. Katumbi Chitanda in 1940
13. Katumbi Chifwembe in 1942
14. Katumbi Chitanje in 1943
15. Katumbi Kamangilira in 1943

Chipofya Family

1. Chipofya Tuduru, 1700-1780
2. Chipofya Chitala 1882 –
3. Chipofya Chiluvya 1888
4. Chipofya Chiduni who went to Mwazisi and settled at Matelo where the Ngoni invaded him
5. Chipofya Bingiza
6. Chipofya Kasendamafwa
7. Chipofya Sindamalongo
8. Chipofya Mujanike
9. Chipofya Paulosi
10. Chipofya Johane

JUDICATURE

When there was a case all the councillors of the Themba met to hear the case at their gathering place. When the accused did not admit that he was guilty, the final decision was to give him an ordeal to prove the truth of his denial. All criminal cases were judged in a different way. The sentence was given according to the nature of the case to burn the criminal or to put him to death in any way or else to make him pay a man or woman to take the place of the one he killed.

CELEBRATION AND HOLIDAYS

Katumbi and his people in Hewe have fixed a day to celebrate the time of their arrival in Hewe. They have taken a stone from Themba hill which they have kept in a small box in the Themba's house. The day of their celebration is the first day of September. They say that they entered Hewe at the time of bush fires. As bush fires are in September, so they confirm that they entered Hewe in September. On this day all the

councillors are dressed in traditional attire. But the Chief and Chipofya put on traditional robes. All the people dance traditional dances. The time comes to exhibit the stone; then a procession of about half a mile marches to the place where the stone is exhibited. The Chief and Chipofya climb the anthill (in place of Themba hill). This is what is done to commemorate their arrival in Hewe. Themba Katumbi and Chipofya stand on an anthill, he then takes the stone which they say it was Mulindafwa's seat at Themba hill. He exhibits it to the crowd.

THE COMING OF MISSIONARIES

Katumbi and Zolokere heard rumours about Dr. Laws' arrival at Livingstonia. It is not known if he visited Hewe or not. It is only mentioned that in 1903 Mr. James Henderson visited Hewe to collect young men to train as teachers to open schools in Hewe, but he collected only two lads namely Jamo Chawinga, the son of Katumbi Mtengacharo and Yoram Chawinga the grand son of Katumbi Chivwalenkwende. The first school was opened at Chitunguru village in 1906. The teacher was Jamo. Later it was moved to Katowo headquarters.

THE COMING OF BOMA

Mr Wales came to Karonga in 1903 and in 1904 he visited Katumbi Chipili in Hewe. He told the Themba and the Headmen about his work as a government agent, that his people must pay three shillings as tax to the Boma. This was the beginning of the Boma at Karonga.

It is said that there were many Europeans who visited Hewe before the instruction of the Ngoni but there is no sufficient information concerning them.

Appendix II.

