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Colonial Economic Disempowerment and the Responses of the Hlengwe Peasantry of the South East Lowveld of Zimbabwe: 1890-1965

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Abstract

Much has been written on how colonialists economically incapacitated Africans through wresting control of the means of production from them. Some studies have also looked at how various Africans responded to the new order. In the British territory of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) the economic disempowerment of the Africans was through land alienation. However, the areas which have received much coverage on the subject in the country are Matabeleland and Mashonaland on the highveld. Given the economic attractiveness of these two areas to the colonialists and the resistance that the Ndebele and Shona in these areas put up, the overshadowing of peripheral areas such as the S.E. Lowveld, home to the Hlengwe is understandable. However, though the Hlengwe have attracted little more than an occasional passing reference in many studies, they were not spared from the colonial experience, especially the oppression, exploitation and economic disempowerment which other African groups experienced. Therefore, this article is primarily concerned with filling the gap created by the seeming lack of interest in the history of the Hlengwe. Information on Hlengwe colonial history was collected and compiled through oral interviews and a thorough study of archival materials and written sources. The article thus establishes that the loss of land led to the loss of economic independence by the Hlengwe peasantry whose main economic activities were land-based and that this same loss resulted in the Hlengwe people responding in diverse ways to the new colonial order. It goes on to explore the dynamics and variations of the Hlengwe response to colonial rule and exploitation. Most importantly, it establishes that contrary to what the Native Commissioners said, the Hlengwe were a warlike people. The article reveals that as they were integrated more into the orbit of colonial rule and felt its squeeze, they became more aggressive.

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Résumé

Il existe une pluralité de documentations sur la façon dont les colons ont débilité économiquement les Africains en essayant de leur ravir le contrôle sur les moyens de production. Certaines études ont également examiné les différentes façons dont les Africains ont réagi à ce nouvel ordre. Dans le territoire britannique de Rhodésie du Sud (actuel Zimbabwe), la marginalisation économique des Africains s'est faite à travers l'accaparement des terres. Ainsi les zones ayant fait l'objet d'une attention particulière dans le pays sont le Matabeleland et le Mashonaland dans la région du Highveld. Compte tenu de l'attractivité économique de ces deux régions aux yeux des colons et de la résistance que les Ndebele et Shona ont opposée dans ces régions, le peu d'intérêt qu'ont suscité les zones périphériques telles que la région Sud-est du Lowveld (terroir des peuples Hlengwe) est compréhensible. Toutefois, bien que seules quelques études occasionnelles ont fait allusion aux Hlengwe, ils n'ont pas moins été épargnés par l'expérience coloniale, en particulier l'oppression, et la marginalisation économique comme d'autres groupes africains. Par conséquent, cet article vise principalement à combler le vide créé par le manque apparent d'intérêt pour l'histoire des Hlengwe. A travers des entretiens oraux et une étude approfondie des documents d'archives et des sources écrites, des informations ont été collectées et compilées sur l'histoire coloniale des Hlengwe. L'article établit ainsi que la perte des terres a conduit à la perte de l'indépendance économique par la paysannerie Hlengwe dont les principales activités économiques étaient liées au travail de la terre. En effet, cette perte a poussé les peuples Hlengwe à réagir de diverses manières au nouvel ordre colonial. Il va plus loin pour explorer la dynamique et la variété de la réaction des Hlengwe à la domination coloniale et à l'exploitation. Plus important encore, il atteste que, contrairement à l'idée répandue par les Autorités coloniales locales, les Hlengwe étaient un peuple guerrier. L'article révèle que, à mesure qu'ils ont été intégrés dans l'orbite de la domination coloniale et qu'ils en ressentaient la pression, ils se sont montrés plus agressifs.

Introduction

A lot has been written about the colonial land policies and their impact on the indigenous people of Africa. In Zimbabwe, the main works on the subject include R. Palmer's books, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (1977) and *Aspects of Rhodesian Land Policy, 1890-1936*, (1968) and L.H. Gann's paper entitled, 'The Southern Rhodesia Land Apportionment Act 1930: An Essay in Trusteeship', in *The National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland Occasional Papers, No. 1*, June, 1963. One of the major post-independence works is a book by A.V. Moyana entitled, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, 1984. All these scholars look in detail at the colonial land policies of the Southern Rhodesian government and how they impacted on the Africans, with Moyana going a step further to look at how the Africans, especially Chief Rekayi Tangwena's people, responded to the new colonial order.

However, in this article the main focus is on the Hlengwe who are a Zimbabwean minority group in Masvingo Province whose history has often been overshadowed by the history of their Shona-speaking counterparts who are the majority in the province. In these studies the Hlengwe have received or attracted little more than passing reference, yet as a people, they were not spared from the colonial experience especially the oppression and exploitation and economic disempowerment that other African groups experienced. Like all other groups, they also responded to the colonial experience in various ways. To that end, this article analyses the Hlengwe economic disempowerment through loss of land and the subsequent response of the same.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section looks at the Hlengwe economic activities prior to the colonisation of Zimbabwe with a view to proving that so long as the Hlengwe controlled all their land they were economically independent and empowered. The second section looks in detail at how the Hlengwe land was appropriated from 1890 to 1965. The third section looks in depth at the impact of land alienation on Hlengwe economic activities; while the last section looks at how the Hlengwe responded to the loss of land and the consequent economic disempowerment. In this section, I analyse the factors that shaped their responses and the various forms of resistance that were used by different groups and individuals at different times showing the dynamism and diversity in the Hlengwe response to economic disempowerment.

Background Information

The Hlengwe are a Zimbabwean minority ethnic group, which is the dominant population in the South East Lowveld area. They are mostly found in the Chiredzi district but also occupy parts of the Mwenezi and Zaka districts in the S.E. Lowveld of Zimbabwe. They are also commonly referred to as the 'Shangani', yet that is a distortion of the truth for the Hlengwe were not originally Shangani people. Chiredzi District was part of the Chibi/Chivi, Ndanga and Nuanetsi/Mwenezi districts. It was created in 1966 after major changes to administrative area boundaries in the Masvingo Province.

Prior to colonization and subsequent land apportionment of Zimbabwe, the Hlengwe were a riverine people, mainly found along the Mutirikwe, Runde, Save, Mwenezi, Bezi, Mukwasini, and Chiredzi rivers. Some were found mostly around the larger hills such as Bendezi, Mateke and Chivumburu where rainfall was slightly higher (Bannerman 1981:9). It is therefore evident they chose better-watered areas because the S.E. Lowveld is predominantly a semi-arid area that experiences very hot temperatures throughout the year with notable exceptions in the winter season. It was this settlement pattern

that caused the early colonial administrators to argue that the Hlengwe country was largely empty at the time they arrived (NAZ L2/2/12/2, J.C.J. Cooper, Notes on a Tour with Mr R. Walsh). This belief contributed immensely to the formulation of policies that resulted in the Hlengwe losing large tracts of land. However, it should be pointed out that as far as the Hlengwe country was concerned, no large interstices of unoccupied land existed between territories of the various Hlengwe chiefs (Mason 1964:54).

On the eve of the Pioneer Column's occupation of Mashonaland in 1890, Hlengwe country was divided among a number of chiefs and sub chiefs, who included Sengwe, Gezani, Tsovani, Chisa, Masivamele, Ngwenyeni, Chilonga, Gudo, Mpapa, Xitanga and Furumela. All had their clearly marked boundaries. That being the case, by the time the whites occupied Zimbabwe in 1890, there were no areas that were unclaimed or unoccupied in the Hlengweni country. The fact that some areas were sparsely populated did not mean that they were not important to the Hlengwe nor did it imply that they did not want to use them. All their land was economically significant to them so losing it to the colonialists economically disempowered them economically. In this article, disempowerment means the economic incapacitation of the peasants through dispossessing them of their main means of production, 'the land', and denying them access to it.