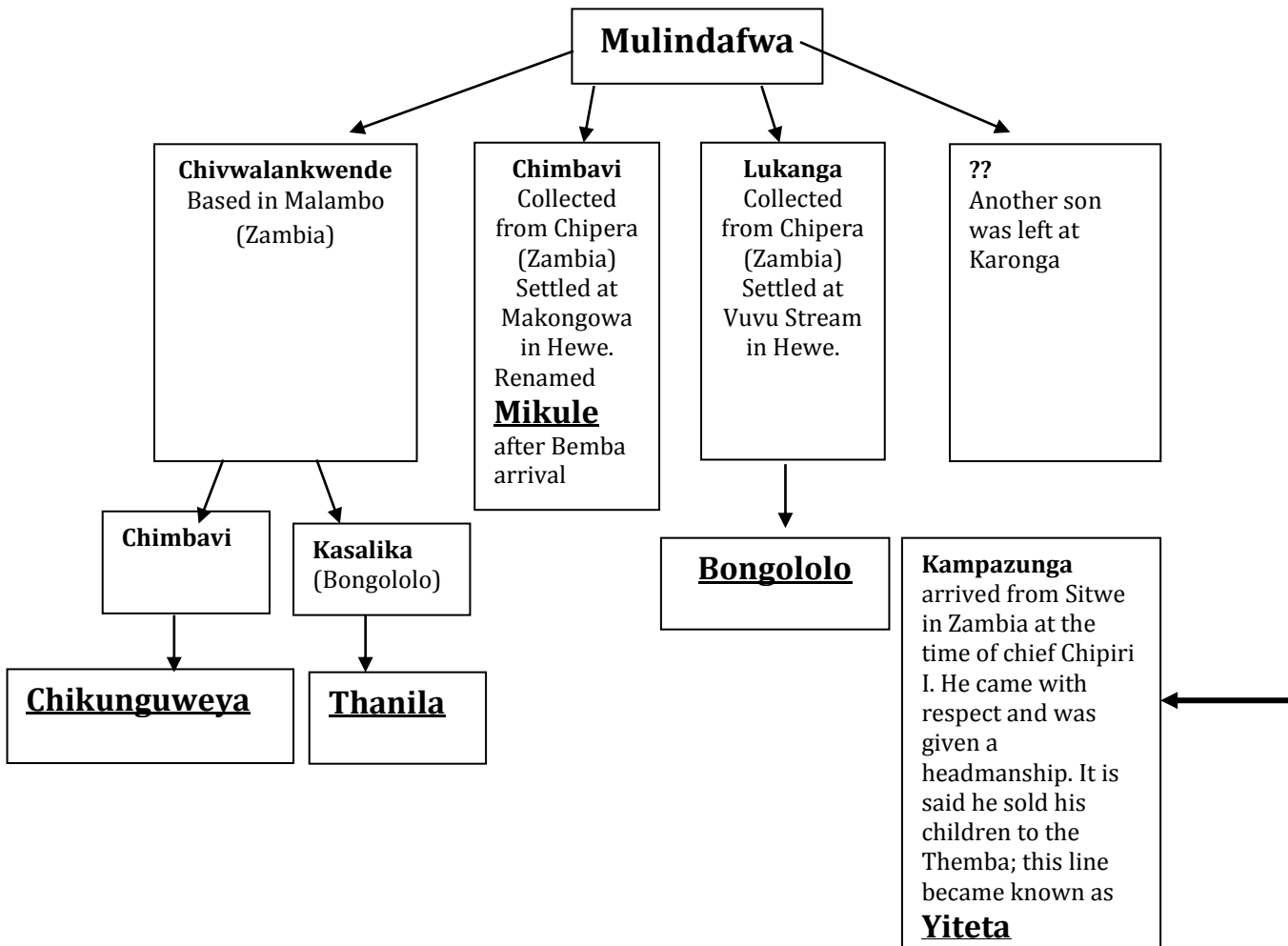
Genealogy of Katumbi Chiefs

Name of Katumbi	Name (if known)	Clan	Seat of power	Year crowned
Mulindafwa			Chipera (Zambia)	
Chimbavi		<i>Mikule</i>	Hewe	
Chivwalankhwende		<i>Chikunguweya</i>	Hewe	
Chikunguweya		<i>Chikunguweya</i>	Hewe	
Chibumila			Karonga	
Chimugwayu Kukhata			Hewe	
Mtengacharo			Sitwe (Zambia)	
Chipiri I		<i>Thanila</i>	Hewe	
Limilazamba			Sitwe (Zambia)	
Yiteta		<i>Yiteta</i>	Hewe	
Dukamayere I	Zakeyo Chawinga	<i>Bongololo</i>	Hewe	1932
Chitanda		<i>Bongololo</i>	Sitwe (Zambia)	
Vwende	Isaac Chawinga	<i>Chikunguweya</i>	Hewe	1940
Chitanje	Jakobe Chawinga		Sitwe (Zambia)	1941
Kamangilira	Timothy Chawinga	<i>Mikule</i>	Hewe	1942
Dukamayere II	Matati Chawinga	<i>Bongololo</i>	Hewe	1974
Mbiriyawaka	Rowland Chawinga	<i>Bongololo</i>	Hewe	1987
Chankhwakhwa	Peter 'Kamaiza' Chawinga	<i>Chikunguweya</i>	Hewe	1995
Chipiri II	Kelvin Chawinga	<i>Thanila</i>	Hewe	2008

As written by the Chiefs Council of Katumbi Chipiri II (Kelvin Chawinga); prepared for the 2009 Mulindafwa Ceremony by Martin "Chibumila" Chawinga, in consultation with other councillors. Additional information about the clans of different Katumbi chiefs, and their Christian names, collected by Mary Davies during fieldwork in 2009.

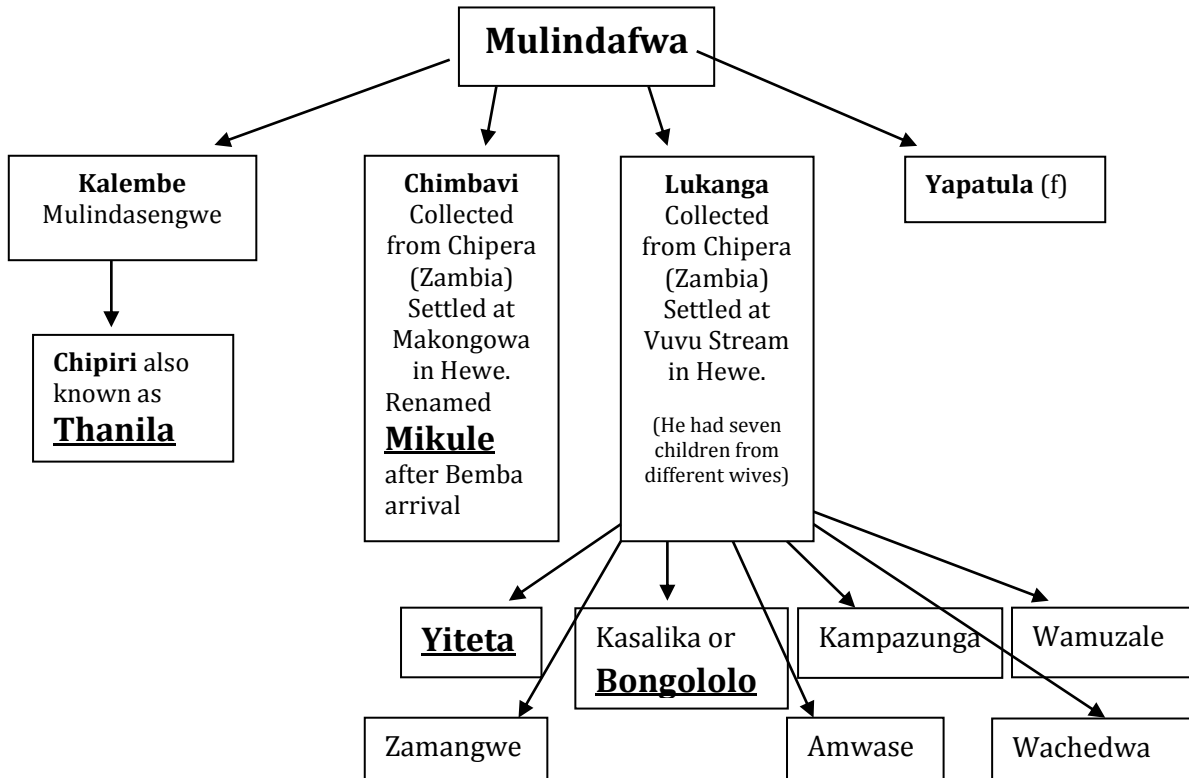
Appendix III.

Chawinga royal family tree, as described by Peter “Bongololo” Chawinga, (Interview with MD, 10 September 2009)



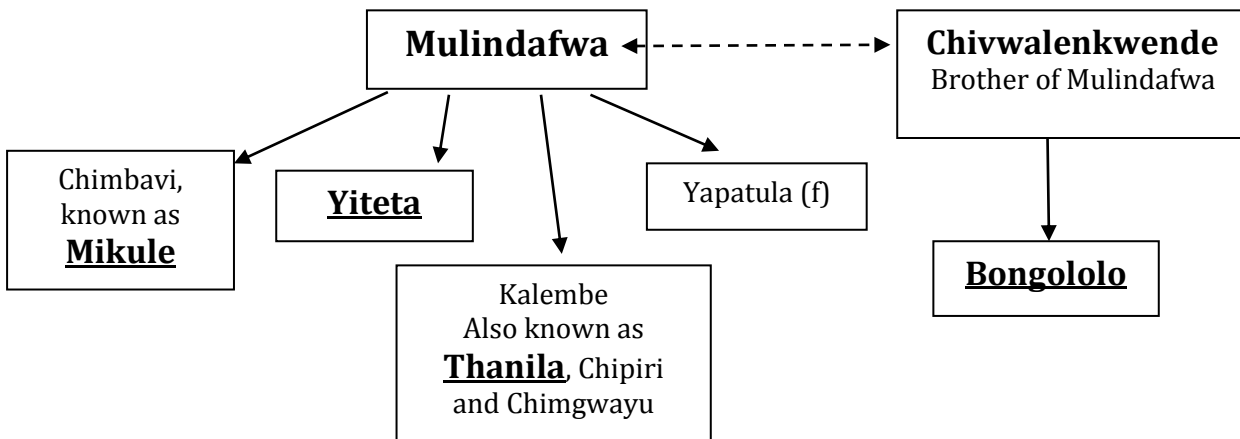
The clans considered to be present day Royalty are indicated in bold and underlined.