Pre-colonial Economic Activities of the Hlengwe

There is ample evidence to justify the fact that before colonial domination, the Hlengwe were independently increasing their capacity to extract or eke out a living from their natural environment. Bannerman identified about five branches of production among the Hlengwe namely gathering, hunting, fishing, agriculture and trade (Bannerman 1981:14-23). However, rearing of livestock, salt production, pottery and basketry were equally important. All these activities were disrupted by the subsequent loss of land to the colonizers.

The S.E. Lowveld of Zimbabwe lies in Zimbabwe's agricultural region V. It is predominantly a very hot area with temperatures ranging from 22 to 30 degrees Celsius, but at times reaching to extremes of about 40 degrees Celsius. It usually receives extremely low rainfall rarely reaching 500 mm per annum (Boast 1961:236; Michie *et al.* 1981:90). In this region, drought is more the norm than an exception, and is a vital factor in determining human activity. Thus in such an environment the above-mentioned economic activities were very important since they were complementary.

Given the prevalence of drought that occurred on an average of three in every four years, gathering became a very important branch of production especially in the lean years (Bannerman 1981:14). This was an activity that

required vast expanses of land, thus making every piece of land that the Hlengwe owned very important to them. Both men and women engaged in this activity and it secured a wide variety of products for them (T. Makondo, interview, 23/2/91). Their environment yielded a great deal of important nutrition in the form of wild fruits, vegetables and insects. The forest products included *mauyu* (baobab fruit), *makwakwa* (wild oranges), fruits of the *Strychnos Madagascariensis* tree, and fruits of the *nkanyi* (*sclerocarya Caffra*) tree. Honey, grasshoppers and two types of edible caterpillars, *macimbi* and *magandari* were no less important. *Kwangwali* palm or ilala palm (*hyphaene natalansis*) was collected to make a popular alcoholic beverage called *njemani* (NAZ, NVC2/1/1, NC Chibi's report, December 1913; NAZ, N9/1/14, NC Chibi annual report, 1911; Mapindhani and Rupangwana, interview 17/02/91).

Gathering became more important during the droughts. *Makwakwa* or *wild oranges* were very important in the Hlengwe diet during droughts (NAZ, NVC 2/1/1 NC Chibi, report, Dec 1913). The seeds were fire-dried and eaten or pounded into a tasty powder. During droughts, bulbous roots of a plant that the locals call *gwangwata* were an important source of food. The *gwangwata* grows on the riverbanks. The stem was used to make mats and the roots were dried and ground into a powder used to make porridge (Malalani, interview, 21/2/91). The tiny seeds of the *gwangwata* were also boiled and eaten but at times they were ground to a fine powder, which was also used to make porridge (Kanuka, interview, 26/02/91).

The Hlengwe also lived off the river as much as they lived off the veld. Fishing was one of their most important economic activities as it supplemented their diet. The rivers of the S.E. Lowveld and the numerous streams were rich in fish and even contained fish such as the tarpon and the occasional small shark which were found in the Marumbini area (Wright 1972:26, 40). However, most of the best fishing areas were closed to the Hlengwe by the creation of the Gonarezhou National Park and other land categories designated European areas.

Hunting formed a major branch of production and consumed much of the men's time. Game was plentiful and it featured prominently in the Hlengwe diet. In the pre-colonial times the S.E. Lowveld had large forests teeming with game and was a hunter's paradise. Most Hlengwe men were great and skilful hunters which led many colonial administrators to wrongly conclude that the Hlengwe solely depended on hunting (NAZ, N3/33/8 History of Ndanga District:74; NAZ N3/33/8, History of Tshitanga Tribe:68). They killed a variety of animals including big game such as the rhinos and elephants. These big animals were killed for meat, skins and ivory.

Agriculture was a very important branch of production though reports by early colonial administrators reflect that their mainstay was hunting. The reports were based on a gross misconception of Hlengwe economic activities in general. Gezani argued that in good agricultural seasons the Hlengwe grew many varieties of crops in their fields (interview, 23/02/91). In fact, having fields on its own is a sign that they were agriculturalists. If they were solely hunters it would have been unwise of them to clear the land when they actually needed wooded areas to attract game. One of Bannerman's Hlengwe informants even said that in the Marumbini area near the Save-Runde junction, they watered their crops even in times of drought. He said, 'Our country (Marumbini) was marvellous country - we cultivated among the small streams along the Lundi River. During the dry spells we were always assured of having a crop. We could irrigate with water close at hand. We could grow pumpkins, maize and sweet potatoes' (Bannerman 1981:20).

The Hlengwe grew various types of sorghum and millet. They knew no less than six varieties of sorghum, which were the main grain crops. These varieties were *xikombe*, *chibedlane*, *chiraxavane*, *maxalane*, *xiponda* and *xitishi*. They also grew *matimba* or sweet-reeds. Other types of crops included *marhakarhaka* (cucumbers), *timanga* (groundnuts), *tinyawa* (beans), *tindluwu* (roundnuts or bambara groundnuts), *xifake* (maize), *lininga* (sesame) which was grown for purposes of extracting oil, *mahonti* (pumpkins), *mihlata* (sweet potatoes) and *makavathla* (water-melons). *Fole* (tobacco) was also grown for making snuff (Bannerman 1981:20).

The Hlengwe also had good knowledge of soils on which to grow their various crops. For example, sandy soils known as *nthlava* were good for millet and sorghum. *Seke* or alluvial soil, which was found along rivers, was good for *xifake*, *mahonti* and a variety of *mirhoho* (vegetables). *Ndzovolo* or fertile basalt soil was used for cultivation on a semi-permanent basis (Bannerman 1981:20). The Hlengwe's unparalleled knowledge of soils reflects that they were good agriculturalists and that agriculture was therefore an important branch of production, hence H.S Keigwin's assertion that, 'Natives have always worked granite and actually prefer granite...' did not apply to the Hlengwe (NAZ, N3/24/4, H.S. Keigwin to B.S.A. Co. Secretary, 27/12/19). Their agricultural activities required them to have access to various soil types.

Herdling was also an important economic pursuit except among the Hlengwe of Ngwenyenye who lived in a tsetse-infested area near the Save-Runde junction (Wright 1972:47; NAZ, V1/10/7 Reports of tsetse-flies, 8/10/23). Cattle were rarely killed in good times because of the abundance of game and also because they acted as a bulwark against hunger in lean years known as *malembe endlala*. Cattle were also used to pay the bride price and

were in most cases a status symbol (Mpapa, interview, 21/02/91). Besides cattle the Hlengwe also kept goats and sheep (Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91).

Other economic activities included salt making, basketry and trade (Mtetwa 1976:264). Oral sources among the Hlengwe say that salt was obtained from some soils along the rivers and was abundant at Manyoweni and Chizenjele. These places were all subsequently enclosed in the Gonarezhou Game Park in the process depriving the Hlengwe of access to salt. Salt was also obtained from a plant called *dangala*, which was obtained from areas, which are now enclosed in the Gonarezhou (Malalani, interview, 21/2/91).

The Hlengwe were also involved in trade which covered a much wider area. They traded meat for grain with neighbouring Shona, especially in lean years. They also had contacts with the east coast where Portuguese settlements were found (Bannerman 1981:22). Hunting was very important in this trade for it provided ivory, and skins of various cats, which were in demand at the east coast. In exchange for these game products, they got guns, cloth called *masinda*, beads called *vuhlamu* and bracelets called *magava* (ibid:22). Free access to all areas was therefore very important for the growth and sustenance of this economic pursuit.

The Hlengwe were also good craftsmen and they engaged in this activity when their agricultural branch of production failed. They made fine mats, baskets, clay-pots, blankets, and bags, which sold readily in areas as far west as beyond the Tokwe River (Mtetwa 1976:263). Their raw materials were obtainable from areas that were converted to European areas.