Chawinga royal family tree, as described by Patstone Chawinga, Group Village Headman Yiteta, (Interview with MD, 17 September 2009)



The clans considered to be present day Royalty are indicated in bold and underlined.

Chawinga royal family tree, as described by Efram Chawinga, Senior Group Village Headman Chilikunthazi, (Interview with MD, 18 September 2009)



The clans considered to be present day Royalty are indicated in bold and underlined.

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Summary

Discussions about colonial chieftaincy in Africa have tended to focus upon the ways in which indirect rule structured and framed traditional authority; for the majority of contemporary historians of British colonialism the question has been to what extent Lugard's blueprint for effective native administration, *The Dual Mandate*, invented, shaped, and restructured *political and social identity*. Whilst acknowledging the importance of this neo-traditional perspective which focuses much on how colonial frameworks *ethnicised* and *tribalised* African society, this thesis argues that indirect rule was as much a *spatialising* process as it was a tribalising one. Colonial tools of territoriality mapped politics in geographically bounded ways and as a result associating power with place began to assume new importance in the ways African leadership was defined, and given authority. By further exploring the spatial context of traditional power in colonial Malawi through the example of a chief named Timothy Chawinga, this thesis reveals new conclusions about the nature of chieftainship there.

The accounts of Chawinga, and other peripheral chiefs like him, have been sifted out of the story of Malawi as they do not fit with the questions which historians have typically tended to address of this period and with the political geography that has been favoured for contextualizing chiefly behaviour. This favoured political geography has rather drawn out examples from places where "things happen": where significant cash crop schemes were implemented and radically transformed farmers lives for the better and worse; where co-operative movements politicised the local population; where conservation measures were harshly and violently enforced; and where chiefs rebelled and vocally took part in the nationalist struggles. Concentrating on highly visible areas, which were economically or politically important to the state leads into making wrong assumptions about the character of the colonial state and the patterns of state intervention in colonial Malawi. The forms of rule and governance were multiple and reflected the dynamic association between administrative institutions and other institutional practices found in the everyday associational life of people.

In Africanist historiography the spatial turn has enabled scholars to move away from these political narratives of the nation-state towards discussions about the ways in which a wide range of actors contest different kinds of political, economic, social and religious space for their own gain. Surprisingly, however, the spatial turn is only beginning to have an impact on the way in which the production of chiefly authority in Africa is understood. The notion of *locality* is used as the central conceptual tool in this thesis, since it can accommodate both the historicity and spatial specificity of chieftainship. It is argued that the locality of chieftainship is the most crucial factor in determining colonial chiefly identity; in other words, the geographical boundaries drawn up in the context of indirect rule offered chiefs opportunities to exploit the material and spiritual resources within these bounded spaces in new, sometimes highly productive, ways which were crucial for increasing both their customary authority and personal fortune. For as much as indirect rule enabled the reach of the Native Authority, through customary law, to gain authority over social domains like the household, it also gave many chiefs the opportunity to assert a territoriality over space, over land, and over fixed natural resources as they never had done before.

By re-locating the historiographical gaze upon "regional" and "local" landscapes it is argued that historians can better catalogue the diversity in these opportunities to act territorially. Timothy Chawinga – the main protagonist of this story – became the fifteenth Chief Katumbi in 1942. He successfully ruled over a modest territory of about 200 square miles in north-western Colonial Malawi for a period of 31 years, growing in regional prowess

throughout this time. This thesis presents evidence of how Chawinga employed the strategy of *territoriality* – the control of people and things by controlling an area – to do this. In order to understand the mechanics of this strategy it is argued that Chawinga should not be considered simply as “a Native Authority”; one cannot get a sense of how varied chiefs’ position and roles were if this reductive perspective is taken. Furthermore, whilst national policy changes in Native Administration did have some bearing on what was expected from chiefs such as Chawinga, it did not create the same framework of opportunity for everyone; especially since local conditions had the effect of producing different expressions of indirect rule chief. This thesis uses the example of Timothy Chawinga, therefore, to unsettle assumptions about the determining role of the state in the production of local authority.

The thesis moves away from treating Timothy Chawinga’s Hewe, the place of his chieftainship, as merely a conventional geographical space. Rather, Hewe represented a set of relations between things as well as a space which contained and dissimulated social relations. At the height of his powers, this thesis argues, Chawinga contributed significantly to the production of Hewe as a locality, by constructing as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of a “situated community” for his own purposes; primarily the extraction of wealth and power. The result being that in between 1942-1974 *the space* in which Timothy Chawinga practiced his authority was used by him as a powerful “tool of thought and of action”, not simply as a place in which he could perform his administrative, and formal, role as Native Authority. Whilst he did take advantage of the position which the state enabled to use tradition and custom, perhaps most important was his ability to build his authority through a material exploitation of his land; this had not been a main pathway to power in the past. Prior to the period of European expansion claims to having a territorial identity hardly figured in the political imagination of African leaders who mainly grew their wealth and power by capturing people rather than gaining control over territory. Chawinga and his contemporaries were using their new “customary rights” to contest borders and boundaries in ways their forebears had never considered useful and to allocate access to land to “natives” whilst denying it to “strangers”; the ramifications of which continue to unfold today.

As well as reconsidering the spatial context of chiefly authority, this thesis calls for our analyses of local authority to be placed within a deeper historical time-scale. Chieftainships are constructed and contested within the context of rural histories and regional contestations, *as well as* through the eyes of the State. Timothy Chawinga inherited a title which was loaded with certain meanings but was an economic and political leadership that was flexible in its inheritance structures and rested upon an authority that could be easily co-opted by charismatic individuals. Less marked by centralised ritual authorities and more by mobility, interdependence and varied involvement in trading networks, the *Balowoka* chiefly tradition - of which the Katumbi chieftaincy is a part - had been highly adaptable even in the pre-colonial period. Wielding only a loose grasp on ritual authority, as they did and still do, the fight to grab a more formal authority is therefore a constant feature of the chiefly political landscape of these Tumbuka communities. With each chiefly succession, authority has needed to be reasserted and maintained. Since these chieftainships had been established with new royal lineages which lacked significant depth, there was plenty of room for new interpretations of authority and more spaces in which individual people with power could challenge the tradition.

As authority became more easily sanctioned through performance than heritable privilege, at least by the beginning of the twentieth century, personality politics thrived amongst the *Balowoka* chieftainships. Bearing this milieu in mind, alongside a new spatial analysis, this thesis presents the emergence of Timothy Chawinga as a regionally significant, charismatic

personality whose concern lay primarily with the protection of his position within the regional political and moral economy. His personal vision did not in fact extend much beyond the pursuit and production of authority within his own and his immediately neighbouring territories. That he was able to pursue this agenda, and develop a strong territorial claim over the Hewe Valley, as a geography and a place of social relations, has much to do with the limited geographical and economic significance which Hewe had, if we “see” it as the colonial state might have. Hewe’s position in the eyes of the administration inevitably enabled this regional locality to emerge as it did, and as such enabled Timothy Chawinga to practice a territoriality that served, in various ways, to augment his historically specific customary authority.

Making statements as to what extent colonial chiefs were “invented” or “authentic”, “traditionalists” or “modernisers” as much of the historiography is wont to do is considered ineffectual. This thesis argues that questions should be posed which bring no structural, temporal or spatial assumptions. A more apt line of questioning revolves around the nature and use of authority rather than upon the structures in which authority supposedly operates: *Where do chiefs in the colonial period draw their authority from? What does this authority enable them to do? And what are the stakes involved in having it?* When Chawinga was arrested in 1974 by the Malawi Congress Party government of Hastings Banda, the matrix of factors that had shaped his particular brand of territorial politics had shifted. The colonial framework of indirect rule had enabled Chawinga to grow in personal wealth and power, but at independence he was confronted with new challenges which transformed his opportunities to accumulate authority through territoriality. Hewe was transformed from peripheral “border zone”, with little attention being paid to it, to that of crucial “border post”, a key check point in the war against Hastings Banda’s political rivals and unwelcome neighbours. The tension which these changes produced between this chief and the post-colonial state ultimately led to his downfall.