Thus before the arrival of the whites, the Hlengwe were a people that enjoyed economic independence and engaged in various activities as dictated by their environment. Their economic activities were complementary. Their ability to make a living out of the environment reflects their achievement of a high stage of economic development if Walter Rodney's definition of economic development is anything to go by. He says that, '*Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature - which means that every continent can point to a period of economic development*' (Rodney 1989:11). In brief, all these activities depended on the Hlengwe's ability to control their means of production especially the land. As such, any slight disruption to land ownership had a negative impact on their economic order, which is what this article partly seeks to prove.

Appropriation of Hlengwe Land From 1890 to 1965

The appropriation of land among the Hlengwe was a gradual process with about three clear phases: 1890-1908, 1908 to the 1930s and the period after World War II. These phases relate specifically to the periods that the Hlengwe

were directly affected by the land policies because they differ slightly from the times that the people in other parts of Zimbabwe especially Matebeleland and the Highveld were also directly affected by the colonial land policies.

After the creation of the first Reserves in Southern Rhodesia in 1895, the process quickly gathered momentum. By the 1898 Order-in-Council, the BSA Company was obliged to set aside adequate land for the Africans throughout Zimbabwe. So Native Commissioners (NCs) throughout the country began the difficult task of demarcating reserves (Gann 1963:73). At this stage the areas under Hlengwe chiefs Tsovani, Gezani, Chisa and Sengwe were set aside as Alienated Company Land. The areas under Chilonga, Masivamele, Ngwenyenye and Mpapa were made part of the Matibi Reserve, which was established between the Runde and Mwenezi Rivers and stretching all the way to the border with Mozambique. However at this stage there were no movements of the Hlengwe to the reserves until 1908 (Bannerman 1981:32; NAZ, N3/24/2 NC of Chibi District to CNC,4/8/1900). This law did not have an immediate impact on the Hlengwe activities. This partly accounts for their non-participation in the Shona-Ndebele Risings of 1896-7.

However, events took a new twist after 1908 when the Company diverted its attention towards land after it realised that there was no second Rand in Southern Rhodesia. The Company's new goal was to recoup expenses it incurred in its wild chase for elusive minerals. The new drive was to create a white rural bourgeoisie, which by developing the country would raise the value of its assets. It was this company move that impacted negatively on Hlengwe access to and ownership of land.

In pursuance of the new policy, the company launched an attack on the African areas in the years 1908 to 1914 with a clear intention of grabbing the best land and making it available for European settlement. In Tsovani's area a farm and two ranches were established in 1911 and this affected eight kraals (villages) with a total adult population of 665 (N9/1/14 NC of Ndanga, report for 1911). The rest of the adult population in the remaining area (which was by now Unalienated Company Land) was forced to pay rent. This was a deliberate ploy to force people to move into the reserves. Though some people moved into the reserves to avoid paying rent, the movement in the Hlengwe country was very slow when compared with other districts especially on the highveld. This was largely because of a negligible European presence in the S.E. Lowveld.

From 1914 the disempowerment of Hlengwe through loss of land intensified as their area was affected by the ruling of the Coryndon Native Reserves Commission of 1914, which recommended that there be a final resolution to the whole reserve issue in line with the company policy of recovering the best land for whites (Gann 1963:73; Palmer 1977:254). The

Matibi Reserve was reduced from its original size of 3,485,942 to a mere 824,596 acres (Palmer 1977:254). The land excised from the central part of Matibi, about 1,800,000 acres, subsequently became part of the Company's 2,500,000 acre Nuanetsi Ranch (Palmer 1977:254). By the same act, the Matibi Reserve was divided into Matibi I in the northwest and Matibi II in the southeast. Mpapa's Hlengwe were directly affected by this recommendation. The company took a greater part of his area to establish the Nuanetsi Ranch. In 1919 a large group of Mpapa's people were moved *en masse* from their Chivumburu hills location into the Matibi II Reserve to make room for company cattle coming into the Nuanetsi Ranch (Bannerman 1978:42). They settled in areas which Forestall the first NC of the area had described in 1900 as, '... *waterless and uninhabitable*' (NAZ, N3/24/2, NC Chibi to CNC, 4/8/1900). However, some remained on the ranch paying rent or as labour tenants.

In Tsovani's country, one major development in 1919 that later significantly altered Hlengwe position on the land was the application by Thomas Murray McDougall to buy land between Mutirikwe, Runde and Chiredzi Rivers for his sugar project (Saunders 1989:7; Mapindhani, interview, 17/2/91).

Further south, in Sengwe, Gezani and Furumela's areas the Company entered into rent 'agreements' with the people. In reality these were not genuine agreements but rather conditions imposed on the Hlengwe people of these areas. The Hlengwe were only allowed to remain on Company land on condition that every adult male paid rent amounting to one pound sterling per annum. However if the land was required for any other purpose the Company or landlord or his successor was entitled to resume possession of the land so required as was happening throughout the country (NAZ, NVH 1/1/1, Mwenezi Native Tenants on Co. Land, 1919). So to all practical purposes and intents, the land had been alienated but the reason why this land continued to be 'unalienated' or more accurately unoccupied by whites was that there were no applications for land by white settlers at the time.

In the area along the border with Mozambique, Masivamele and some of his people were moved into the Matibi II Reserve in 1920. However, this movement was not necessarily directed by the need to create room for European settlement, but it was undesirable from a security point of view to have reserves along the borders of the most remote areas of the country (Wright 1972:202).

However, although by 1920 land alienation and African movement into reserves was gaining momentum in the S.E. Lowveld it was not as serious as it was in other parts of the country such as Gutu District where the movement of people into the reserves as from 1910 was described as 'enormous' (NAZ, N9/4/23, NC Gutu, Monthly Report, April 1910). This seeming lack of land buyers up to the 1920s must have been a result of

environmental constraints associated with the lowveld and its remoteness from the then key administrative centres, and lack of precious minerals.

After the 1920s, the major land policy that affected almost all black Zimbabweans negatively was the Land Apportionment Bill of 1930, which became law in 1931. This law demarcated land unfairly between Whites and Blacks. Europeans were given 51 per cent of all land and Blacks 29.8 per cent only. The rest of the land remained either as: Unassigned area (18.5 per cent), Forest Area (0.6 %) or Undetermined Area (0.1 %). The Land Apportionment Act's first major negative outcome for the Hlengwe was that no area was marked as Native Purchase Area in their land until the 1960s. Between 1931 and the end of World War II the movement into Reserves was quite slow compared with other parts of the country. However, after the war the Hlengwe were stripped of whatever little claim and denied whatever access they had to their land.

After World War II, there was a vast influx of new white settlers into Southern Rhodesia who were escaping the post-war austerity in Europe (Palmer 1974:2). In the heart of the Hlengwe country in the area stretching from modern north to western Chiredzi District most cattle ranchers arrived soon after the war and by 1947 the Department of Land Settlement was flooded with applications for permission to use the land for ranching purposes. The applicants were described by the Chief Land Inspector as people '*... suffering from land hunger*'. These men included De la Rue, Stockil, Baxter, Sparrow, Bridges and Sommerville, men who acquired large pieces of land in the area (NAZ, S2111/30, F. Gillward to the Undersecretary, 21/11/47). After the direct occupation of the land the Hlengwe were dealt a final blow and had no option but to move to the reserves.

Following a lull in evictions during World War II, two major developments in the Triangle and Hippo Valley Estates saw massive evictions of the Hlengwe of Tsovani into the Sangwe Reserve as from 1944. The government took a keen interest in the sugar project, following the success of MacDougall's sugar cane production experiment. It took over the project and expanded the area under irrigation to boost sugar production in the country. In 1954 it sold out to a Natal Syndicate, which accelerated the settlement of sugar cane farmers. The syndicate expanded the area under sugar cane and by the time it sold out to Sir J.T. Hullet and Sons Limited in 1957 the area had been increased from 1,189 acres in 1954 to 1,441 acres. The Hullets who had absolute confidence in the future of the S.E. Lowveld irrigation scheme quickly committed the company to massive investment in the enterprise and this resulted in vast tracts of Hlengwe land being brought under sugar cane production (Saunders 1989:45; Bennet 1969:31).