Samenvatting

Discussies over koloniale chiefs in Afrika hebben zich voornamelijk gericht op de manieren waarop indirect bestuur traditionele autoriteit heeft gestructureerd en omkaderd; voor het merendeel van de contemporaine historici van het Britse kolonialisme was het de vraag tot op welke hoogte Lugard's blauwdruk voor effectieve inheemse administratie, *The Dual Mandate, politieke en sociale identiteit* heeft uitgevonden, gevormd en geherstructureerd. Terwijl het belang van dit neo-koloniale perspectief, dat zich erg richt op hoe koloniale raamwerken de Afrikaanse samenleving *geetniseerd en getribaliseerd* hebben, erkend wordt, beargumenteert dit proefschrift dat indirect bestuur evenzeer een *ruimtelijk* als een tribaliserend proces was. Koloniale hulpmiddelen van territorialiteit schetsten politiek in geografisch begrensde manieren en als gevolg hiervan begon de associatie tussen macht en plaats een nieuw belang in te nemen in de manieren waarop Afrikaans leiderschap gedefinieerd werd en autoriteit kreeg. Door verder in te gaan op de ruimtelijke context van traditionele macht in koloniaal Malawi, door middel van het voorbeeld van een chief genaamd Timothy Chawinga, komt dit proefschrift tot nieuwe conclusies over de aard van de macht van chiefs aldaar.

De verhalen van Chawinga, en andere perifere chiefs zoals hij, zijn uit het grote verhaal van Malawi geschilderd aangezien zij niet passen bij de vragen waaraan historici typisch aandacht hebben besteed in deze periode en bij de politieke geografie die voorrang heeft gekregen om het gedrag van chiefs te contextualiseren. Deze bevoorrechte politieke geografie heeft liever gebruik gemaakt van voorbeelden uit plaatsen waar "dingen gebeuren": waar invloedrijke markt gewasplannen werden geïmplementeerd die het leven van boeren radicaal hebben getransformeerd, ten goede of ten kwade; waar co-operatieve bewegingen de lokale bevolking gepolitiseerd hebben; waar conservatiemaatregelen met kracht en geweld werden doorgevoerd; en waar chiefs in opstand kwamen en actief deel namen in de nationalistische strijd. Concentreren op hoogst zichtbare gebieden, welke politiek of economisch belangrijk zijn voor de staat, leidt tot verkeerde vooronderstellingen over de aard van de koloniale staat en de patronen van staatsinterventie in koloniaal Malawi. De vormen van bestuur en regering waren pluriform en reflecteerden de dynamische associatie tussen administratieve instituties en andere institutionele praktijken die te vinden waren in het alledaagse associatieve leven van mensen.

In de Afrikanistische historiografie heeft de ruimtelijke wending het voor wetenschappers mogelijk gemaakt om afstand te nemen van politieke narratieven van de natiestaat, om richting discussies te bewegen over de manieren waarop een breed scala aan actoren verschillende vormen van politieke, economische, sociale en religieuze ruimte voor hun eigen belang hebben bevochten. Verrassend genoeg begint de ruimtelijke wending pas net invloed uit te oefenen op de manier waarop de productie van autoriteit van chiefs in Afrika wordt begrepen. De notie van *lokaliteit* wordt gebruikt als het centrale conceptuele hulpmiddel in dit proefschrift, aangezien het ruimte biedt aan zowel de historische dimensies als aan de ruimtelijke specificiteit van het ambt van chiefs. Het wordt beredeneerd dat de lokaliteit van het ambt van chiefs de meest cruciale factor is in het vaststellen van de identiteit van koloniale chiefs; met andere woorden, de geografische grenzen die werden vastgesteld in de context van indirect bestuur boden aan chiefs de mogelijkheid om materiële en spirituele hulpbronnen te exploiteren binnen deze begrensde ruimtes in nieuwe, soms hoogst productieve, manieren, die cruciaal waren om zowel hun traditionele (gewoonterechtelijke) autoriteit te vergroten als om hun persoonlijk lot te verbeteren. Indirect bestuur maakte het mogelijk dat de Native Authority, door middel van gewoonterecht, invloed en autoriteit kreeg over sociale domeinen zoals het

huishouden, maar het gaf ook vele chiefs de mogelijkheid om een territorialiteit over ruimte, over land en over begrensde natuurlijke hulpbronnen, uit te oefenen, zoals zij dit tot dan toe nog nooit hadden kunnen doen.