In 1956 Sir Raymond Stockil who had established a citrus estate in the Bendezi hills area earlier on also started sugar cane production right in the heart of Tsovani's country (Agricultural Development 1959:21). Tsovani and the majority of his people were then moved into the Sangwe communal land to make room for European projects. The whole process of evicting people in the Triangle-Hippo Valley complex was completed when about 800 families that were still on European land were evicted from the fertile area west of Mutirikwe River and South of the Runde and moved into the Matibi II area in the early 1960s. This followed the transfer of part of the Nuanetsi Ranch to Triangle Sugar Estates following the conclusion of a deal whereby the Imperial Cold Storage Commission Company was to release part of its rich land to Triangle for irrigation purposes (Saunders 1989:66; Wright 1972:265).

With the 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act enforcing the removal of all Africans from all Crown or European Land by 1955 whether or not it was required for European settlement the Hlengwe had no choice but to move to the reserves. From the 1950s to the 1960s the Nuanetsi Ranch was subdivided and sold to private owners (Wright 1972:143). Thus the remaining pockets of Hlengwe on the vast ranch were effectively removed. In the other parts of the lowveld evictions continued with greater intensity. Furumela's people were split and moved into either Matibi II or Sengwe Reserve. Chisa's people were moved from the area between the Chivonja Hills and Save Runde Junction and settled in the south of Sangwe Reserve. His area became part of the Gonarezhou Game Reserve controlled Hunting Area. Lastly, when the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area was created in 1954 it was another curse to the Hlengwe in that the land was sold mostly to non-Hlengwe people. The Hlengwe in this area who were under village heads Dumela and Natali were evicted to the Sengwe Tribal Trust Lands (Rukanda, interview, 16/2/91; N. Zanamwe, interview, 23/2/91).

By the Land Apportionment Amendment Act No. 37 of 1961 part of the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area and areas along the border with Mozambique were converted into the Gonarezhou Forest Area (Wright 1972:137). This development led to further evictions of Africans from their ancestral lands. Masivamele's people who had remained behind in the Gonarezhou Forest Area were moved into the Matibi II reserve to join their kinsmen. A 100 square mile strip of land excised from the Forest Area was created into a special area to accommodate Shilothela's people as there was nowhere else to place them. That area later became part of the Sengwe Reserve or Tribal Trust Land. Ngwenyeni's people, the last of Hlengwe groups to remain on European land were moved to Sengwe Reserve in 1968 (ibid:243, 328).

Three distinct strategies were used to force Africans off the land in the Hlengwe territories. These were the imposition of rentals, threat to use force and direct use of force. The rentals had the immediate effect of forcing people off the farms in that in the reserves people were paying one British pound sterling in tax and those on European farms were expected to pay an extra two pounds for using the land (Gezani, interview, 23/02/91). So once these fees were imposed on tenants, many moved fast into the reserves to avoid having to pay the exorbitant taxes. Those that insisted on staying even when the land was needed for immediate occupation faced open threats of forceful evictions. One interviewee confirmed that if these two methods failed people were beaten and sent off to the reserves by farm owners who were assisted by the police (Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91). This view is supported by R. Palmer who says that after 1945, *'To make way for the new immigrants recourse was had to the traditional policy of eviction which had lain somewhat dormant during the war years, the bulldozers moved in'* (Palmer 1974:2).

By 1965 most Hlengwe chiefs and their people had lost their lands to the whites and had moved into areas specifically demarcated for African settlement. These areas were remote, very dry, infertile and some uninhabitable especially considering the nature of the Hlengwe technology, which suited their original environment. The evictions were in short a manifestation of the new order that reflected the colonialists' abandonment of the nobler values of enlightened humanity and of those fundamental principles of justice, which are part of the common heritage of all mankind. To the Hlengwe therefore, the evictions meant loss of a livelihood and consequently, economic disempowerment.

The Impact of Land Alienation on the Hlengwe

The Hlengwe's ultimate security and subsistence lay in their ability to control their land. The loss of it (land) was a direct onslaught on their economy and livelihood in general. Studies carried out elsewhere prove that land alienation was a tool meant to make Africans more amenable to white demands and to weaken their position as competitors to whites. Jack Woddis (1960:8) argues that, the essential reasons behind the wholesale expropriation of land in Africa as a whole were, *'.... to prevent the African peasant from becoming a competitor to the European farmer or plantation owner and to impoverish the African peasantry to such an extent that the majority of adult males would be compelled to work for the Europeans in the mines or on the farms.'* Lionel Cliffe (1986:18) believes it was done for three reasons; to make room in better-watered areas for whites, to create a permanent supply of cheap labour and to reduce competition from Africans. A Zimbabwean study by

A.V. Moyana (1984:42) authenticates these claims and even concludes that the idea of alienation was to ‘.... *incapacitate the African by removing him from the arena of economic competition*’. As also noted by Phimister (1988:61), this would reduce the African to a position whereby he would be a permanent source of cheap labour.

Evidence collected from the area under study confirms these observations. Land alienation in Hlengwe country was systematically done, targeting the best lands for European settlement. Letters and reports written by the early colonial administrators give credence to this claim. For example, when writing about the land between Runde River and Mwenezi River one official said, ‘*The few natives inhabiting it, are mostly hunters of Shangaan [Hlengwe] origin who are unable to make use of more than a very small portion of the Reserve. I consider that some of the best ranching country in the territory is in this area and it should be brought into use for large ranches, it would materially assist in the development of the country*’ (NAZ, L2/2/12/2, J.C.J. Cooper on tour, p. 6). In another letter the Company Representative wrote, ‘*Very good land is also contained in the native reserve lying between the Tokwe and the Lundi and it is hoped that it may be possible to resume possession of a portion of the land*’ (NAZ, L2/2/12/2 Commercial Representative (BSAC) to the Secretary of the BSAC, 28/6/13).

Mr Jenkinson writing to the Director of Land Settlement about an area in the Matibi Reserve said, ‘*The proposed area is in very hilly country with vleis: I do not consider this area suitable for European settlement. The area I would recommend to the Company is that of about 120,000 acres between Nyazugwi and the Mtilikwe River and bounded on the South by the Lundi River. Another good area is the South of Chiredzi River ranch the grazing is equally good*’ (NAZ, L2/2/12/2, EH Jenkinson to the Director of Land Settlement, 23/12/19).

Thus the best agricultural and grazing areas of the Hlengwe were turned into European land. By this move, the food security of the former was gravely compromised as their many branches of production were dealt an enormous blow. The impact of droughts and famines on the Hlengwe was intensified. In the Sangwe communal land it was surprising to note that good harvests were so rare that when a good harvest occurred the year went down in history as *lembe lamaguta* (the year of a good harvest). This is a departure from the norm where years of catastrophe or calamities are the ones used as time markers in oral history. Most people in the area remember the year 1952 as the year ‘*lemaguta*’ (Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91).

In the new fragile environment, food production among the Hlengwe dwindled and food shortages became serious as the people were now dependent on agriculture only. Ngwenyeni (Ngwenyenye) indicated to

Bannerman that he missed his original homeland in the Save–Runde junction from where he had been evicted in the 1960s. With nostalgia he said, ‘*Our country Marumbini. It was marvellous country we cultivated among the small streams along the Lundi River. During the dry spells we were always assured of having a crop. We could irrigate with water close at hand. We could grow pumpkins, maize and sweet potatoes*’ (Ngwenyenye cited in Bannerman 1981:20). His statements alluded to problems of food shortage in the Sengwe area and summed up the sorry state of Hlengwe agriculture and food security after land alienation. Given the techniques employed by the Hlengwe peasantry and the type of land allocated to them, the implication of the transformation of the systems of cultivation was progressive soil erosion and thus decreasing agricultural productivity as the type of soil continued to deteriorate year in year out.

One other consequence of the loss of land was overcrowding in the reserves, which resulted in serious problems for the Hlengwe who besides other activities, were cattle herders. By 1954 while the Natural Resources Board was becoming concerned about overcrowding and the resultant conditions in the reserves, in the Sangwe and Matibi II reserves conditions had started to deteriorate in the 1930s. Though the Matibi II reserve was very big (480,000 acres), its carrying capacity was very low. The NC’s reports for 1934 to 1937 reflect that there were inadequate pastures for livestock in the area (NAZ, S1563, Assistant NC Nuanetsi, Annual Report, 1934; NAZ, S1619 Assistant NC Chibi, Monthly Report, December 1936, NAZ, S1619 NC Chibi, Monthly Report, January, 1937). In 1934, 1,790 out of 9,900 herd of cattle died due to insufficient grazing (NAZ, S1563, Asst. NC Nuanetsi, Annual Report, 1934). This was a clear sign that the carrying capacity of the area had been exceeded. However, this did not deter the government from settling more people in the reserve after World War II. The estimated population of 3,102 in 1946 rose to 16,640 by 1969 as a result of more evictions of the Hlengwe from areas now turned into European areas. In 1955 more people came from Mashava Crown Land, which was an area well outside Hlengwe Land (NAZ S2588/1 CNC to Department of Statistics, 1946; Chiredzi District Development Plan, 1985:3).

In the Sangwe Reserve, cases of overpopulation were reported mostly after 1934 as it became manifest that the southern part of the reserve could not carry a larger population than it already had at the time (NAZ, S1563, NC, Ndanga Annual Report, 1934). However, after WWII, more people evicted from European areas continued to pour into the reserve. By 1946 the area had an estimated human population of 2,753 and 1,926 cattle (NAZ, S2588/1 CNC to Dept of Statistics, 1946). The northern part of the Sangwe Reserve with an area of about 81 square kilometres had an estimated human population

of about 1,680 and 1,425 cattle (*ibid.*). By 1952 the carrying capacity of the whole reserve had been exceeded. This excluded the number of goats, sheep, and donkeys whose grazing habits are detrimental to the environment. The main consequence for the Hlengwe was loss of their livestock through scarcity of good pastures.

In the 1960s, the situation in the Sangwe Reserve worsened following the mass movement of Chisa and Tsovani's people into the Sangwe Reserve. By 1969, the population had risen to about 12,300. By the mid-1960s the Sangwe reserve had the highest population density of about 64 people per square kilometre (Bannerman 1981:37). Erosion set in and was exacerbated by the Hlengwe's reluctance to cut down the size of their herd of cattle. However, in the southern areas of Hlengwe country, there was some marked difference in that though the people continued to be moved into the reserves in large numbers, the main reserve (Sengwe) had not shown signs of a disaster by the 1950s. It was only in the 1960s that the people became restless owing to congestion on the few good pieces of land in the reserve.

Giovanni Arrighi (1977:24, 32; 1975:221) says that to improve labour supplies in Africa, the whites found it necessary to lower the opportunity cost of the peasantry by progressively reducing its overall productivity. Among the Hlengwe, this was achieved through land alienation, which put a stop to most of the Hlengwe economic activities as the people were settled in a very hostile environment. Most of them became so vulnerable that they had to depend on offering their labour to whites in order to survive. Land alienation therefore had the great effect of impoverishing the Hlengwe and turning them into a labouring class, providing cheap labour to the white capitalist farmers in the S.E. Lowveld.

The sugar and citrus estates and farms in the area depended much on this cheap labour, which was now being drawn from the reserves (NAZ, S2337/288/43/2, P.H. Fripp to CNC, Fort Victoria, 24/5/43). Excess Hlengwe labour was used on a number of public projects in different parts of the country. In the 1940s some were used in areas as far afield as Gweru in the construction of roads and dip tanks. In Chisa's former area, they were engaged in clearing trees as a way of getting rid of tsetse flies in the area that was now European land (Mapindhani, Interview, 17/2/91). Hlengwe labour was now being used on projects from which they did not derive any direct benefit. Their wages were miserly and labour conditions in general were horrible (Van Onselen 1975:228-246; Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91, Mpapa, interview, 21/2/91).

The harnessing of male labour for use on European farms and other projects caused a reduction in agricultural production as women and children were forced by circumstances to perform tasks hitherto viewed as a preserve for men. For most families, agricultural production further declined as men

decided to escape the harsh conditions by going to seek employment in South African mines. Land under cultivation was reduced as fast-growing bushes took over. It is no doubt that most of these men's wives raised families as single parents while enduring the hardships of colonial rule and its many demands single-handedly.

Besides agriculture and herding all other branches of production such as fishing, hunting, gathering and basketry suffered a premature death. These activities officially ceased when most rivers and hunting areas were closed in the Gonarezhou Game Reserve and other occupied European areas. The activities were deemed illegal by the state laws. One law, which had the immediate effect of disempowering the Hlengwe after their land was occupied, was the Herbage Preservation Act of 1913.

Paragraph 2 of the Act, destroyed basketry and gathering activities for it stated that, '*... anyone found guilty of the destruction of any tree, shrub, bush, brushwood, undergrowth or grass, not on his property is upon conviction liable to a fine not exceeding 100 British pounds sterling* (Southern Rhodesia Ordinance, No. 9, 1913, para. 2). This meant that it was illegal to cut reeds, which were essential in the making of baskets. Also outlawed or illegalized was the supplementing of Hlengwe diet by gathering fruits or any other forest products. Barter trade with the Shona associated with basketry also suffered a huge blow and consequently it meant loss of a mitigatory measure to the impact of drought.

Paragraph 8 of the Ordinance stated that '*... no person shall pursue any kind of animal or knowingly enter upon, the land of another with the intention of pursuing any kind of animal without the consent of the owner or occupier of such land* (ibid, para. 8). Paragraph 9 also stated that, '*No person shall remove honey or bees from the land of another without the consent of the owner or occupier of the land upon which the honey or bees maybe* (ibid, para. 9). Paragraph 10 stated that, '*... any person trespassing upon such land away from a recognised road or path is liable to punishment*' (ibid, para. 10). This made all areas that were of economic significance to the Hlengwe inaccessible, in the process crippling the Hlengwe economically. In 1961 the Gonarezhou was declared a protected Game Forest and hunting died as an essential branch of production.

If anything, land alienation also weakened the Africans' position as economic competitors against whites. While the Hlengwe were barred from entering the rich game areas, the whites had the rights to hunt and benefit from the sale of game products. Chisa's former area was even converted into the Save-Runde Special Hunting Area (Kanuka, interview, 26/2/91; Muteyo and Mapindhani, interview, 17/2/91). The restrictions placed on the Africans with regard to hunting thwarted the development of other activities such as

ivory trade with the Portuguese in Mozambique and meat trade with the Duma for grain especially in times of drought. Uninterrupted participation in this activity could have seen the Hlengwe entering the lucrative curios and other game products trade business. However, the prospects of this development suffered a stillbirth as a result of a well-executed land alienation system by the colonialists.

Whatever hopes of competing with the whites that the Hlengwe cherished, if any, were finally dashed in 1954, as a result of the creation of the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase area. Much to the disenchantment of the Hlengwe, the offer to purchase land was open to all Africans from any part of Zimbabwe. In 1958 the Purchase Area was reduced by more than half to create more room for the Gonarezhou Forest Area (Wright 1972:326). Among the first eleven farm purchasers there was not even one Hlengwe farmer (Rukanda, interview, 16/2/91; N. Zanamwe, interview, 23/2/91). Today, there are only three Hlengwe-owned farms out of forty-three farms in the Gonakudzingwa Small Scale farming area (L. Zanamwe, interview, 5/7/2008).

In the discourse on the economic disempowerment of the Hlengwe, there is truth in Arrighi's assertion that competition from an African rural bourgeoisie was considered by the whites to be dangerous. Its emergence was therefore accordingly prevented and contained within well-defined limits (Arrighi 1977:38). Hlengwe competition was checked through policies of land apportionment and alienation. Following land alienation in the Hlengwe country in the S.E Lowveld, economic and social differentiation became well marked in the rural areas. The clear separation of land between Africans and Europeans made it possible to direct capital expenditure in roads, dams and other general improvements to European areas, totally shunning African areas. The Hlengwe were located in a hostile environment that was far away from markets, railways and main roads, and were effectively denied access to what used to be their most productive land. All these were indirect checks on African competition and well-calculated measures to keep them in a position of perpetual servitude.