Door de historiografische blik te verrichten naar “regionale” en “lokale” landschappen wordt het beredeneerd dat historici de diversiteit aan mogelijkheden om territoriaal op te treden beter kunnen vastleggen. Timothy Chawinga – de belangrijkste protagonist van dit verhaal – werd de vijftiende Chief Katumbi in 1942. Hij regeerde succesvol over een bescheiden territorium van ongeveer 200 vierkante mijl in noordwest koloniaal Malawi gedurende een periode van 31 jaar. In deze tijd groeide hij in regionaal aanzien. Dit proefschrift presenteert bewijs van hoe Chawinga de strategie van *territorialiteit* – de controle over mensen en dingen door de controle van een gebied – gebruikte om dit te bewerkstelligen. Om het functioneren van deze strategie te begrijpen wordt het beredeneerd dat Chawinga niet simpelweg gezien zou moeten worden als een “Native Authority”; men kan geen idee krijgen van hoe gevarieerd de positie en rol van chiefs was, als men zo een reductionistisch perspectief neemt. Verder, terwijl veranderingen in nationaal beleid omtrent Native Administration wel hun weerslag hadden op wat verwacht werd van chiefs zoals Chawinga, creëerde dit niet dezelfde mogelijkheden voor iedereen; vooral aangezien lokale omstandigheden verschillende expressies van indirect bestuur produceerden. Dit proefschrift gebruikt het voorbeeld van Timothy Chawinga, daarom, om vooronderstellingen over de determinerende rol van de staat in de productie van lokale autoriteit aan de kaak te stellen.

Dit proefschrift behandelt het Hewe van Timothy Chawinga, de plaats van zijn ambt als chief, niet als een conventionele geografische plaats. Hewe representeerde daarentegen een set van relaties tussen dingen, zowel als een plek die sociale relaties omvatte en verspreidde. Dit proefschrift beredeneert dat Chawinga op het hoogtepunt van zijn macht aanzienlijk heeft bijgedragen aan de productie van Hewe als een lokaliteit, door het gebied te construeren als een structuur van gevoel, een eigenschap van sociaal leven en een ideologie van een “gesitueerde gemeenschap”, voor zijn eigen doeleinden; welke primair de extractie van rijkdom en macht omvatten. Het resultaat was dat tussen 1942-1974 *de ruimte* waarin Timothy Chawinga zijn autoriteit uitoefende door hem werd gebruikt als een machtig “hulpmiddel van gedachte en van actie”, niet simpelweg als een plaats waar hij zijn administratieve en formele rol als Native Authority kon uitvoeren. Terwijl hij wel gebruik maakte van de positie welke de staat hem gaf om traditie en gewoonte te benutten, was het meest belangrijke misschien zijn vermogen om zijn autoriteit op te bouwen door een materiële exploitatie van zijn land; dit was in het verleden nooit een grote machtsbron geweest. Voorafgaand aan de periode van Europese expansie speelden claims tot het hebben van een territoriale identiteit nauwelijks een rol in de politieke verbeeldingen van Afrikaanse leiders, die hun rijkdom en macht voornamelijk vergrootten door mensen te veroveren in plaats van door controle te krijgen over territorium. Chawinga en zijn tijdsgenoten maakten gebruik van hun nieuwe “gewoonterechten” om grenzen te betwisten in manieren die hun voorvaders nooit nuttig hadden geacht en zij deelden toegang tot land uit aan “inheemsen” terwijl zij dit aan “vreemden” ontzegden; de gevolgen hiervan spelen zich vandaag de dag nog steeds af.

Naast het herzien van de ruimtelijke context van de autoriteit van chiefs, vraagt dit proefschrift er ook om dat onze analyses van lokale autoriteit in een diepere historische tijdsframe worden geplaatst. De ambten van chiefs worden geconstrueerd en betwist binnen de context van rurale geschiedenissen en regionale machtsstrijden, *alsmede* door de ogen van de Staat. Timothy Chawinga erfde een titel die vol was van bepaalde betekenissen, maar ook een economisch en politiek leiderschap was dat flexibel was in zijn structuren van erfenis en

gebaseerd was op een autoriteit die gemakkelijk uitgebaat kon worden door charismatische individuen. Minder gemarkeerd door gecentraliseerde rituele autoriteiten en meer door mobiliteit, interdependentie en een gevarieerde inmenging in handelsnetwerken, was de *Balowoka* traditie van chiefs – van welke het Katumbi ambt van chief deel uitmaakt – zelfs in de pre-koloniale periode hoogst flexibel geweest. Omdat zij, zowel in het verleden als vandaag de dag, slechts een losse grip op rituele autoriteit hadden, is het gevecht om een meer formele autoriteit te bemachtigen een constante factor van het politieke landschap van chiefs van deze Tumbuka gemeenschappen geweest. Met elke opvolging van chiefs moest autoriteit opnieuw worden bevestigd en behouden. Aangezien deze ambten van chiefs voortgekomen zijn uit nieuwe koninklijke afstammingslijnen welke geen significante diepte hadden, was er veel ruimte voor nieuwe interpretaties van autoriteit en meer plaats waarin individuen met macht de traditie aan de kaak konden stellen.