Following land alienation, the imbalance in the man-land relationship led to a rapid deterioration of the physical resource base in the Hlengwe reserves. Land apportionment put a definite limit to the land available for Hlengwe settlement and use. This meant that all of their activities were now to be carried out in a restricted, fragile and hostile environment with limited resources. The situation was exacerbated by a combination of factors such as lack of the required environmental management skills among the Hlengwe and the artificially created overpopulation in the reserves through evictions of more people from white areas. Thus their economic sovereignty was grossly compromised.

Hlengwe Response to Economic Disempowerment and Exploitation

Walter Rodney contends that Africans responded aggressively to the destruction of their economic independence leading to many revolts (Rodney 1985:332). Though the Ndebele and the Shona on the Zimbabwean Highveld reacted aggressively in the 1896-7 First Chimurenga, this was not the universal response in colonial Zimbabwe especially in the early years of colonization. In the Hlengwe area in the S.E. Lowveld, there is no evidence pointing to an aggressive response to loss of land in the early years of colonization. However, in the years after 1945 there was no small amount of resentment amongst the Hlengwe. Thus the assertion by the early colonial administrators in the area that the Hlengwe were not ‘..... a warlike people,’ were made prematurely (NAZ, N3/14/3 NC Chibi, Confidential report to the CNC, 9/10/1914). Bannerman (1978:492) points out that in the 1950s and 1960s there was great resentment to the evictions. In reality, the nature of the Hlengwe response to the colonial order underwent gradual transformation and became more and more aggressive as the evictions intensified.

A number of factors shaped the Hlengwe response during this period. One was the slow pace of direct occupation of Hlengwe land in the early years of colonization as a result of the limited number of whites interested in land in the Hlengwe country. Lack of white interest in the area is demonstrated by the fact that by 1911 only one farm and two ranches in the whole of the Chiredzi District had been effectively occupied. As such the indigenous people still had the option of remaining on European land paying rent or as labour tenants. Thus under such circumstances, there was no point in being aggressive, but this does not mean that the small pockets of those directly affected did not engage in various forms of resistance.

Secondly, there is a great possibility that as from 1890, the majority of the Hlengwe had not realised that their country was under new authorities. This was largely as a result of the fact that they were far placed from where colonial treaties or agreements were being signed and they were neither consulted nor involved when this was done. To make matters worse, the first administrative office responsible for the huge Chibi district, which encompassed their land, was far placed from the area such that it is almost certain that it took a long time before they were directly affected by colonial policies. This is why Forestall, the first NC at Chibi was shocked to find Portuguese flags and influences among the Hlengwe, stretching all the way from the border with Mozambique to as far west as Mpapa’s country as late in the colonial era as 1897 (NAZ, NVC1/1/1 NC Chibi to CNC, Quarterly Report, 3/1/1899).

Even when the European powers agreed upon the boundary between Mozambique and Zimbabwe, it was done in the European capitals far away from the Hlengwe country and the people whose fate was going to be affected by this development were not immediately consulted. Masivamele's people living along the border with Mozambique were only moved from the area in 1920. Thus lack of information also slowed the development of co-ordinated Hlengwe resistance in the early years of colonization.

One other factor, which was very significant in shaping Hlengwe responses, was what I call a 'Hlengwe personality'. This is what also contributed greatly to the dynamism and diversity in their response. An informant, Luckson Zanamwe (interview, 5/7/2008), said that the Hlengwe are a small group of people who from years back were very conscious of their numerical inferiority hence they fought hard to maintain their numbers. As a result they always tried to avoid or delay violent confrontation with occupiers or strangers. However, this did not mean that they tolerated open challenges to their manhood. The younger generations seem to have inherited this behavioural trait. They quickly adapt to their new social environment to ensure their survival within the system. They are also very cunning so that they can easily mislead an opponent or stranger into false security by exhibiting features of docility and harmlessness. They also have great ability to conceal their true emotions and to keep family and community secrets. They are masters at the game of deception so it is hard to judge their next course of action and this always gives them an upper hand when dealing with strangers. Thus in a way they are unpredictable which trait can easily mislead an outsider (Chabvepi, interview, 28/6/2008; L. Zanamwe, interview, 5/7/2008; Chinhavi, interview, 7/7/2008).

They are also a conservative people and always strive to maintain their traditional way of life (Chinhavi, interview, 7/7/2008). In short their survival instincts and their numerical inferiority taught them to devise survival strategies, which only use violence as the last resort to safeguard their vital interests when they are severely threatened with destruction. This is the reason why the effective occupation of their traditional land after world war II caused gross resentment among their lot. They were now feeling the 'squeeze'.

However, an analysis of their response in the interwar period reveals that the full establishment of the state machinery, such as the police force, also influenced the nature of Hlengwe responses. Under such tight monitoring, the people opted for the approach that Phimister (1988:81) described as, 'the struggle in the shadows,' or silent responses.

All these factors shaped the Hlengwe response to their disempowerment, hence the dynamism and diversity that it generated. The response was not homogeneous but was characterized by heterogeneity in various areas and at

different times. From 1890 to about 1911 there were no major signs of restlessness among the Hlengwe. They did not even seem to be perturbed by the implications of the Southern Rhodesia Order-In Council of 1898, which resulted in the creation of the Matibi Reserve and the conversion of Tsovani, Gezani, Chisa and Sengwe's areas into official alienated land. One very possible explanation for the seeming absence of resentment is that they were not consulted so they were not aware of the new political dispensation and land order. But if they knew about the new development and decided to do nothing about it, then, according to their judgment, it was not time to act since this ruling had no direct impact on their activities at that conceptual time. Accordingly, the survival instinct prevailed. However, one other possibility is that some Hlengwe, like Ngwenyeni and his people, were aware of the drawing and existence of the border between Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Mozambique but were deliberately trying to play one European group against the other. This could be the reason why Forestall the NC, Chibi District, found Portuguese flags and other influences among the Hlengwe in 1897 yet the drawing of the Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) boundary had left them on the Rhodesian side.

However, from 1911 when the first farm and two ranches were marked in Tsovani's country and more land acquired for European settlement in other parts of Hlengwe country, some defied the order to move to the reserves. Defiance in its various forms, overt and subtle, was a common response in many parts of the S.E. Lowveld throughout the period under study. There was a marked increase in instances of refusal to comply with orders in many parts of the Lowveld. In 1921 the NC for Ndanga District wrote that, '*The Shangaans [Tsovani's Hlengwe] in the south prefer to remain until the land is taken up when they will move into reserves if an agreement can be come to with the landowner*' (NAZ, N9/1/24, NC Ndanga, Annual Report 1921). This was defiance, which was inspired by an attempt to avoid violent confrontation with the colonial authorities but at the same time reflecting a desire by a people to continue with their way of life as they had known it. A similar approach but with a slight variation was also used by Ngwenyeni in 1961. He requested not to be moved to the reserves but instead be allowed to move with his people to Mozambique (Wright 1972:328). This was defiance associated with diplomacy. He must have been aware that the colonial administrators were not prepared to lose their cheap labour to a rival colonial power so he used the colonialists' fear as a negotiating tool. It is clear here that violence was avoided and he successfully evaded eviction. A special area created for him was finally incorporated into the Sengwe Special Native Area in 1968 (ibid.).