Aangezien autoriteit, ten minste aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw, makkelijker gesanctioneerd werd door prestatie dan door erfbare privileges, bloeide persoonlijkheidspolitiek op onder de *Balowoka* chiefs. Door te letten op dit milieu, samen met een nieuwe ruimtelijke analyse, presenteert dit proefschrift de opkomst van Timothy Chawinga als regionaal relevant. Hij was een charismatische persoonlijkheid wiens belang primair lag bij het beschermen van zijn positie binnen de regionale politieke en morele economie. Zijn persoonlijke visie reikte feitelijk niet veel verder dan het behalen en produceren van autoriteit binnen zijn eigen en zijn direct omliggende territoria. Dat hij dit doel kon bereiken en een sterke territoriale claim over de Hewe Vallei kon ontwikkelen, als een geografie plek en een plaats van sociale relaties, heeft te maken met het beperkte geografische en economische belang van Hewe, als wij het “zien” zoals de koloniale staat het gezien zou hebben. Hewe’s positie in de ogen van de overheid maakte het voor deze regionale lokaliteit mogelijk om te verschijnen zoals het deed. Dit maakte het mogelijk voor Timothy Chawinga om een territorialiteit uit te oefenen die in verscheidene manieren diende om zijn historisch specifieke gewoonte autoriteit te vergroten.

Stellingen maken over de graad waarin koloniale chiefs “verzonnen” of “authentiek” waren, “traditioneel” of “moderniserend”, zoals veel van de historiografie doet, wordt ondoeltreffend geacht. Dit proefschrift beargumenteert dat vragen gesteld zouden moeten worden die geen structurele, tijdelijke of ruimtelijke vooronderstellingen met zich meebrengen. Een meer productieve manier van vragen stellen gaat uit van de aard en het gebruik van autoriteit in plaats van van de structuren waarbinnen autoriteit zogenaamd opereert: *Waar halen chiefs in de koloniale periode hun autoriteit vandaan? Waartoe stelt deze autoriteit hen in staat? Wat zijn de gevaren en mogelijkheden van deze autoriteit?* Toen Chawinga gearresteerd werd in 1974 door de regering van de Malawi Congress Party van Hastings Banda veranderde de mix van factoren die zijn specifieke vorm van territoriale politiek tot dan toe had vormgegeven. Het koloniale raamwerk van indirect bestuur had het mogelijk gemaakt voor Chawinga om te groeien in persoonlijke rijkdom en macht, maar bij de onafhankelijkheid werd hij geconfronteerd met nieuwe uitdagingen welke zijn mogelijkheden om autoriteit te accumuleren door territorialiteit getransformeerd werden. Hewe veranderde van perifere “grenszone”, waar weinig aandacht aan geschonken werd, naar een cruciale “grenspost”, een strategische check point in de oorlog tegen de politieke rivalen en ongewenste burens van Hastings Banda. De spanningen die deze veranderingen produceerden tussen de chief en de post-koloniale staat leidden uiteindelijk tot Chawinga’s val.

Biography

Mary Davies was born in Frimley in the United Kingdom (1979). She had her first experience of Africa soon after finishing her A-levels when she went on a gap year travelling around Namibia and Zimbabwe in 1999. After completing a BA in Modern History and Politics from Sheffield University in 2002, Mary went on to study for an MSc in Violence, Conflict and Development at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London from where she graduated in 2004. Whilst living in London she worked as a research assistant for the Royal African Society and as a co-ordinator for St Matthew's Children's Fund, a charity working with vulnerable families in Ethiopia from 2003 to 2005. Her love of history was revived whilst working as a graduate assistant at the British Institute for Eastern Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. She spent a year, from 2005 to 2006, undertaking archival, archaeological and ethnographic research in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania; it was this experience which encouraged her to apply for a Ph.D. position at Leiden University. Since completing her doctoral research, Mary has taught courses at Goldsmiths College, University of London and is currently developing a biographical project which focuses on the experiences of Africans living and working in Britain during the colonial period.