In other parts of the S.E. Lowveld people openly defied the order to move to the reserves. This was influenced by the fact that they were conservative by nature and strongly desired to maintain their traditional lifestyles and homelands. Dumezulu refused to move from the Mateke Hills area from the 1930s until the time of his death (Gezani, interview, 23/2/91). In 1958 Mashamba refused to move from an area down the Mwenezi River called the Buffalo Bend Area, which Allan Wright, the District Commissioner (DC), wanted to turn into a game reserve (Wright 1972:54). He only moved to the Sengwe Reserve after the continuous destruction of his crops by elephants. This was aggressive defiance, which was motivated by the desire to protect a vital economic interest that was under threat. These four cases of defiance cited above reflect the conciliatory and aggressive dynamics of Hlengwe response, one being influenced by a desire to avoid violence at all costs and the other by a desire to protect a birthright. However, the aggressive response by Dumezulu and Mashamba might have been influenced by their knowledge that the NC and DC did not have sufficient police back-up at the time.

Cases of the 'struggles in the shadow' were also common among the Hlengwe. As has been alluded to above, the Hlengwe would look harmless and docile, but it should be remembered that this would be mere deception. In the whole period under study, there were many acts of sabotage that were carried out by the Hlengwe against the Europeans. This mode of resistance was employed more by individuals rather than by large groups of people and involved destruction of property, theft, arson and the use of other various forms of social banditry on European farms and in the Gonarezhou Game Reserve.

On a number of occasions some individuals started fires on European farms. This act was sustained by the Hlengwe's ability to take on a character of docility and harmlessness and to keep secrets. Most Europeans simply believed that these fires were a result of 'the natives' carelessness' (NAZ, N3/33/7, NC Belingwe, to the Superintendent of Natives, Gwelo, 15/10/1919). This showed their lack of understanding of the unique Hlengwe personality and behaviour that were reinforced by their initiation ceremonies, which were quite critical in character building. It was very difficult to trace the offenders as their fellow men would all profess ignorance. The burning of grass was a sign of protest against the loss of their land. The idea was to punish the whites through destroying their property.

One very controversial response which the Hlengwe engaged in was the 'silent struggle' which included theft from farmhouses, and destroying or stealing farm fences for the purpose of trapping livestock and game on

European farms. Whilst theft cannot be condoned there were some unique cases as witnessed among the Hlengwe where the targets were carefully chosen to include only the colonizers. A case in point is that of a character called Chitokwa who was identified by the District Commissioner of Mwenezi, Allan Wright, as a nuisance among the white farming community in the area. Between 1961 and 1962, Chitokwa became infamous for breaking into the European farmhouses to steal goods. He also engaged in poaching and killing the farmers' livestock. In the Sengwe area he was treated as a hero for he shared his loot with the locals (Wright 1972:289-300). The people gave him sanctuary, and this clearly demonstrated that they supported his activities. They even gave him the honorary title, 'Mister Chitokwa'.

Another character called Mutongi took it a step further by stealing livestock from European farms and also African farms in the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area (N. Zanamwe, interview, 23/2/91). The reason for stealing from African farms as well according to an informant was that he was one of the people evicted from the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase area (ibid.). Thus according to Mutongi the black farmers were equally as bad as the white farmers. His approach was unique in that he was fighting against the system and not a racial group. With this response therefore, there were two variations and thus two dynamics based on differences in the ideology of a land expropriator. One emphasized race in the definition of the enemy while the other emphasized the evil act of land grabbing. The latter targeted both white and black farmers whilst the former targeted whites only. The two characters were using the same strategies but their ideologies of a land expropriator differed.

The Hlengwe women who do not feature much in the colonial records seem to have played a complementary role to that of the menfolk in the struggle against land alienation. Since there is no record of them betraying their men it can be safely concluded that women were reliable partners in the struggle against the 'land grabbers'. They were fully aware of their men's escapades against the whites but they never 'sold out'. Instead the majority of them continued to break the law by going undetected deep into the European land to fetch firewood, harvest caterpillars and collect fruits and other edibles. They also engaged in poaching fish, which they caught using pieces of cloth and rugs. They also stole thatch grass from the farms (Govani, interview, 27/6/2008; Chinhavi, interview, 7/7/2008). However, it is not very clear whether they perceived this as fighting against the system; but all in all, this turns out to be part of the 'struggle in the shadow'.

External migration was one other common method used by the Hlengwe to escape oppression and exploitation. It brought out two dynamics in the Hlengwe response. One dynamic was that associated with permanent migration to enable them to continue with their traditional way of life while the other was associated with temporary migration to escape forced labour and to reach the best labour markets. Some Hlengwe showed their resentment to loss of land by crossing into neighbouring Mozambique and South Africa to live there permanently. In 1914 it was noted that in the Matibi Reserve there was a slight increase in population because, '.... *more natives* [had] *left the territory for Portuguese Territory than* [had] *come to this territory from there*' (NAZ, N9/1/14, NC Ndanga, Annual Report, 1914).

However, it should be noted that it was not every Hlengwe who opted to migrate permanently to neighbouring countries and that those that migrated did not just go to any neighbouring country. Those who went to Mozambique were mostly hunters, who chose to go to Mozambique not because the conditions there were better than those in Zimbabwe. Instead taxes were even higher in Mozambique than Zimbabwe. However, what made the difference to them was that hunting which was forbidden in Zimbabwe was going on uncontrolled in Mozambique. These were people who were not prepared to change their traditional way of life but at the same time were not ready to fight for they realised that if war was to be an option, the odds would be stacked against them. One other reason why some preferred to go especially to Mozambique was that their relatives were there but had been separated from them by the drawing of the Mozambique-Zimbabwe boundary. Therefore it was not every Hlengwe group that opted to go to Mozambique but those in the border areas like Masivamele and Ngwenyenye's people. To that end, the people's main economic pursuits and geographical location contributed to the heterogeneity in the response. The Hlengwe that were further inland chose to stay, while those separated from their fellow men in neighbouring Mozambique chose to join them.

For the temporary movements, the main motivation was to escape labour exploitation or to go to countries offering competitive wages, which they would use to pay the taxes or rent demanded by the European settlers. In the 1920s there was in the S.E Lowveld a marked absence of men caused by a flight of men to the South African mines (Bannerman 1981:33). It is true that the labour conditions in South Africa were not princely, but the wages were better than those offered in Zimbabwe. One other notable thing here is that it was mostly men who engaged in this type of response. This is what explains the lower number of males to women in many parts of colonial Africa. Only a few women in the Hlengwe country dared to go because of the many

challenges on the way to South Africa. However, one other hindrance to their emigration was their culture, which had clearly defined gender roles that forbade such adventurous undertakings by women.

The Africans who were employed on European farms or were recruited into forced labour gangs also devised strategies to escape wanton exploitation of their labour. They did this either as individuals or small groups of close friends. The tightly controlled situations resulted in modification of their strategies of resistance. At the slightest opportunity, they deserted to unknown destinations whilst some chose to stay and feigned illness. Some pretended not to be competent enough in performing their tasks that some authorities complained that, '*They (Hlengwe) are poor agricultural labourers*' (NAZ, N3/33/8, History of Ndanga District:74). In May 1943, P.H. Fripp even said in a letter to the Director of the Irrigation Department of Triangle Estates, '*To date, there is no hint of labourers arriving for the contractor gang to replace boys who are finished their three tickets of 30 days. In this connection it is very noticeable that some of the boys have been released due to illness by the parties concerned*' (NAZ, 2337/288/43/2 Fripp in a letter to the Director, Triangle, 20/5/43). The frequency of the illnesses and the number of workers concerned was sufficient proof that these illnesses were not genuine. Such behaviour can best be understood in the realm of the Hlengwe personality and behaviour.

Thus the Hlengwe in different places responded differently, hence there was no uniformity in the modes of Hlengwe response.

The Phase of Overt and Violent Response

'Only exposure to adverse circumstances brings out the hidden nature of a people'

In many parts of the Hlengwe country, restlessness associated with more radicalism began to manifest after World War II. Resentment of the colonial order was becoming more overt and violent. This shift to a radical approach was a result of pressure created by the increased eviction of people from European land to the overcrowded reserves. This left them with limited options since the state now wanted all Africans to be driven to the reserves except a few who were directly employed on European properties. Reality had now dawned on the Hlengwe that their vital interest, especially their position on the land, was under severe attack and that their interest had to be protected at all costs.

After the 1950s, the Hlengwe became more confrontational and daring in breaking the law. Allan Wright, the D.C of Mwenezi, reported having serious problems with law-breakers, especially the poachers. However, it is

very clear that these were not genuine poachers who were only after game because these so-called 'poaching gangs' would hunt up to within half a mile of the homestead of the ranchers simply to provoke them. If the landowners tried to assault or corner them they fought back. One farm owner named Francis Taberer was killed (Wright 1972:50). The DC also said that, '... there were several reports of arrows wounding pursuing farmers.' This kind of response shows that the Hlengwe had been pushed to the limit and felt that it was time to defend their birthright.

Even some traditional authorities became very confrontational. In 1957, Sub-chief Lisimati Mpapa in the Makambe area threatened a government lands officer or demonstrator with unspecified action for delineating fields for a group of Shonas evicted from the (Victoria) Masvingo district in his area. He even uprooted the pegs that the demonstrator had used to delineate the fields (Chisi, interview, 13/6/2008). The sub-chief was irked by the loss of land to people he called 'outsiders'. In the interview, the retired officer also revealed that another sub-chief, Lisenga Chilonga, was very uncooperative and '... was a very difficult man to deal with' (ibid.). He always resisted orders from the DC and only implemented them after receiving threats of use of force against him. In the Sengwe Reserve one headman retorted to the DC, '*Can I stop my followers from drinking water*' (Wright 1972:143). This was after the DC instructed him to stop his people from hunting on European farms. This confrontational attitude reflects the general feeling that most Hlengwe had towards Europeans as from the 1950s onwards.

In the early 1960s, the Hlengwe political situation, which had been described as stable in the 1920s was close to tipping point. The nationalist wind, which was sweeping across the country, began to have an impact on many Hlengwe in the S.E Lowveld. Wright attributed the blossoming of modern nationalist ideas among the Hlengwe in the 1960s to the arrest and detention of Joshua Nkomo at Gonakudzingwa Restriction Camp in the S.E. Lowveld. According to him, people treated Nkomo as a 'Messiah', because he was promising them a restoration of their land when he came to power. This message appealed to the Hlengwe who had been economically disabled through the loss of their land. Matters came to a head on 8 and 9 May 1965, when over 500 followers of Joshua Nkomo defied police orders and gathered at the Chikombedzi Mission Hospital aiming to attack the white missionaries after the meeting. The missionaries were only saved by instant flight to neighbouring towns (Wright 1972:143).

In the Sengwe Reserve, spears and fresh arrows were made and old muzzleloaders resurrected, cleaned and readied for a 'Big Day' in May 1965. Women informants, who revealed the whole plan to the DC of Mwenezi

District, also disclosed that some six whites had been put on the death list. Of the six farmers, three owned land in the Mateke Hills, an area from which Gezani's people had been evicted. One was a rancher just across the Runde River, while the other two were from the Beit-Bridge area (ibid:378). The state dealt with the situation by declaring a State of Emergency in May 1965. Many Hlengwe men were arrested and a ban was slapped on visits to the Gonakudzingwa Restriction Camp (ibid.:376). There is no doubt that this was an Hlengwe-directed operation, because it mainly targeted whites that had settled on their traditional homelands. It is also clear that the Hlengwe were now spoiling for war to recover their land, dignity and ultimately economic emancipation.

Two dynamics of the Hlengwe response identified in these incidents were their ability at this stage to unite with other ethnic groups in the struggle against a common enemy and to engage in coordinated action as one big Hlengwe group fighting for its birthright. The Hlengwe response had entered a new phase and it was not surprising when some young men from the area such as Justin Chauke who later became one of the prominent nationalist leaders went for military training as a liberation fighter in the 1960s (Martin *et al.* 1981:22).

However, the existence of a group of women who revealed the Hlengwe Insurrection plan proves that the Hlengwe response was not uniform for they represent a group that was comfortable with the status quo, which was yet another dynamic of the Hlengwe response. In traditional Hlengwe culture, women had no right to make decisions that were ultra vires the male-dominated community's wishes. So this act by these women proves that there was a team of Hlengwe men behind them. Thus the Hlengwe response was heterogeneous because there existed within the same society some groups against and some, though in the minority, for the status quo.

From the above discourse, it is very clear that the Hlengwe used various methods in responding to the loss of land and colonial oppression associated with it. It is also quite clear that it is wrong to homogenize their response for it was characterized by great diversity. Different people at different times and in different places reacted differently to the new colonial set up depending on the different impact the land expropriation had on each of the Hlengwe groups.

Conclusion

One major achievement of this article has been its success in extricating the history of the Hlengwe from a maze of what is largely Shona or Karanga history. In that history, the Hlengwe have always been largely obscure yet

they are a people with their own identity and with their own colonial experiences to tell. It is hoped that more detailed studies covering other aspects of their history will be carried out.

Before 1890 the Hlengwe were an economically empowered people who were charting their own course of economic development as their environment dictated. They had many branches of production, which assured them of food security and above all sustained their livelihoods. However through various land policies starting with the Southern Rhodesia Order-in-Council of 1898, the Land Apportionment Act of 1931 and the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, the Hlengwe lost their grip on their land.

The loss of land meant to them loss of their economic sovereignty as their traditional economy was destroyed. People who were at one time masters of their own destiny were turned into a labouring class that was now dependent on the wages from the new masters. There is no doubt that land alienation economically incapacitated them because of the centrality of land to their economic activities. In no time signs of impoverishment began to show among their numbers. A Hlengwe-driven mode of economic development died a sudden death leaving the majority of them in a pathetic state.

This course of events ignited numerous and diverse Hlengwe reactions. From the passive forms of resistance in the early years, the reactions became more violent in the ensuing years as the evictions intensified and conditions in the reserves deteriorated. The warlike nature of the Hlengwe manifested itself when their vital interests were threatened. By 1965, many of them were taking part in modern nationalism and were ready to kill the colonialists so as to repossess their traditional lands. All in all, a deep analysis of the Hlengwe modes of response to colonial rule and exploitation reveals that there were many dynamics and variations and heterogeneity in their response as opposed to the common analysis that sees homogeneity in African resistance and often ignores its salient features.

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- Chinhavi, Agnella, B.A Hons., history student from Chiredzi South, interviewed in Gweru, 7/7/2008.
- Chisi, A.K, (demonstrator in the Matibi II area from 1956-76) interviewed at Village 12, Mushandike Resettlement Scheme, 13/6/2008.
- Gezani, Amos, (heir-apparent to the throne) interviewed in the Sengwe communal area, 23/2/91.

- Govani, Chipo, of Matibi I, interviewed in Gweru, 27/6/2008.
- Kanuka, B.J., (headman) interviewed at his homestead in Matibi II, 26/02/91.
- Makondo, Thomas, interviewed at Chikombedzi Business Centre in Matibi II, 23/2/1991.
- Malalani, Lisenga, Rev. interviewed at his homestead in Matibi II, 21/02/1991.
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- Zanamwe, Lackson, (headmaster) interviewed at Kamba School, Triangle, 5/7/2008.
- Zanamwe, Nehemiah, interviewed at Farm No. 1 Gonakudzingwa Purchase Area, 23/02/91.

Key words and Abbreviations

Economic disempowerment: refers to the economic incapacitation of people either by withdrawing their main means of production or denying them access to the same and passing inhibiting pieces of legislation which in the process make the targeted people a vulnerable group incapable of fully sustaining itself through independent production or utilization of its own resources.

Peasantry: in this article refers to the class of peasants who solely depended on land for subsistence.

NAZ: National Archives of Zimbabwe material.

NC: Native Commissioner (in this article this is immediately followed by the area he was in charge of, e.g. NC, Chibi).

CNC: Chief Native Commissioner.

DC: District Commissioner (formerly NC).